

RELIGION AND PUBLIC POLICY:  
A GERMAN-AMERICAN  
COMPARISON

# AICGS GERMAN-AMERICAN ISSUES

## 09

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AT JOHN HOPKINS UNIVERSITY



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## FOREWORD

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This edited volume is the culmination of a project on “Religion In Politics: The Impact of Culture and Religion on Public Policy Debates.” Through a series of workshops and Issue Briefs, AICGS sought to enhance understanding among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners on three policy debates involving religious aspects occurring on both sides of the Atlantic: faith-based initiatives, stem cell research, and religious education.

The essays presented here examine these issues from both German and American perspectives, and discuss how religion is understood in the public sphere, whether cultural or historical sensitivities constrain policymakers’ choices, and how religious concerns can be incorporated into a decision-making process that is not necessarily designed to account for these concerns. Although not the only policy debates in which religion plays a role, the issues selected for this project are sure to be at the top of the political agenda in the coming years, as evidenced by President-elect Barack Obama’s statements and policy positions. These eight essays were written over the course of 2008 and prior to the outcome of the U.S. presidential election. In her introduction, Lily Gardner Feldman addresses the changing trends seen among religious groups in the 2008 election.

AICGS is very grateful to the Robert Bosch Stiftung for their generous support of this project, and to Lily Gardner Feldman, Senior Fellow in Residence and Director of the Society, Culture, and Politics Program, for her support and guidance. We are also grateful to Rolf Schieder and the Program on Religion and Politics at Humboldt University for their support. Additionally, AICGS would like to thank Kirsten Verclas, Research Program Associate, and Jessica Riester, Research Program Assistant and Publications Coordinator, for their work in implementing the project and editing this publication. The Institute is also indebted to the speakers at the workshops in Washington, DC, Brussels, and Berlin, whose insights were invaluable as we examined these issues: Jeremy White, Stanley Carlson-Thies, Thomas Becker, Traugott Jähnichen, Jo Anne Schneider, Stephan Kline, Father Jack Hurley, Thomas Farr, Marcia Pally, Sönke Siemon, Stephen Colecchi, Muqtedar Khan, and Matthias Hass; John H. Evans, Ronald Cole-Turner, Christa Wewetzer, Lee Silver, Burkhard Jandrig, Charles Kessler, Thomas Banchoff, Wolf-Michael Catenhusen, and Luis Martin-Oar; Robert Boston, Sandra Krump, Robert Vischer, Hosffman Ospino, Ian MacMullen, Brigitte Thies-Böttcher, Peter Schreiner, and Joachim Willems.

Best regards,



Jack Janes  
Executive Director  
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**Professor Marcia Pally** teaches at New York University in Multilingual Multicultural Studies and is a permanent Fellow of the New York Institute for the Humanities. Her book, *Warnung vor dem Freunde: Tradition und Zukunft amerikanischer Außenpolitik* was published in Germany in spring, 2008. Prof. Pally was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin (Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin) in 2007, and has been a cultural and political columnist in the U.S. and Europe for the past twenty years. She has written for *The New York Times*, the *Village Voice*, *The Nation*, *Internationale Politik*, *Die Zeit*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Merkur*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, among other publications, and has lectured widely at universities and professional associations, among them Harvard, Columbia, Humboldt University (Berlin), The University of Zurich, and The Cato Institute.

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## INTRODUCTION:

# RELIGION AND POLITICS: AN ENDURING RELATIONSHIP IN GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES

LILY GARDNER FELDMAN

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*“Politics and religion...these are two different things. But we also know that the Christian image of man is not some politically non-committal, abstract formula; it is more in that it offers orientation and guideline.”*

Angela Merkel, 13 June 2006<sup>1</sup>

*“We know faith and values can be a source of strength in our own lives... But it can also be something more. It can be the foundation of a new project of American renewal. And that’s the kind of effort I intend to lead as president of the United States.”*

Barack Obama, 1 July 2008<sup>2</sup>

Over the course of a year and a triad of conferences, the project that gave rise to the following essays sought to identify the intersection of religion and politics in three prominent areas of public life: faith-based initiatives concerning foreign policy and social policy; stem cell research; and religious education.

Conventional wisdom in both the study of comparative politics and the practice of policy suggests that Germany and the United States differ in the prominence of religion in the public sphere, yet the contributions here indicate that the difference may reside in style rather than in degree. Especially in the last eight years of the Bush administration, religion has played an open, vibrant, and sometimes caustic role in the American polity. In Germany, far from being anemic, religion has informed a number of policy choices, but it has been neither shrill nor obtrusive.

From statements and policy positions of the Barack Obama presidential campaign, it is clear that faith will continue to shape policies in the next four years. Yet the actual appearance, as opposed to the religious

thinking behind it, will probably be more muted, rendering the American style more like that of Germany. As Germany and the U.S. seek to reinvigorate and recalibrate their alliance, understanding religion’s influence in foreign and domestic policies will enhance the capacity for transatlantic dialogue and transatlantic action.

While religion has been a common determinant of policy preferences in the United States and Germany, there have largely been different outcomes with respect to institutions, colored by differences in federalism and in the workings of a parliamentary system vs. a presidential political system. This essay will summarize the findings of the contributors by focusing on the specific nature of religion’s influence and the concrete character of institutional and policy expression in the areas of faith-based initiatives, stem cell research, and religious education. It will also forecast the positions of the new administration in the three areas, reconfirming the relevance of these policy issues.



## Faith-Based Initiatives in Foreign and Social Policies

Marcia Pally considers religion's influence in terms of the values underlying the broad sweep of American history and foreign policy from the founding through today. Her analytical focus rests on evangelicalism, its relationship to individualism, economic liberalism and self-reliance at home, and its connection to U.S. missionary zeal and championing of economic and political liberation abroad. The contemporary manifestation of the evangelical-political nexus is the American efforts at nation-building in Iraq. Given the "deep structure of missionary liberalism," she cautiously anticipates basic continuity in American foreign policy.

For Stephen M. Colecchi, the religious principles that motivate his personal and professional engagement in foreign affairs derive from Catholic social teaching. Leaning on Pope Benedict's views on the church-state relationship and on the Catholic principles of participation and subsidiarity, he identifies three roles for Catholic (and other) religious organizations when it comes to global issues: active involvement in public debate and discourse with an emphasis on reason; mobilization of citizens through appeals to conscience; maintenance of independence from the state as the Church articulates "the rights and dignity of the human person" and serves "the needs of the community." There are two additional channels through which the American Catholic church is active internationally: transnationalism (its sister Catholic churches) abroad, and ecumenism (with other religions on foreign policy) at home. Foreign policy issues in which the Catholic church has been a serious player range from poverty to debt relief, from Darfur to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, from torture to globalization.

The focus is shifted by Thomas Becker to social services in Germany, in which he notes, comparable to Colecchi in foreign policy, the fundamental influence of the Catholic values of solidarity and subsidiarity. The German Caritas Association is active at the national and regional/local levels, employs over 500,000 people, and provides extensive social services (e.g., 25 percent of day-care attendees frequent Catholic centers). Becker enumerates three roles for

Caritas in the fields of social welfare, health, and education: participation in defining social policy; provision of social services; promotion of societal community. Similar to Colecchi, Becker also highlights the centrality of other religions and other non-governmental actors (NGOs) in the overall process of social services and the value of independence from the state.

Religion was highly significant in the 2008 presidential election in at least two ways: the candor with which the candidates discussed faith; and the fact that a broad coalition of religious voters chose Barack Obama. The last point is particularly relevant as observers saw this election narrowing (though not eliminating) the so-called "God gap" in which frequent churchgoers in past elections have solidly been "in the Republican column."<sup>3</sup> George W. Bush beat John Kerry in 2004 by 61 percent to 39 percent of weekly churchgoers, whereas in 2008 John McCain garnered only 54 percent to Barack Obama's 44 percent among the same group.<sup>4</sup> Forty-five percent of Protestant/Other Christian voters chose Obama and 54 percent selected McCain; among Catholics, the figures were reversed.<sup>5</sup> An overwhelming majority of Jews, 78 percent, voted for the Democratic candidate, as did a huge 89 percent of Muslims.<sup>6</sup> Approximately one-third of white evangelicals under 30 gave their vote to Obama, whereas the figure was only 24 percent for those between 30 and 64.<sup>7</sup>

In his efforts to reach out to religious voters during the election campaign and to underscore his own community-organizing background in a Catholic organization, Barack Obama frequently talked about faith-based initiatives. Obama does not view faith-based organizations as an alternative to government, but as a necessary partner given the monumental nature of social challenges. Emphasizing the importance of a strict separation between church and state, Obama has distinguished his plan from the Bush administration's in several respects: federal money cannot be used for proselytizing; faith-based organizations cannot discriminate against recipients or employees on the basis of religion; and federal dollars used by faith-based groups must be used for secular programs.<sup>8</sup>

Obama's stance on faith-based initiatives in foreign policy are less easy to discern than in the domain of social policy, but at the April 2008 Democratic Candidates Compassion Forum, in advancing the goal of being his "brother's keeper and [his] sister's keeper," he praised George Bush's international policies regarding HIV/AIDS (Obama has been critical of the Bush administration's unwillingness to give aid to organizations that distribute condoms and counsel women about the availability of abortion.) He also flagged good stewardship of the globe and sensitivity to non-radical Islam as areas where religion influences his views.<sup>9</sup>

### Stem Cell Research

An analysis by Ronald Cole-Turner of the debate on stem cell research in the U.S. begins with a statement of policy and institutional difference between the U.S. and Germany: "In Germany, public policy controls what cell lines may be legally imported for research. In the United States, except where prohibited by individual states, nearly every aspect of work in the field is legally permitted." The key restrictions in the U.S. are the limit on the number of stem cell lines eligible for federal funding and the cut-off date for their derivation, as codified in President Bush's executive order of 9 August 2001. Congress has tried to increase the number and expand the deadline, but Bush, propelled by religious imperative, has vetoed the initiatives. Cole-Turner addresses the manner in which moral values frame all sides of the U.S. debate by grappling with the puzzles of why some religious traditions, such as Judaism and Islam, support and promote stem cell research, why others, such as Christianity (with some important exceptions), oppose it, and why a third category, Mormons, endorse limited research. Cole-Turner alerts our attention to the future by noting technological, scientific, moral, and political arguments that will likely change the debate and the institutional and policy outcomes.

In contrast to the American presidential executive order, Burkhard Jandrig emphasizes it is German law deriving from the Bundestag in 1990 and 2002 that constrained stem cell research, with a key provision up until recently permitting the use of embryonic stem cells derived before 1 January 2002 in the country of origin (thus, reacting to the American cut-off date of

9 August 2001 and the content of Bush's executive order). In April 2008, a majority of the Bundestag voted to shift the cut-off date to 1 May 2007. Jandrig draws a principal distinction between policy in the two countries: "Whereas in the U.S. only public funding was affected, there was a general ban in Germany for research in the public and private sectors." Unlike in the U.S., where Cole-Turner notes the absence of a national system of oversight regarding stem cell research, in Germany there exists an institutional framework to monitor research activities, as Jandrig elaborates. The moral opposition to stem cell research raised mainly by the Catholic church in Germany does not fade with advances in biomedicine: "[T]he possibility to create an embryo or embryonic stem cells out of other adult cells (such as skin cells) provokes the genuine ethical question of why these adult cells should not have the same human dignity as an embryo."

As Senator, in July 2006 Barack Obama was co-sponsor of a stem cell bill that would have markedly improved scientific access to embryonic stem cells. His advocacy was based on the ethical argument of medical breakthroughs that could result from expanded scientific activities, but was mindful of views opposing stem cell research: "I realize there are moral and ethical issues surrounding this debate. But I also realize that we're not talking about harvesting cells that would have been used to create life and we're not talking about cloning humans. We're talking about using stem cells that would have otherwise been discarded and lost forever—and we're talking about using those stem cells to possibly save the lives of millions of Americans."<sup>10</sup>

In its review of Bush administration executive orders that could be quickly overturned, transition advisers to Barack Obama have singled out Bush's 2001 action on stem cells as an early priority.<sup>11</sup> It is also expected that increased funding for stem cell research will be a priority for the new Democratic majority in Congress, especially as there is significant Republican support for such a measure.<sup>12</sup>

### Religious Education

The nature of the principles and values behind Catholic organizations' activities outlined by Colecchi

and Becker are reprised in Hosffman Ospino's examination and advocacy of Catholic schools in the U.S. He refers to the four themes of: dignity of the human person, common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. In addition to arguing for a relation of partnership and collaboration between church and state, he posits three roles for Catholic schools: the promotion of a complementary connection between faith and reason; the pursuit of the concept of community, where church, society, and the family must work together; and the commitment to reducing social inequalities. In the last regard, despite financial difficulties and significant Catholic school closings, church schools are still able to be effective in the inner cities, where "[r]esearch demonstrates that their presence in poor neighborhoods truly makes a difference." Increasingly, Catholic schools serve a diverse population, for example Hispanic and African American students, who make up 27 percent of the total student enrollment in Catholic schools.

The evaluation by Sandra Krump of religion in German schools first stresses the legal principle of religious freedom stipulated in the Basic Law, similar to the U.S. Constitution's free exercise clause in the First Amendment. Yet, there is a marked difference between the American constitution's non-establishment clause—which precludes the government from preferring one religion over another, thereby preventing religious practice in publicly-funded schools and public financial support for religious schools—and Article 7 of the Basic Law by which the state guarantees religion classes in schools and assigns responsibility for the curriculum to religious entities. Colored by her experiences in Catholic Bavaria, Krump notes that of the four desirable approaches to education, two—the moral-evaluative and the religious-constitutive—demonstrate the importance of the church in teaching. She outlines the contributions of religious teaching to the fundamental mission of education: "to goals and purposes that are important for the development of a child and that are of interest for the state and society." Specifically, she suggests that religious education facilitates dialogue and debate about existential questions, cultural heritage, tolerance, and faith.

Against the backdrop of religious pluralism, multiculturalism, globalization, post-modernism, and secu-

larization, Peter Schreiner examines religious education's dynamic from a broad, cross-European perspective. He views religious education in Europe as a multi-layered proposition with different outcomes depending on four factors: the nature of religion (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, mixed); the relationship between religion and society; the character of the school system; and the relationship between church and state. He also identifies three types of actors in religious education: religious communities; a collaboration between state and religious communities; and the state. Despite the differing contexts and actors, Schreiner pinpoints common goals in religious education: sensitivity to religion; an orientation to religion's role in society; knowledge concerning religious beliefs and experiences. In terms of the practice of religious education, Schreiner addresses four themes: learning religion; learning about religion; learning from religion; and learning through religion. Regarding the future, he deems a centralized approach to religious education in Europe "neither possible nor desirable," but does envision common standards in all aspects of religious education.

Education in general is a main priority for America's renewal, according to the President-elect; he considers the state of America's schools "morally unacceptable."<sup>13</sup> As a former professor of constitutional law, Obama maintains a position of strict separation of church and state, but has insisted on a "sense of proportion" in its enforcement, for example in the pledge of allegiance and voluntary student prayer groups on school property.<sup>14</sup> On another issue in the debate about religion and education, school curriculum, Obama again has a somewhat nuanced position: "I do believe in evolution. I don't think that is incompatible with Christian faith. Just as I don't think science in general is incompatible with Christian faith."<sup>15</sup> On the topic of vouchers for private and charter schools, many of which are religious, Obama has come out in favor of charter schools, but against vouchers as "the data doesn't show that [a voucher program] actually solves the problem."<sup>16</sup>

The authors in this compilation of essays, whatever the area of policy, see a deep connection between religion and politics, such that these topics will continue to animate debates in the U.S. and in Germany. Appreciating the role of religion in politics

in Germany and in the U.S. will allow each country to understand the domestic and foreign policy opportunities and challenges facing the transatlantic relationship as it attempts collectively to navigate treacherous international waters. Certainly, the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, Barack Obama, has promised that faith will shape politics: “[I]f we truly hope to speak to people where they’re at—to communicate our hopes and values in a way that’s relevant to their own—we cannot abandon the field of religious discourse. Because when we ignore the debate about what it means to be a good Christian or Muslim or Jew; when we discuss religion only in a negative sense of where or how it should not be practiced, rather than in the positive sense of what it tells us about our obligations towards one another; when we shy away from religious venues and religious broadcasts because we assume we will be unwelcome—others will fill the vacuum, those with the most insular views of faith, or those who cynically use religion to justify partisan ends.”<sup>17</sup>

## NOTES

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ESSAYS

# THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION ON FOREIGN POLICY IN GERMANY AND THE U.S.: BENEFIT OR BURDEN?

MARCIA PALLY

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## Introduction

In contemporary foreign policy, religion is usually considered a foreign or external factor—a provocation overseas that prompts the U.S. to act. Violent Islamism is the obvious example. Where there is influence of American religion on foreign policy, we tend to think this is the result of party politics and lobbying efforts—especially since the New Right coalition between evangelicals and the Republican Party that began in the 1970s. These domestic activities, I would like to suggest, are important but fleeting, and risky to use in anticipating future policy. Since 2006, for example, the evangelical-Republican bloc, which has supposedly had such vast influence, has begun to fracture: while 78 percent of evangelicals voted Republican in 2004, 41 percent voted Democrat in the 2006 midterm elections. Between 2001 and 2005, 55 percent of young, white evangelicals (age 18-29) considered themselves Republicans; in 2007, just 37 percent.<sup>1</sup> In the recent presidential election, Barack Obama saw a 5 percent increase (since 2004) among evangelicals. Among those who attend church more than once a week, the Democrats saw an 8 point gain. As these figures suggest, it would be unwise to predict future policy based on the party and lobbying structures of the New Right's last forty years.

## Religious Influences on U.S. Foreign Policy

Perhaps more useful would be to look at the underlying structure of foreign policy and religion's influence on it. That structure has endured over time and has explanatory power in understanding past foreign policy as well as predictive power in anticipating future policy—regardless of what party or person is in

the White House. This is especially important in light of the hopes pegged on the Obama presidency. While the assumption of any election is that it makes a good deal of difference who wins, it is critical to understand the constraints that any candidate faces, including the deep structural interests and worldview of the country. In the U.S. case, these were significantly informed by American evangelicalism, America's predominant religion from the colonial era until World War I.

Since its founding, American foreign policy has been grounded or motivated by a number of beliefs:

- belief in the benefits of economic liberalism and political liberty;
- belief in the anti-authoritarian, self-reliant individualism that grounds liberty and liberalism;
- belief in America as the New Jerusalem—bastion of such liberty and liberalism; and
- belief in the American mission—the obligation on the American Jerusalem to bring liberty and liberalism to the world because they are of benefit not only to America but to all.

These characteristics emerged from the British liberal tradition, which the U.S. inherited, as well as from the rough, entrepreneurial frontier and immigration experiences, and from evangelicalism—or what happened to Calvinism when people sought a more personal relationship to Jesus and a less state-oriented religion. The German pietistic and Moravian movements were American evangelicalism's primary parents.



Even in Europe, their emphases were:

- an “inner” individual relationship with Jesus,
- a life-transforming conversion to that relationship,
- the “mission” to bring others to that life-changing conversion,
- the inerrancy of the Bible,
- individualist Bible reading by ordinary men and woman, and
- the priesthood of all believers, of ordinary men and women rather than a priestly class.

The anti-authoritarian, liberal, individualist emphasis was already strong in Europe but it grew stronger in America, owing to: (1) sparse settlement across the vast land mass, (2) local and dispersed power (itself the result of sparse settlement as well as the federated system), and (3) the need for self-reliant initiative to survive the frontiers. Relative to crowded, settled, tradition-bound Europe, individualist self-reliance was not a theory in America but a practical necessity and way of life. The individualist strains of evangelicalism were well-suited to it; in many ways, evangelicalism was the ideal religion for this go-it-on-your-own America.

### The Historical Rise of Evangelicalism

The First Great Evangelical Awakening of the 1740s was a festival of individual iconoclasm, breakaway religious groups, and populist religious ideas promoted by untrained but entrepreneurial preachers. Evangelical churches were not part of “the system” but part of the people, not an oppressor but a liberator, not a top-down hierarchy but the voice of the individual. And there were so many of them. The marketplace of confessions had begun. Liberalism, where individual freedom is of highest value, became a key feature of American economic, political, and religious life. America’s anti-authoritarian churches sided with the Revolution and with a host of populist movements. Individualist liberalism was the defining Zeitgeist.

In the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries, evangelical doctrine continued its individualist, liberal drift as it interacted with isolated frontier conditions. Interestingly, theological doctrine itself shifted in synergy with the local environment. One shift of particular importance was from “God’s Grace” to the individual’s role in his own salvation: accept Jesus and you are saved. The critical step is yours. It is a theology which is individualist, self-reliant, and democratic. A second shift is particularly important for foreign policy. The notion that man can be forgiven for sin shifted to the idea he can be free from sin—the perfectibility of man. Start over; be born again. And one can improve not only oneself but also others. America, the New Jerusalem, would be model and purveyor of liberty to the world, one whose use of force was blessed by God—as He had apparently blessed America’s war of independence and violent continental expansion.

After the Revolution, these ideas had profound influence on the American outlook owing to evangelicalism’s enormous popularity. Not only had the churches supported the Revolution (not the power elites), the Constitutional separation of church and state guaranteed that the churches continued to be seen as a force for good, untainted by the corruptions and hypocrisies of politics. They were associated instead with individualism and anti-authoritarian, grassroots optimism. Evangelical churches in particular were progressive, anti-Federalist, Jeffersonian, anti-landlord, anti-banker, and populist Jacksonian, supporting female preachers and black churches. In the post-Civil War period and through industrialization, evangelical churches developed the “Social Gospel,” spearheading efforts to aid the urban poor and moving so far as to develop a thorough critique of capitalism.

### THE NEW RIGHT COALITION

In light of this history of grassroots populism, the forty year coalition between evangelicals and conservative Republicans is puzzling. Yet starting in the 1960s, a backlash movement brought these two groups together. In response to fears of communism, to the anti-Vietnam War protests, the youth counter-culture, the civil rights movement, and Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society program of social service “handouts,”

evangelicals and Republicans joined to redirect the country back to its core values. Back to individualist self-reliance at home and the mission to fight illiberal tyranny abroad.

The New Right coalition hung together with these ideas: (1) that classic Republican business-interests—liberal markets, “small government”—are the finest flowering of self-reliance and personal liberty and (2) that in foreign policy, America needed a government big enough to fight illiberalism—communism—overseas. Note that the evangelicals had not changed their classically liberal views. But in the post-1960s political context, when individualist self-reliance seemed best understood by Republicans, the liberalism of early evangelicalism had become conservative.

### The American Outlook: Missionary Liberalism

The story of evangelical liberalism in America is one of seepage from religious communities to the American worldview overall. It is this worldview that undergirds U.S. foreign policy. So, there is not a two-step argument here, from evangelicalism to foreign policy, but a three-step argument: from evangelicalism to the American outlook to foreign policy.

Now we can refine the foreign policy bullet-points above. American foreign policy has been grounded by the country’s long-term interests but also by a particular approach to achieving those interests, which we can call missionary liberalism:

- The notion that global economic liberalism brings political liberty, if not immediately then eventually. That is, the conflation of economic liberalism and political liberty that worked so well in America is assumed to work well everywhere—to be of universal benefit.
- The notion that economic and political liberty bring peace, which boosts economic trade, closing the circle.<sup>2</sup>
- Conversely, that economic illiberalism is an existential threat, dangerous to prosperity and liberty, at home and abroad.<sup>3</sup>

In practice this has meant, liberalize the economies of the world as much as possible and “liberate” where necessary—wherever a piece of the liberal global economy looked to fall to socialist or autarkic alternatives. Should liberation require war, proxy war, or covert operations, these have been seen as protective of American interests to be sure, but also protective of liberty for all abroad. At a minimum, they protect weaker nations from illiberalism—communism, now Islamism—the worse possibility. God blesses America’s liberating efforts.

The conflation of economic liberalism with political liberty, and belief in their universal benefit, were evident from the nation’s beginning. Said another way, Americans have been comfortable with the economic motive in foreign policy because they assume the universal benefits of economic liberalism and its slide to political liberty. America has been slow to see—or not been interested in seeing—when these universal benefits do not emerge, i.e., when economic liberalism does not bring political liberty. Throughout the developing world, Americans have seen themselves as liberators even when economic liberalism has better served America’s interests than the target nation’s interests, and has not brought that nation to self-determination or democracy.

Interestingly, when America comes to see that it is no longer a liberating force, it clamors for withdrawal. As Americans are earnest in their liberalizing/liberator self-image, they have little tolerance for policies that disturb it. This is the Vietnam and now Iraq syndrome: when U.S. efforts abroad cease to appear liberating, cognitive dissonance sets in and America wants out.

This perspective on U.S. conduct abroad explains a good deal in America’s past and is rich with suggestions for the future. A few examples: between 1813 and 1860, in pursuit of markets for its already surplus-producing economy, the U.S. not only pursued continental expansion but sent its troops and navy to West Africa, throughout Latin America, and to China and Japan to ensure open markets. Yet the nation understood this, as Andrew Jackson said, as “extending the area of freedom.”<sup>4</sup> Post-Civil War, the belief that foreign markets were key to the domestic economy was the consensus not only of business groups but of labor leaders like Samuel Gompers, populists like



William Jennings Bryan, and the radical farm organizer Jerry Simpson, who declared that “surplus must seek foreign markets.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, effectively capturing America’s conflation of liberalism, liberty, and peace, Harper’s magazine wrote in 1893, “The United States will hold the key, unlocking the gates to the commerce of the world, and closing them to war. If we have fighting to do, it will be fighting to preserve the peace.”<sup>6</sup>

The 1898 Spanish-American War got the U.S. its first overseas territories, but for many Americans, Cuba’s attempt to expel Spain recalled their own war of independence, and after watching the island struggle for three years, they were ready to intervene. Wilson entered WWI to protect U.S. loans to the allies and to have a seat at the peace table where he could shape Europe’s post-war economy to U.S. advantage. Not only Wilson but the nation believed it was making the world safe for democracy. Edward “Colonel” House, among Wilson’s closest advisors, told the British foreign secretary that the American people would support intervention in the war not to protect U.S. shipping, but to create a lasting peace.<sup>7</sup>

Even the Marshall Plan had double motives: liberate and liberalize. On one hand, the U.S. sought to liberate Europe from Nazism, to protect both Europe and Japan from communism, and to build an integrated, liberal global economy that would prevent another world war.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the integrated, liberal global economy would also guarantee U.S. access to materials abroad and create consumers for American products, especially European consumers. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the United Auto Workers union, and the American Farm Bureau agreed that to avoid another depression “you must look to other [non-domestic] markets and those markets are abroad,”<sup>9</sup> as Acheson declared in his testimony to Congress.

In the developing world, both before World War II and since, the long list of direct and proxy wars and covert operations was meant to install liberal economies that would give the U.S. access to markets and materials and to liberate weaker nations from illiberal communism. This was the idea behind destabilizations, overthrows, and wars even when the reigning government was reformist, not communist—

when it was interested in land reform, minimum wages, or industry nationalization rather than central economic planning or totalitarian control. In short, America’s faith in its particular sort of economic liberalism blinded it to these critical distinctions, or as historian Melvyn Leffler wrote, “There was no finely textured analysis here of the prospects for divisions within the Communist world and of the differences between vital and peripheral areas.”<sup>10</sup>

Missionary liberalism did not end with the Cold War. The 1991 Gulf War was understood in these terms: Saddam Hussein threatened U.S. access to Kuwaiti and Saudi oil which needed to be returned to global liberal markets and he violated the national sovereignty of a small nation which the U.S. would liberate. President Bill Clinton held that the liberal rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO) would make all economies rise and so violence would fall—the idea of the universal benefit of liberal markets if ever there was one. To make this possible he increased American interventions in the developing world. From 1990 to 1999, under first a Republican, President George H. W. Bush, and then under a Democrat, Clinton, America engaged in forty-eight military conflicts, compared with sixteen during the forty years of the Cold War.<sup>11</sup> Turning to much-maligned Bush, his 2002 declaration of global military hegemony, which so alarmed the world, was already declared in Clinton’s 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review and in Harry Truman’s National Security Council 68 of 1950. His Iraq War was classic, liberalize and liberate: America would topple a dictator, liberate a nation, and usher this oil-rich nation into the world of global liberal commerce. It was assumed that this would be of such universal benefit that none could oppose it.

### Religion’s Continuing Influence

Given this track record, the ingrained liberate/liberalize structure of U.S. foreign policy is unlikely to change substantially. Emerging from the frontier experience, British liberalism, and America’s evangelicalism, it runs deep and has brought the U.S. a great deal of success. Much of the nation assumes it brings success to other countries as well. Bush’s low popularity after 2006 was not a rejection of these liberal ideas but a continued embrace—America simply rejected a president and party that failed to realize

them. After 2005-2006, U.S. forces in Iraq no longer looked to be liberating, and as history shows that is when America wants out.

Because America's interests and liberal aims are not the sorts of things that change suddenly, whatever range of policies has been possible under this deep structure of missionary liberalism will likely remain foreign policy, both by cultural habit and by inertia. This is the range that should be anticipated by Germany, America's close ally.

Is this a problem? Perhaps not; perhaps a superpower with liberal motives is preferable to one without them, like China or Russia under Putin's influence. The liberate/liberalize assumptions that moved America to "save" Southeast Asia and Latin America from communism, resulting in the exploitation and destruction of those regions, also moved America to the invasion of Normandy and to rebuild post-war Europe. For many Americans, the effort in Iraq was of the same liberating, liberalizing can-do-ism that made the American airlift for a blockaded Berlin possible. We have America's evangelicals to thank, in part, for both.

## NOTES

1 C. Caron, "Evangelicals Go Green — Will Conservative Candidates Follow Suit?: Some Christians lead the charge in environmental policy," ABC News, 23 August 2007, <<http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/GlobalWarming/story?id=3511781&page=1>>.

2 Seymour Lipset described this virtuous circle in his modernization theory: once a certain level of economic development was achieved through liberal markets, a liberal civil society and government would emerge; see: S. Lipset, "Some social requisites of democracy: Economic development and political legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53 (1959): 69-105. This does not turn out not to be the case: rising standards of living stabilize democracies that have already formed but do not lead necessarily to democratization; see: A. Przeworski, M. Alvarez, J. Cheibub, & F. Limongi, *Democracy and development: Political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

3 The logic is: if overseas markets/raw materials were lost, domestic production would fall, leading to depression and political unrest, which could be addressed only by illiberal economic planning and illiberal police control. Secretary of State George Marshall—of the Marshall Plan—explained, "The cumulative loss of foreign markets and sources of supply would unquestionably have a depressing influence on our domestic economy and would drive us to increased measures of government control." W.A. Williams, *The tragedy of American diplomacy* (New York: Norton, 1959/1972), 271.

4 M. Rogin, "Recolonizing America," *American Literary History* 2 (1990): 146, <[links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0896-7148\(199021\)2%3A1%3C144%3ARA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E->](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0896-7148(199021)2%3A1%3C144%3ARA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E->).

5 H. Zinn, *The twentieth century* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 6.

6 W.A. Williams, *The tragedy of American diplomacy* (New York: Norton, 1959/1972), 34.

7 C. Seymour, ed., *The intimate papers of Colonel House*, Edward M House (1926-1928). Reprint Services Corporation, 170-171.

8 Japan, lacking liberal political institutions pre-war, was rebuilt more slowly and with greater political controls. Post-war, economic assistance to Japan was proportionately close to what Afghanistan received in the late 1990s, and Japan achieved post-war economic levels commensurately slowly, eleven years after the end of WWII. A. Przeworski and F. Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and facts," *World Politics* 49 (2) (1997): 155-183; A. Przeworski, M. Alvarez, J. Cheibub, & F. Limongi, *Democracy and development: Political institutions and well-being in the world, 1950-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

9 R. Keohane, "Hobbes's dilemma and institutional change in world politics: Sovereignty in international society," in *Whose World Order?: Uneven Globalization and the End of the Cold War*, H. Holm and G. Sorensen (Eds.) (Bolder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 166.

10 M. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 260.

11 U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century, "New world coming," (Washington, DC: The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, 1999), 128. Of the Cold War sixteen, six were large scale (Korea, two in Lebanon, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, and Granada). From 1989 to 2003, nine were large scale (Panama, two in the Persian Gulf, Kurdistan, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan).



# REFLECTIONS OF A CATHOLIC ON RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AS ACTORS IN THE GLOBAL ARENA

STEPHEN M. COLECCHI

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## Introduction

There is ample evidence of the influence of religion in world affairs. The end of colonial rule in India, the overcoming of apartheid in South Africa, the solidarity movement in Poland, and the abolition of slavery and promotion of civil rights in the United States all drew considerable energy from religious individuals and religious organizations.

Almost daily the news media testify to the intersection between religion and politics globally. We read about religious leaders advocating for peace, justice, and the alleviation of poverty. There are stories of ordinary people motivated by faith to make extraordinary contributions to the common good—promoting reconciliation in the wake of conflicts, pressing the governments of wealthy nations to aid developing countries, and urging protection of the environment that we all share.

Of course, there is also a dark side. Some who would claim religious motivations attack innocent civilians and justify their heinous acts in the name of religion. Appeals to religion are also used to discriminate against members of other ethnic groups and for other nefarious purposes. But most people of goodwill would agree that these justifications and appeals are perversions of authentic religious teaching.

The action of religion in the international sphere not only finds expression in the initiatives of individuals; it is also embodied in the activities of organizations and institutions. So questions naturally arise: What is the proper role of religious organizations in shaping the world in which we live? How can, should, and do religious institutions influence governments and foreign

policy?

My analysis of these questions is influenced by three realities. First, my outlook is shaped by my vocation as a practitioner, not an academic. My thinking is rooted in my experience working within the Catholic Church in the United States to address international concerns and policies. For the past thirty years, first as a religious educator and then as a social ministry leader, I have labored at the local, state, and national levels to address global concerns in light of the values of the Catholic faith tradition. Second, as a church leader my policy work is based on Catholic social teaching and the Church's presence and activity in many countries. That experience has included both interfaith and ecumenical initiatives, but it is defined principally by a Catholic approach to public engagement. Third, my experience has focused almost exclusively on church-state relations in the United States and on endeavoring to help inform and influence the foreign policy of the United States.

## Religious Organizations in Public Policy Debates: Neither Representing nor Replacing

When considering the role of religious organizations in shaping foreign policy and their ability to act as independent actors in their relations with their counterparts in other states or directly with the governments of other countries, some may ask: are religious organizations representing or replacing the state? In the arena of public policy, it is my conviction that religious organizations neither narrowly "represent" nor more broadly "replace" the state. For religion to attempt either representing or replacing the state

would compromise both institutions.

Religious organizations can and should contribute to the common good by participating in public policy debates in ways that respect their own independence, teaching, and experience as religious institutions; they cannot and should not seek simply to represent the state. It is true in a limited sense that when religious organizations accept public funding to deliver humanitarian or development assistance they “represent” the state, but in these cases they should always authentically represent their own mission as religious institutions committed to advancing the well-being of all, especially the poorest and most vulnerable members of the human family.

Religious institutions should only accept government funding for activities that are fundamentally compatible with their mission and activity as faith-based organizations. In this way they supplement or complement the work of the state and contribute to the common good, but they neither represent nor replace the state. To remain true to their mission they must remain distinct from the state and retain their distinctive identity as religious institutions.

#### THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE STATE

The first German pope in almost five centuries, Pope Benedict XVI, spoke of the Church’s relationship to the state in his first papal Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*. In this teaching letter on “God is Love,” he argued: “The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good is something which concerns the Church deeply.”<sup>1</sup>

Although Pope Benedict was addressing the relationship of the Catholic Church to the state, his reflections have relevance for the wider question of the

relationship between religious institutions and the state. At least three aspects of the Holy Father’s teaching highlight key elements of a way to frame the proper role of religion in shaping international policy: the importance of religious communities appealing to reason in the public square; the centrality of spirituality and formation of conscience in the mobilization of people for the common good; and the necessity of maintaining the distinct roles of church and state, of religion and politics.

In the first place Pope Benedict maintains that the Church acting in the public sphere should appeal to arguments that flow from reason and are seen as reasonable by people of goodwill. The Church, and by extension other religious institutions, should appeal to “rational argument” in public discourse. In other words, the Church’s concerns may be motivated by faith, but they should also be intelligible to people of goodwill who do not necessarily share the same faith. For example, a doctrinal basis for the Church’s emphasis on the protection of human life, human dignity, and human rights is the belief that every person is created in the “image and likeness of God.” But in public debates the Church can “translate” this doctrinal belief, which appeals to the religious convictions of the Catholic faithful, into systematic and coherent arguments that defend human rights and command the respect of persons who do not subscribe to the underlying doctrine. Likewise, Catholic belief in the Creator motivates a believer’s care for God’s creation, but this doctrinal concern can also find expression in reasoned arguments on the importance of protecting the environment. The Catholic Church finds no contradiction between appeals to faith and reason because both apprehend the same truth. In Catholic teaching the authentic quest for religious truth and the honest search of human reason lead in the same direction because they draw on the same ultimate source of truth—the divine truth.

Second, Pope Benedict argues convincingly that the Church, and by inference other religious organizations, motivate commitment and action by mobilizing people spiritually and appealing to their consciences. For example, in the United States this can be seen in the leadership role played by churches, synagogues, and mosques on the issues of Darfur and torture. The

Save Darfur Coalition has energized both members of the general public and public officials in our nation to work actively for an end to the genocidal violence in Sudan. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Religious Campaign Against Torture have raised awareness and provided moral support to efforts to ban the practice of torture.

As an issue neither Darfur nor torture has a large natural constituency based on self-interest. For these and other issues impacting the poor and the vulnerable, the role of conscience is particularly important. The effectiveness of the advocacy of religious organizations, like the Church, depends in large part on the ability to speak a moral language that helps form and then touches the consciences of people of faith and moves them to take action. A commitment to the life and dignity of the human person, rooted in deeply held religious convictions, informs the consciences of many. Through them this belief contributes to the development of a societal consensus to act in defense of the human person.

Third, Pope Benedict maintains that the Church as a religious organization, acting in the public arena, should not be identified with the state. Identification with the state tends to mute criticism of the state. Such identification would compromise the mission of religion and confuse its proper role in public debates. For example, if the Church is identified with the state, it would lose its prophetic distance from the state—a distance that enables it to address public issues with an independent voice based on its own understanding of the rights and dignity of the human person and its own experience serving the needs of the community.

This distance between church and state, between religion and public authority, paradoxically strengthens the functions of governments by enriching public discussion with more diverse perspectives. The relative independence of religious institutions within a state contributes to building a robust civil society and provides vehicles for enriching the pluralism of public discourse. In as much as religious institutions engage their members in public concerns they help build participation in and ownership of the society's public institutions, including the state, and strengthen the fabric of public life. At their

best, religious institutions help form part of a vibrant civil society, and along with other institutions within civil society and the private sector, strengthen widespread participation in society.

## CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES

There are two dimensions of Catholic social teaching that are important for understanding this Catholic vision of society: participation and subsidiarity. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church,<sup>2</sup> participation is both a right and a duty that flows from human dignity. The Catechism states: "To promote the participation of the greatest number in the life of a society, the creation of voluntary associations and institutions must be encouraged 'on both national and international levels, which relate to economic and social goals, to cultural and recreational activities, to sport, to various professions, and to political affairs.'" To pursue the common good, the role of the state is to coordinate the participation of individuals and social institutions, not to absorb them. The Church articulates a principle of subsidiarity to help ensure that the state does not replace the functions of the family and other social institutions, but rather supports and assists them. The participation of religious organizations in the public arena contributes to a rich diversity of social life and ultimately strengthens society and the state.

## Religions Organizations in World Affairs

Religious organizations are active around the world; but their action is not confined to the national level. As these organizations expand their work internationally, questions arise as to what extent the ties between religious organizations in different states are increasing and what are the consequences of this development.

It is manifestly true that contacts and ties between religious organizations and communities in different countries are increasing both in frequency and intensity. Even though the Catholic Church was a global institution of transnational proportions long before the age of globalization, today the growth of instantaneous global communications and the increased accessibility of global travel have strengthened the bonds of solidarity and increased the opportunities for

collaboration among local churches and religious communities worldwide. For example, for the past two years, Catholic bishops' conferences in the G8 countries have written a common letter to G8 leaders ahead of their annual summit. These letters have asked the G8 nations to address global poverty, health care, climate change, and peacekeeping. Such collaboration among bishops' conferences would have been unthinkable and unworkable before the advent of instantaneous electronic communications.

These intensified international contacts enable the Catholic Church and many other religious traditions to act with greater coordination and to greater effect. The Jubilee 2000 debt relief movement is a powerful example of faith communities influencing the policies of many nations. Building on previous efforts to "drop the debt," in 1994 the late Pope John Paul II infused the debt relief effort with spiritual energy by linking it to the Great Jubilee Year 2000. In an eloquent call to the Church, he admonished: "In the spirit of the Book of Leviticus (25:8-12), Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of all the poor of the world, proposing the Jubilee as an appropriate time [for] ... reducing substantially, if not cancelling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations."<sup>3</sup> His call was answered by people of many faiths and no faith at all who pressed international financial institutions as well as their own governments to provide debt relief for the poorest countries. While the debt relief agenda has not been fully accomplished, it is clear that the spiritual energy of Jubilee contributed to dramatic progress in debt relief.

At the same time it must be acknowledged that improved communication and more frequent contact between religions can also lead to conflict as it has in certain countries, especially where the fault lines of the conflict follow religious lines. For example, the reaction in Muslim majority countries to the publication of cartoons critical or disrespectful of the Prophet Mohammed on one continent had ramifications half a world away. Similarly, acts of religious intolerance from whatever source can now affect communities that have no other contact with each other beyond the world-wide media, making reconciliation difficult.

#### RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS: INFLUENCING FOREIGN POLICY?

In a globalized world, some ask if religious organizations influence governments of other states and their policies directly or more indirectly through their own governments; the answer to this question is complex. The Catholic Church in the United States can most effectively and directly influence the actions of the U.S. government, and through the U.S. government, the policies of other nations. But the Catholic Church in the U.S. is also linked to the Catholic Church in other nations and, especially in this age of more regular travel and communication, can collaborate with them to intensify advocacy efforts. For example, the experience of the Church in Africa informs our advocacy with the U.S. government on foreign aid, health care, debt relief, and trade. And the work of the Church in Africa also gives the Church in the U.S. real credibility with American policymakers. But at the same time the Church in Africa also works to encourage their governments to address corruption and improve transparency and participation in development efforts, which in turn reinforces and complements our policy efforts here by making foreign aid investments more accountable and effective. In my experience religious organizations can most directly influence their own government, but there is a complex set of relationships through which both influencing our own government and other governments is strengthened through the Church's global network.

There has also been a dramatic increase in interfaith and ecumenical collaboration among religious traditions. The best example that I can point to in the U.S. is the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East. This Initiative unites the voices of major Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious leaders in the United States. Together these religious leaders support a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians—two states—a secure and recognized Israel living in peace alongside an independent and viable Palestinian state. These religious leaders have also worked with their counterparts in Israel and Palestine to press for peace with justice for both peoples and for religious freedom and access to the holy sites.



## Conclusions

The intersection between and among religious organizations and governments in the global arena of international policy is more complex and multifaceted than this short essay can capture, but certain directions seem to emerge with clarity:

- Religious communities can best influence public policy when they are independent and neither represent nor replace the state.
- Religious organizations can influence public policy by making reasoned arguments, appealing to people's consciences and mobilizing involvement through spiritual commitment.
- The credibility of religious organizations is strengthened by the consistency of their teaching, the reasonableness of their positions, and the experience they have on the ground serving people.
- Religious organizations have distinct roles from the state. This distance from the state paradoxically strengthens the social and human fabric of the state and contributes to the participation of all in the building of the common good.
- The effectiveness of religious organizations in influencing public policies internationally has grown as a result of increased global collaboration, both within religions' traditions and across traditions—collaboration made possible by technology which allows increased and more frequent contact. Although there can be a dark side to some organizations which misuse religion, this engagement, when inspired and energized by authentic religious experience, can make significant contributions to the foreign policy of nations and to the humanizing of our world.

## NOTES

- 1 *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI, 25 December 2005, no. 28a.
- 2 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano, 1993, nos. 1913-1917, 1882, 1910, 1883, 1894.
- 3 *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Pope John Paul II, 10 November 1994.





# RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AS PROVIDERS OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN GERMANY

THOMAS BECKER

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## The Role of NGOs in Germany

The main characteristic of a free, democratic country is the presence of a strong civil society and activity of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs). People associate freely and try to manage their lives or their environment together by organizing in groups and organizations trying to influence politics on the local, national, or international level.

The social system of the Federal Republic of Germany is guided by the principle of solidarity, which governs the establishment of a close-meshed net of social services and facilities created to provide help for people with health and social needs and which is ensured by governmental and non-governmental agencies. It is also shaped by the principle of subsidiarity, which encompasses the following:

- Tasks that can be taken care of by a community of a lower order should not be assumed by a community of a higher order;
- The community of a higher order should support the community of a lower order in fulfilling its tasks independently, also through financial support; and
- The motto should be: Allow as much self-reliant responsibility (individual contribution) as possible and only as much responsibility (support) of community levels of a higher order as necessary.<sup>1</sup>

The implementation of the principle of subsidiarity is guaranteed by a legal provision which stipulates that at the service provider level, non-governmental social service agencies will take precedence over govern-

mental agencies, if the services provided by non-governmental agencies are adequate and appropriate. As a result, individual citizens preserve their freedom of choice. Each individual may seek help from the specific social service that suits his or her need best, with respect to its professional concept and religious or ideological outlook.

The great number of non-governmental social services and facilities offering assistance are organized by several non-governmental/voluntary social welfare agencies. The social arms of the two major churches are *Deutscher Caritasverband* (German Caritas Association) and *Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* (Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany), respectively, while the social-democratic labor movement gave rise to *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (Workers' Welfare Association). Other central national organizations are *Deutsches Rotes Kreuz* (German Red Cross) and *Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland* (Central Welfare Office of the Jews in Germany). *The Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband* (German Non-denominational Welfare Association) embraces over 10,000 independent social organizations, institutions, and self-help groups.

## Caritas Germany: An Example

Caritas Germany (*Deutscher Caritasverband*, DCV) was founded in 1897 by Lorenz Werthmann and is the charitable association of the Catholic Church in Germany. The organization comprises twenty-seven Diocesan Caritas Associations totaling 636 Caritas associations at various local levels, 262 charitable

religious communities, and nineteen Federal Catholic Professional Associations. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the Local Caritas Associations, the Diocesan Caritas Associations, as well as the Federal Catholic Professional Associations are autonomous and independently responsible for their activities. The German Caritas oversees 25,699 establishments of different types, (such as homes for the elderly). These establishments employ over 500,000 people; about another 500,000 volunteers work to fulfill the mission of the Caritas in Germany. To give just one example of the prevalence of religious social services providers, 25 percent of all children in Germany who attend a day-care center go to a Catholic establishment.

Caritas, with its branches and their participating members, has three essential functions as a charity association of the Catholic Church: The German Caritas Association takes part in defining social policy in Germany, is an important provider of social services, and deploys efforts toward tapping into solidarity potentials. In other words, Caritas in Germany takes part in shaping social reality in Germany, first, by seeing its role as advocate of the disadvantaged and as an actor of civil society, participating in shaping and promoting social policy; second, through its services and facilities, Caritas provides social services in all sectors of social welfare, education, and health, on an out-patient, partially in-patient, and in-patient basis; third, Caritas promotes societal solidarity. All three functions of Caritas are closely interconnected and characterize the Association's relationships with state and society.

### Precedence of NGOs

Practically speaking, precedence of non-governmental agencies means that, for example, when a non-governmental agency is planning a nursery, a hospital, or a facility for disabled people, the governmental agencies will stand aside instead of establishing their own facility. About 1 million full-time staff are employed in just under 70,000 facilities run by non-governmental social welfare agencies, adding up to 2.5 percent of all persons in gainful employment in Germany. They are supported by nearly 2 million volunteers. In addition, commercial companies are tending to increase their activities in the non-govern-

mental social and health sectors.

The non-governmental social welfare agencies would not play such a major role in Germany if they had not been given priority in the provision of social services and if government had not committed itself to funding the non-governmental services through legislation. These services and facilities finance themselves by drawing on their own funds, including fees paid by the social insurance institutions or by bodies responsible for social assistance, youth welfare, etc., in return for services provided, and by government grants which are especially important for longer-term investment purposes, such as building hospitals and day-care centers. More than half of the services offered in the field of social work in western Germany are provided by the non-governmental sector.

### Problems with the Principle of Subsidiarity

Despite its appeal, the principle of subsidiarity has two main drawbacks: (1) The government might entirely withdraw from its responsibility and leave everything up to the voluntary welfare initiatives, groups, and associations in order to save money; (2) the voluntary welfare bodies might lose their individual profile/identity if they rely too heavily on government support. To avoid these pitfalls, institutionalized modes of cooperation should be established in order for voluntary welfare bodies and government authorities to negotiate the areas of action and define who is responsible for fulfillment of which tasks. Furthermore, voluntary welfare bodies must require a solid basis of their own funds in order to be able to "afford" their individual identity.

### Competition among NGOs

The organizations responsible for social services in Germany are competitors; such competition ensures the freedom of choice of disadvantaged persons. In Germany, the competition between social services has been shaped in a specific way, which is called a social tripartite system. There is a tripartite relationship among the destitute persons, the state, and the service providers. The state grants a social service to the disadvantaged person, but does not provide this service on its own. Instead, it enters into contractual relationships with the service providers, e.g., estab-

ishments run by Caritas, on service standards and cost reimbursement. And the destitute person has the right to choose for him/herself which service provider he/she will use to claim the state's promise, or in other words, which provider he/she chooses. Generally speaking, the service provider will receive cost reimbursement only once the person entitled to a service has actually chosen the provider's offer. It links the state's responsibility for providing social services with a pluralistic offer of providers and thus with the right to choose for the users.

Competition must ensure the freedom of choice and of action. NGOs desire to be independent providers, and not instruction-bound mandates of the state's social policy. Competition should enable revenue levels on par with the service and should prevent the case in which it might be possible to generate income disproportionate to the services provided—and this at the cost of social security systems.

Competition ensures quality, enables innovation, and adapts the structures of the offer and the deployment of investments and personnel to the needs of the clients.

### The Advantages of a Pluralistic Social Welfare System

Some people wonder about the advantages of such a pluralistic social welfare system. Because people are different, they have different needs. These needs are satisfied as much as possible by providing the legally guaranteed right to choose in the social sector as well. The agencies in the social and health care sectors offer their services in different ways and thus compete with each other, an effect which helps to improve the standard of support services. The non-governmental social welfare agencies also play an important role when it comes to appealing to the people, to shaping social awareness, and to motivating the population to commit themselves to voluntary social work—a social conscience cannot be established by government decree. In addition, the voluntary agencies function as pressure groups in politics and administration, both in shaping the social code as well as in asserting the specific interests of those affected. This makes them important mediators, partners, and co-designers of the social welfare

state.

### Advocacy Function of NGOs

Regarding the advocacy function of NGOs three aspects must be distinguished.

#### POLITICAL ADVOCACY FUNCTION

One of the basic functions of NGOs in the social sector is to perceive the interests of people in need and to make their interests a public, political issue. By drawing attention to social problems, pushing for political solutions, and contributing expertise, the social NGOs work to shape state social and socio-political developments. The representation of interests for the benefit of the disadvantaged is mainly directed toward legislators, governments, administrative bodies, and the public. The NGOs fight for just socio-political and economic conditions. In an attempt to overcome emergencies, they establish and support volunteer networks and self-help groups. In this regard, the NGOs see themselves as partners of politics. When NGOs fulfill their task of advocating for the disadvantaged, they also serve to build or uphold societal and social peace.

#### ADVOCACY FUNCTION IN SOCIAL SERVICES

The second dimension of advocacy is manifested through the services and facilities of the social NGOs, in which people receive help according to their individual circumstances. The whole concept of aid includes not only alleviating apparent need, but also speaking up for the disadvantaged in the facilities and services. That means that the advocacy function should also be carried out in the facilities and services of the social NGOs themselves. Their own facilities and services should be a role model for fulfilling state requirements. Discrimination of any kind must be eliminated by making services and facilities open in an intercultural sense and by granting aid to people who cannot provide reimbursement.

#### INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY FUNCTION

The third dimension of advocacy is the individual advocacy function. It can be seen whenever social services, staff members, or volunteers become

personal advocates for the disadvantaged. In general, this type of advocacy takes the shape of guaranteeing social rights of the disadvantaged in state and public institutions. Social NGOs guarantee that people in need are not completely at the mercy of public administration.

#### AN EXAMPLE: THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

Poverty, unemployment, and lack of solidarity with marginal groups are persistent in western societies. Indeed, the number of recipients of social assistance in Germany has doubled over the last ten years alone. More and more people are no longer able to support themselves by working, drawing on their savings, receiving financial support from members of the family, or receiving benefits through the wage-financed insurance systems.

What is the answer of the NGOs? In recent years, non-governmental agencies have published several poverty reports and opinions to draw attention to the situation of poor people in Germany, a rich, industrialized country. In doing so, the organizations took on the role of advocates of the poor. Due to these poverty reports, even the government—beginning in the early 1990s—took note of the fact that there is poverty in Germany.

It was the NGO Caritas, until then seen as a more traditional type of voluntary welfare agency, which discovered a kind of poverty that had not been empirically studied and proven before. The Caritas Poverty Studies showed that in the years 1993 and 1996, for every four recipients of social assistance there are three people in hidden poverty, and this rate is even higher in eastern Germany. The hidden poor are people who have the right to subsistence aid but do not receive it.

According to all political parties, the hidden poor live below the guaranteed minimum level of existence. The political lobbying for the poor has been and still is one of the main tasks of Caritas Germany for more than one hundred years.

## Conclusion

In providing social services, religious NGOs in Germany work to shape and improve society and guarantee social rights. The German Caritas Association aims to protect the dignity of individuals, to foster a life of solidarity in a pluralistic world, and to commit itself worldwide to life in freedom, justice, and peace. As a charity organization of the Catholic Church, the German Caritas Association helps shape the life of the Church and society in general. Its actions lend credibility to Church proclamation in the public domain. As one of six members of the group of Non-Statutory Social Welfare Organizations in Germany, the German Caritas Association bears responsibility for molding a socially just society in Germany and in Europe. It is committed to the preservation of basic social rights throughout the continuing development of the European Union. The German Caritas Association is an advocate and partner of the disadvantaged; promoter of self-help and participation; provider of social services; and founder of solidarity. It cooperates with the other non-statutory social welfare organizations to shape public welfare. As a member of the international Caritas network, it supports people in need around the globe. It does this through political lobbying on every level and convincing the government of the need for social services or funding for social services. The political argument is based on the experience Caritas has had with the people in need. This is always a strong argument when it comes to crucial points in debates on social reforms. Caritas strives to achieve a high quality standard in social work.

The welfare associations in Germany serve solely non-profit and charitable purposes in accordance with the section "Tax-Deductible Purposes" of the German tax law. That means the associations have to work on the basis of selflessness. They have no interest in making profit. No single individual shall profit from disproportionately high payment or from expenditures that do not align with association purposes. The two Christian welfare associations of the Catholic and the Protestant/Lutheran churches obtain funds from the church tax. The churches spend around 20 percent of their church tax income for charitable purposes—one reason why Caritas and Diakonie are able to run so many social services.

There is no danger of replacing the state because the state is not the biggest player in providing social services. Furthermore, the welfare organizations are competitors on the social market. A welfare organization will run a service only if the reimbursement is ensured.

The Church and Caritas are only two of many players in a pluralistic state. The welfare organizations of the Catholic (Caritas) and the Protestant/Lutheran Church (Diakonie) are the two biggest welfare organizations in Germany. In their relationship with the state they have the same rights as the other four official welfare organizations (The Workers Welfare Organization, the German Non-denominational Welfare Association, the Jewish organization, and the Red Cross). The six welfare organizations are combined in a state approved umbrella organization (BAGFW). The most lobbying in social policy is done by this umbrella organization. So the question is not the separation between Caritas and the state. The question is the relationship between organizations of civil society and the state. Caritas is a natural part of civil society. Another separation concerns the relationship between the Church and Caritas in the public opinion. People do not distrust Caritas (only 6 percent), but many people distrust the Catholic Church (45 percent). Now, Caritas tries to confer part of its good image to the Church.

The German welfare system is unique in Europe. For example, in the northern European states the state sector dominates in providing social services. The strict implementation of the principle of subsidiarity in the social field has a long tradition in Germany in contrast to other European countries and a bright future.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with In Quadragesimo Anno, Pope Pius XI, 1931.



# RELIGION AND STEM CELL RESEARCH: U.S. POLICY IN TRANSITION

RONALD COLE-TURNER

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## Background: Science Policy in the Context of Religion

When researchers first isolated pluripotent stem cells from donated human embryos in 1998, a debate about religion and embryo research was already raging in the United States. Earlier in the 1990s, Congress banned the use of federal funds for work directly on embryos. As a result of the breakthrough of 1998, the question arose as to whether federal funds would be available for research on cell lines derived from embryos but not on the embryos themselves. The question was essentially unresolved until August 2001, when President George W. Bush announced a policy of limited support that remains in place through 2008.

Here lies the most striking difference between the United States and Germany on embryonic stem cell research policy. In Germany, public policy controls what cell lines may be legally imported for research. In the United States, except where prohibited by individual states, nearly every aspect of work in the field is legally permitted. Attempts have been made to limit this freedom of research, but the only significant federal limit is on access to federal funds to support research, a situation that reflects both the religious and the libertarian nature of the U.S.

To a large extent, the underlying religious controversy has centered on the question of the moral and theological status of the human embryo, specifically embryos created by in vitro fertilization. Many Christians view the human embryo from conception as human life at its earliest and most vulnerable stage. They might acknowledge that intractable conceptual problems arise when theological precision is

demanding, and some may hold back from being dogmatic about the individual personhood of the newly conceived embryo. Even so, many of these Christians regard the embryonic stage of life as so clearly set on an intrinsically-guided pathway to personhood that—whatever its current ontological status—its moral status demands absolute protection.

Not all Christians in the United States agree with this position. Some Protestant denominations, particularly the historic or “mainstream” Protestants, have defended embryonic stem cell research, at least within limits.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, polling data suggest that members of denominations that officially oppose research involving human embryos may dissent from their leaders’ views. More striking, of course, is the fact that the various traditions within American Judaism have spoken together, not just defending embryonic stem cell research but declaring it to be a duty even in its more provocative forms, for instance involving the use of nuclear transfer or “therapeutic cloning.”<sup>2</sup> An Islamic perspective on stem cell research, which is strongly supportive of research, may be found in a recent statement of the Islamic Medical Association of North America.<sup>3</sup>

Of the many questions that might be asked about the U.S. religious landscape and embryo research, three are particularly important. First, why is Christianity different from the other religions, including Judaism and Islam with which it shares traditions and texts? Second, why do some Christians believe that limited research involving human embryos is morally acceptable while many others do not? Third, why do members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day



Saints (the Mormons) typically find limited research involving embryos to be acceptable?

First, Christianity is different from other faiths in its view of the embryo because it holds uniquely to the view that the divine is incarnate in a human life, that of Jesus Christ. The incarnation is the work of God the Holy Spirit, who causes Mary to become pregnant and who joins the divinity of Christ to the humanity in the womb from the beginning of its life. For many Christians, this richly symbolic belief has the effect of conferring dignity on all humanity at all stages, from the earliest moment until its final destiny. For many of these Christians, all human embryos have absolute moral worth that precludes their destruction for the benefit of another or their creation for purposes of research. Other theological reasons surely play a role in explaining the striking differences between Christianity and Judaism on these questions, but the biological significance of the incarnation is probably the most important.

Second, some but not all Christians find some forms of embryo research acceptable. This is not easy to explain, but several factors can be identified. First, supporters of research may be more symbolic and less literal than opponents in their theological understanding of the incarnation. Second, they may be more open to the sciences such as evolutionary biology and especially in this case to developmental biology, which reveals the stunning complexity of the various stages of embryological development, including the possibility of twinning and of the fusing of two embryos. Like many scientists, these Christians tend to see human individuality and personhood as arising developmentally, not as existing fully at the outset. It is interesting to note that many of the most important theologians of the ancient church (Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas) held to some version of a developmental view. What these classical theologians might believe today in light of current science is debatable. It should be noted that today's Christians who support embryo research tend to limit their support to work on excess embryos created for reproductive purposes and donated for research as an alternative to simply being destroyed. In other words, their approval of embryo research usually does not go so far as to approve of the creation of embryos expressly for research, whether

by in vitro fertilization or (someday, perhaps) by nuclear transfer.

Why do members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), who hold much in common with conservative Christians, often support limited embryo research? This question is politically significant given the leadership role of Sen. Orrin Hatch and other LDS members serving in Congress, who have effectively prevented limitations on research from being passed in recent years. In traditional Mormon theology, human life begins not just with the biological or the genetic but with the unity of soul and body in the womb of the mother. When that occurs, the resulting nascent life is fully human and must be defended, and abortion is not permitted. But up to that point, the embryo outside the womb is not fully a human person. These views are grounded in texts that are traditional and unique to the Mormon faith.

It is well known that President Bush identifies himself as a conservative or evangelical Protestant Christian and is among those who have moral and religious concerns about human embryonic stem cell research. In 2001, the President tried to balance these concerns with his desire to see research go forward. He authorized federal funding for research on embryonic stem cell lines which, among other criteria, were derived before the date of his 9 August address. It may be recalled that ardent defenders of the moral status of the embryo were outraged by the President's decision, in particular because public funds would be used in a way they believed was complicitous in the act of destroying innocent human life. Others were equally displeased because the policy went only part way toward encouraging the development of the field. Still others defended the policy as a wise compromise between competing values, the protection of life at its earliest stage, and the possible saving of lives at later stages.

### 2009 and Beyond

At the end of the Bush presidency, political changes and technological advances have set the stage for a period of rapid change in U.S. public policy. The most obvious change is likely to be a liberalization of the list of stem cell lines that are eligible for federal funds for research. When President Bush gave his 2001

speech, he said that more than sixty different stem cell lines would be eligible for funding. By 2008, this number has been reduced to twenty-one, and some of these are under a cloud of suspicion about whether they fully meet the standards of informed consent.<sup>4</sup> Congressional attempts to expand the list by removing the 2001 deadline have been met by vetoes, but it is believed that both major candidates for the presidency would accept such a change in policy or perhaps change it by executive order.

This change is generally expected, and it will remove the most obvious religious thorn in the side of the American stem cell research program. When that happens, will all the controversies about stem cell research go away and will all the religious concerns disappear? Hardly. First of all, a significant and determined minority, nearly all of them motivated by conservative Catholic or evangelical Christianity, will try to limit the scope of research. Many of the concerns they raise will be important and legitimate indicators of where future problems might lie, even if their goal is to end all research. Sound public policy will attend to these concerns.

In any case, it must be stressed clearly that expanding the list of cell lines eligible for public funding is not the only important public policy issue in this arena, nor is it the only one on which religious convictions bear heavily. At least eight other issues, all arising at the intersection of religion and stem cell research, deserve sustained public attention during the time-frame of the next presidential term.

#### 1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDUCED PLURIPOTENCY AND THE NEED FOR CONTINUED RESEARCH INVOLVING PLURIPOTENT CELLS FROM EMBRYOS

Until recently, stem cells from embryos were especially prized because of their unique pluripotency, that is, their potential to develop into any cell type of the adult body. A surprisingly rapid series of breakthroughs in 2006-07 has made it possible for researchers to create pluripotent cells, not from embryos but from skin cells. The resulting cells are called "induced pluripotent stem" cells or iPS cells. This step was heralded as solving the moral problem of embryo research. More realistically, it should be

viewed as a stunning breakthrough achieved through embryo-related research, the full benefit of which will best be realized in tandem with continuing work with embryo-derived cell lines. The iPS breakthrough opens the possibility that patient-specific stem cells (quite possibly exempt from rejection by the patient's immune system) might someday be created in at least some cases and without resort to "cloning" or nuclear transfer, although serious technical challenges must be met first. More immediately, iPS will be used to create cell tissues that model the development of specific diseases, such as Parkinson's, and may lead to important pharmaceutical breakthroughs. The challenge for public policy is to provide the proper balance of funds for work on iPS and on cells derived from embryos and to maintain public understanding and support for both.

For many years, the term "embryonic" stem cells has been used interchangeably with "pluripotent" stem cells, as if the only pluripotent cells came from embryos. The development of iPS cells has changed this, and it is best to use the term "pluripotent" to speak of the potency of the cells regardless of their source and to reserve the term "embryonic" to speak only of those cells derived from embryos, regardless of their potency.

#### 2. REVISITING INFORMED CONSENT

An article by Robert Streiffer in the May-June 2008 issue of *The Hastings Center Report* identified problems in the informed consent procedures used to obtain the donation of the embryos used to create the cell lines that are officially approved for research funding under the 2001 Bush policy. Whether any of these cell lines will be withdrawn is unclear. At the very least, a thorough review and advice to researchers and their institutions is urgently needed. In addition, a nationally-accepted standard for informed consent should be in place for the donation of embryos for research.<sup>5</sup> Finally, in light of the possibility to turning any cell into a pluripotent stem cell through iPS, various other informed consent forms may be due for revision.

#### 3. STRENGTHENING LOCAL OVERSIGHT

At present there is no nationally-standardized system

of oversight of human stem cell research. The National Academy of Sciences has filled some of the void and has advised all institutions engaged in embryonic stem cell research to create review committees, first called “Embryonic Stem Cell Research Oversight” (or ESCRO) committees.<sup>6</sup> More recently, because of iPS cells and other developments that blur the line between cells derived from embryos and other sources, these committees have become “SCRO” committees, concerned with many types of human stem cells, regardless of their source. In spite of the fact that there is no coordination of these committees, it is generally assumed that they are in place in every relevant institution, that their membership is broad and representative of the community and of ethical or religious concerns, and that their work is taken seriously. Even so, their ability to provide sound guidance to local researchers will be enhanced by some coordination and support at a national level.

#### 4. THE PLACE OF CHIMERAS IN RESEARCH

One issue facing local SCRO committees is the question of chimera research. For various reasons, researchers ask these committees to approve experiments that involve the insertion of human multipotent or pluripotent cells into nonhuman animals, such as a mouse embryo. At present, there is no other way to test how the cells that are inserted might behave in a living biological system. The result of such an insertion is called a “chimera,” in this case a mixed-species chimera, which contains some human and some nonhuman cells. So far, efforts to create chimeras have been only partially successful, but one possibility (highly remote, but impossible to exclude) is that a mouse embryo into which human pluripotent cells have been inserted might develop with human cells in its brain and in its sex cells. For this reason, the National Academy of Sciences Guidelines recommends that human-nonhuman chimeras not be allowed to breed, but this recommendation is only voluntary.

In ancient myths, chimeras were monsters to be feared, while in more recent fantasy literature (most notably, the *Harry Potter* series), chimeras are helpful because of their special powers. Interestingly, while conservative Protestant Christians sometimes warn

against chimeras, Catholic scholars are less apprehensive, arguing that a few human cells (even human neurons) will not make a mouse into a humanized rodent. Even so, given the sensitive nature of this work and the importance of maintaining public support for science, a national discussion of what has been called “the other stem cell debate” is surely in order.<sup>7</sup>

#### 5. NUCLEAR TRANSFER OR CLONING

In 1997, about a year and a half before the isolation of human embryonic stem cells, researchers in Scotland announced success in mammalian cloning by introducing the world to Dolly. Global attention focused immediately on the prospect of human reproductive cloning. So far, despite bogus claims to the contrary, human cloning has not been achieved. Experts in the field caution that even if a cloned human embryo could be produced, it should not be implanted because it almost certainly would not result in a healthy child. Nearly all religious experts have said that even if such technical problems could be overcome, human reproductive cloning should be avoided on moral grounds.

Some scientists who agree that reproductive cloning is not safe argue nonetheless for what is sometimes called “therapeutic cloning,” which would create a cloned embryo from which stem cells would be derived after four to five days. All who object to embryo research reject such a proposal, and many others are cautious about it because it might open the pathway to reproductive cloning. Interest in human non-reproductive cloning has also waned recently among scientists due to advances in iPS cells, which may provide an alternative approach to achieving the hypothetical benefits of nuclear transfer. If so, this development is beneficial to public discussion because it removes the red-flag issue of human cloning from the more general debate about stem cells.

#### 6. THE PATHWAY TO CLINICAL TRIALS

As promising as human pluripotent stem cell research might be, they will not benefit human health unless they can be brought safely and carefully through a process of clinical trials. In April 2008, the Food and

Drug Administration (FDA) convened a meeting to preview the issues that must be addressed in pre-clinical (animal) testing and in moving forward to clinical trials that involve the insertion of embryo-derived cells into patients.

The challenge faced by the FDA is both scientific and political. Partly as a result of the religious controversies surrounding the field, stem cell research has been touted as a great medical breakthrough. This may turn out to be true, but only after serious challenges are overcome. Patience and prudence must be balanced against the excessive enthusiasm of some non-scientist advocates of stem cell research. In particular, the U.S. must find ways to discourage Americans from traveling to other countries with little or no regulation in order to seek stem cell "treatments." Such "medical tourism" is already underway and poses a significant health threat. More seriously, disastrous individual results of premature stem cell "therapies" could set back the whole field and greatly compound the challenges faced by the FDA.

#### 7. THE POSSIBILITY OF STEM CELL-DERIVED GAMETES

In nonhuman species, pluripotent stem cells have been used to create gametes (eggs and sperm). This has not yet been done with human pluripotent cells, but some experts in the field believe that this step may be just a few years away.<sup>8</sup> Initially, at least, the primary use of such cells would be for research into infertility and perhaps other conditions. One step might be to use stem cell-derived gametes to create an embryo for research, but this step crosses a line that, at present, many Americans appear unwilling to cross but unlikely to ban. At some point in the future, however, gametes from pluripotent stem cells might be used to achieve a pregnancy. Such a step raises numerous scientific, cultural, and religious issues, all requiring sustained public discussion.

#### 8. STEM CELLS AS A PATHWAY TO HUMAN GERMLINE GENETIC MODIFICATION

If it becomes possible to derive gametes from human pluripotent stem cells, the pathway will be open to human germline modification, which would introduce a genetic modification into a future child in a way that

affects every cell of the body and may be passed indefinitely to future generations. Quite simply, the pluripotent cells from which gametes might be derived would first be precisely modified genetically. The derived eggs or sperm would carry the modification.

Until now, many policy experts in genetics have considered germline modification as a step too far, not just because of the health risks but because of the degree of control in might give the present generation over future generations. However, religious leaders, including Catholics and many Protestants, see germline modification as morally permissible within certain limits, such as the avoidance of enhancement.<sup>9</sup> It is not a foregone conclusion that the American public would reject germline modification, at least within limits.

### Concluding Observations

In the 2008 election, the stem cell debate is not expected to play a major role, although it may be used in local areas as a kind of "wedge" issue. It is generally expected that in early 2009, the Bush policy of August 2001 will be changed and that the list of cell lines eligible for funding will be greatly expanded. If so, researchers in all fifty states will be on a somewhat more even playing field in terms of access to research funds.

The role of religion, which up to now has been largely to prevent or limit research funds in the field, will likely change. Ardent religious critics may be expected to challenge the field at every opportunity, but their power to affect policy is expected to diminish. Moderate religious voices might take up the broader set of public issues regarding stem cells that have, until now, been pushed into the background. If so, then religion in its full diversity of expressions in American life might find a way to play a positive role, not by controlling policy but by enriching the discussion of critical issues facing not just Americans but the whole world.

## NOTES

1 These denominations include the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Episcopal Church, among others. For the statements of these and other religious bodies, see Brent Waters and Ronald Cole-Turner, *God and the Embryo* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003).

2 See Waters and Cole-Turner.

3 Islamic Medical Association of North America, *Stem Cell Research: The IMANA Perspective* (Lombard, Illinois: Islamic Medical Association of North America, no date).

4 Robert Streiffer, "Informed Consent and Federal Funding for Stem Cell Research," *The Hastings Center Report* 38, no. 3 (2008): 40-47.

5 For a discussion of international standards and oversight, please see [www.isscr.org](http://www.isscr.org). See also: Daley et al, "ETHICS: The ISSCR Guidelines for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research," *Science* 2 February 2007: 603-604.

6 Committee on Guidelines for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research, Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, *Guidelines for Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research* (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2005).

7 J. Shreeve, "The Other Stem Cell Debate," *The New York Times Magazine*, 10 April 2005, 42-47.

8 The Hinxtongroup: An International Consortium on Stem Cells, Ethics & Law, "Consensus Statement: Science, Ethics and Policy Challenges of Pluripotent Stem Cell-Derived Gametes," 11 April 2008, <[http://www.hinxtongroup.org/Consensus\\_HG08\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.hinxtongroup.org/Consensus_HG08_FINAL.pdf)>.

9 See Ronald Cole-Turner, ed., *Design and Destiny: Jewish and Christian Perspectives on Human Germline Modification* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008).

# THE 2008 STEM CELL RESEARCH DEBATE IN GERMANY

BURKHARD JANDRIG

The debate on changes of the German Stem Cell Act in 2008 showed that research with human stem cells is clearly in the public awareness. However, the debate was not merely a simple cut-off date discussion; it also served as an example for moral problems that come with modern biomedicine. The controversial ethical discourse on stem cell research concerns predominantly human stem cells and especially human embryonic stem cells. The first derivation of human embryonic stem cells<sup>1</sup> stirred a great deal of debates in ethics, law, and public policy. The isolation of embryonic stem cells prompted more controversy in recent times than any other biological discovery.

## Stem Cells

Stem cells, in general, have unique qualities. They are capable of self-renewal, ensuring a lifetime supply of ancestors for repair or replenishment, and they may differentiate into intermediate and downstream types of cells specific to the tissue or organ. Adult stem cells are relatively unspecialized, can renew themselves, and can become specialized to yield mainly the cell types of the tissue from which they originate, but in some cases even to yield other cell types.<sup>2</sup> Embryonic stem cells come from the inner cell mass of an embryo and have the potential to develop into all or nearly all of the tissues in the body (pluripotency). If they are cultured, embryonic stem cells can grow and divide nearly indefinitely.

Embryonic stem cells are derived from excess embryos created in the course of infertility treatment with the consent of the donors and without financial inducement. Batches of cells can be separated from cell lines and distributed to researchers. The currently

existing human embryonic stem cell lines were established mainly in the United States, Australia, India, Israel, and Sweden.

Research involving pluripotent human embryonic stem cells is a rapidly growing field of science. Many scientists believe that embryonic stem cell research may eventually lead to therapies that could be used to sprout cardiac muscle cells in a heart damaged by myocardial infarction, to replace destroyed dopamine-secreting neurons in brains of Parkinson patients, or to transplant insulin-producing pancreatic beta cells in diabetic patients.<sup>3</sup> Still, human embryonic stem cell research has led to an intense debate about the possible medical and economic benefits as well as the ethical and societal problems of using human embryos in biomedical research. These debates have affected various countries, most notably the U.S. and Germany, and have led to different legal regulations and limitations of stem cell research.

## The Legal Situation

A German scientist in this area is confronted with two key laws: the 1990 embryonic protection law (*Embryonenschutzgesetz*, ESchG)<sup>4</sup> and the 2002 German stem cell act (*Stammzellgesetz*, StZG).<sup>5</sup> The embryonic protection law does not allow the production of a human embryo for purposes other than reproduction. However, it does not explicitly deal with the use of human embryonic stem cells and it does not explicitly prohibit research on imported human embryonic cells.

The Stem Cell Act of 2002 prohibits the destruction of embryos while still allowing for some research. This



act tries to balance the state's obligation to respect and to protect human dignity, the right to life, and freedom of research by forbidding the import and the use of embryonic stem cells. At the same time, it also defines conditions and exceptions under which the import and the use of embryonic stem cells are permitted.<sup>6</sup> Most importantly, these conditions included the provision that embryonic stem cells must be derived before 1 January 2002 in the country of origin, in accordance with relevant national legislation there, and be kept in culture or subsequently stored using cryopreservation methods. This was partly in accordance with the situation in the U.S. where President George W. Bush stated: "I have concluded that we should allow federal funds to be used for research on these existing stem cell lines where the life and death decision has already been made. This allows us to explore the promise and potential of stem cell research without crossing a fundamental moral line by providing taxpayer funding that would sanction or encourage further destruction of human embryos that have at least the potential for life."<sup>7</sup>

Whereas in the U.S. only public funding was affected, there was a general ban in Germany for research in the public and private sectors. The American decision set the cut-off date to 9 August 2001; the cut-off date in Germany was then set to 1 January 2002. Another main point in the Stem Cell Act of 2002 is the penalties section. Section 13 stated: "Any person who imports or uses embryonic stem cells without having obtained approval pursuant to section 1 of § 6 shall be punished with imprisonment of up to three years or shall be fined."<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, German researchers were prevented to a large extent from working on international projects.

Furthermore, Germany created an institutional framework for conducting stem cell research: "Any importation and any utilization of embryonic stem cells in Germany shall be subject to approval by the competent agency."<sup>9</sup> The Federal Ministry for Health named the Robert-Koch Institute Berlin as the competent agency that has to request the opinion of the Central Ethics Commission on Stem Cell Research.

By the end of September 2008, thirty-four projects received permission from the Robert-Koch Institute to work with human embryonic cell lines in Germany

(Figure 1).<sup>10</sup> The projects are scattered throughout Germany with small clusters in Berlin (five projects), Bonn, and Cologne (four projects each, as of 30 September 2008). Considering the main scientific institutions, a diversity is seen again (Figure 2). It is clear that the majority of the projects (91 percent) are publicly funded and that it is mainly basic research (as of 30 September 2008).

This relatively small number of projects (thirty-four within six years) might be due to restrictions in funding and partly due to the quality of the stem cell lines. It became clear relatively quickly that the stem cell lines established before 1 January 2002 were of questionable quality and limited genetic diversity.<sup>11</sup> Some of the cells were contaminated with animal cell products or viruses or had not been extracted or cultivated under standardized conditions. Researchers' calls for more and better stem cell lines grew stronger, eventually being supported by the German Science Foundation.<sup>12</sup> Because of the legal framework conditions, German researchers were denied access to new cell lines and prevented from working on an international level. Interestingly, while it was illegal for German researchers to work on stem cell lines generated after 1 January 2002, German tax money simultaneously financed this kind of research in the EU's research program. During months of public debate, religious groups, in particular the Catholic Church, lobbied heavily for the abolition of embryonic stem cell research. The statement of Karl Cardinal Lehmann, who opposes research with human embryo destruction in general, was particularly remarkable.<sup>13</sup>

While research organizations such as the German Research Foundation wanted to free the import of embryonic stem cells, the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD)—and especially EKD President Bishop Wolfgang Huber—favored a "onetime" extension of the 2002 cut-off date.<sup>14</sup>

What about the German people? In 2003/2004 a so-called Citizen's Conference was held at the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in Berlin-Buch and formulated a *Citizens Opinion* that was delivered in March 2004 to the president of the German Bundestag. The participants, randomly selected, urged lawmakers to mainly support research with adult stem cells. In addition, half of the partici-

pants supported a balance between freedom of research and protection of the embryo as defined in the Embryo Protection Law and particularly in the Stem Cell Act. The other half favored a careful liberalization in favor of embryonic stem cell research.<sup>15</sup>

In January 2008 Infratest polled one thousand citizens on “How Germans think about stem cell research?”<sup>16</sup> In comparison to 2007, a growing number of the participants said that only adult stem cells or reprogrammed cells should be used for research but not embryonic stem cells (Figure 3, column A). In addition, fewer people than in 2007 thought that all cells—especially also embryonic stem cells—should be used for research (Figure 3, column B). Looking in more detail at the age distribution of the respondents who rejected the use of embryonic stem cells (Figure 4), there is a clear percentage increase, especially between the ages of 30 and 40. However, there is a slight percentage decrease in the group that probably would benefit most from advances in stem cell therapy (age 50-59). Nevertheless, it is astonishing that a growing number of people—especially young people—are rejecting embryonic stem cell research.

On 11 April 2008 stem cell research became an issue in the Bundestag again when different petitions were due for approval. In the end, 346 deputies voted to shift the cut-off date for stem cells created in and imported from foreign countries from 1 January 2002 to 1 May 2007, while 228 voted against it. In addition to the change of the cut-off date, the scope of the law is now limited unambiguously to the national territory.<sup>17</sup> However, it is worth mentioning that destruction of human embryos due to research still remains illegal within Germany, whereas in the U.S. it is mostly unregulated in the private sector and at the state level. Nevertheless, the number of authorized projects by the Robert-Koch Institute (Figure 1) may increase now because of the extension of the cut-off date.

### Scientific Future of Stem Cell Research in Germany

The bioethics and science communication group at the Max Delbrück Center of Molecular Medicine, Berlin, together with the Research Center Jülich, worked on two main projects with stem cells: the citizens conference and a Delphi study.<sup>18</sup> The Delphi

exercise was conducted among leading German stem cell experts on the future of embryonic and adult stem cell research in Germany to assess its scientific, therapeutic, and social prospects. A questionnaire with fifty-seven hypotheses on the future of stem cell research was administered twice to the same group of experts. The results revealed large differences between adult and embryonic stem cell research in regard to the desirability of certain developments, as well as their predicted timeframes of realization. In general, the desirability of all developments in adult stem cell research was on average about 25 percent higher than the comparable values for embryonic stem cell research.<sup>19</sup> In addition, 40 percent of the experts doubted that major risks with embryonic cells, such as tumor development and false differentiation of transplanted cells, could ever be ruled out. More than 90 percent of the experts assumed that the public debate about the ethical aspects of human embryonic stem cell research will lead to an amplified funding of research with adult stem cells in Germany. In the medium-term, two-thirds of the participants expected that the majority of the German population will approve human embryonic stem cell research as a consequence of its medical successes. A “brain-drain” due to the restrictions imposed on embryonic stem cell research was seen as an enormous risk for Germany.

### Further Ethical Questions

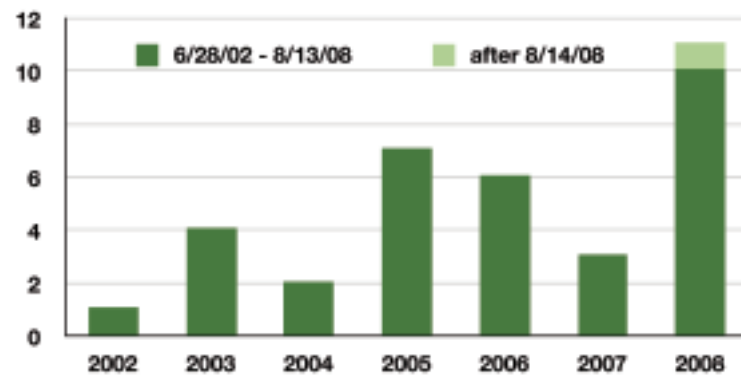
Among the many ethical issues raised by human embryonic stem cell research the most important problem is that it includes the destruction of human embryos. While pluripotent cell lines could be established by reprogramming somatic cells,<sup>20</sup> properties of such induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells are routinely compared with those of embryonic stem cells—and native human embryo development is still the gold standard. In addition, although the generation of iPS cells is undoubtedly an important development for the field of regenerative medicine and avoids many morally questionable decisions, the hidden question concerning the moral state of the human embryo is not even touched, though will come up again concerning other questions in biomedicine. The ethical problem as such is only bypassed—but far from being solved.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the possibility to create an embryo or embryonic stem cells out of other



adult cells (such as skin cells) provokes the genuine ethical question of why these adult cells should not have the same human dignity as an embryo. Altogether, the ongoing ethical discussions around the artificial creation of human embryos concern the question of whether they are genuine embryos even if they have been created in the test tube.<sup>22</sup> Instead of trying to avoid complex scientific and ethical discussions, it should be brought to mind that unless the important ethical and social questions on top of the agenda are not successfully tackled, biomedicine and especially stem cell research will forever be concerned with its own justification.

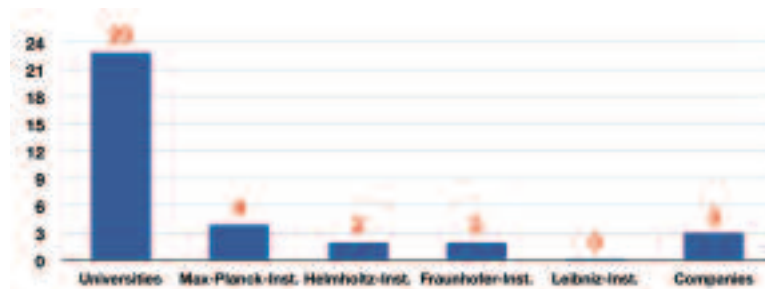
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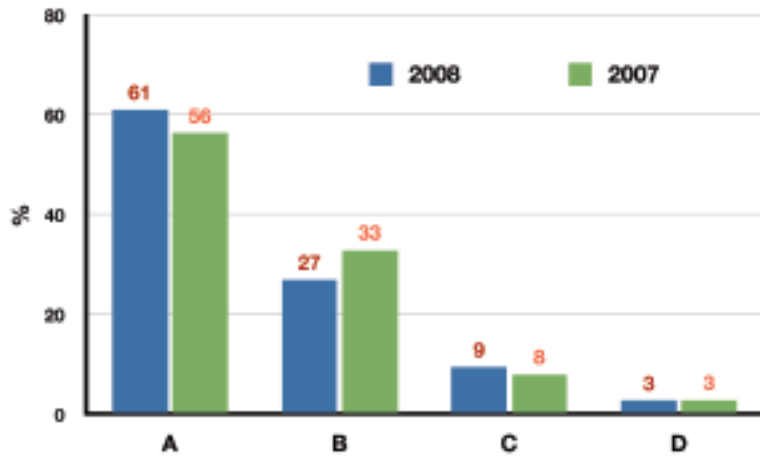
**Figure 1:** Number of authorized projects with human embryonic stem cells in Germany (at cut-off date 8/30/08)

Source: Register of the Robert-Koch Institute (2008)



**Figure 2:** Number of authorized projects with human embryonic stem cells concerning the main scientific institutions in Germany (at cut-off date 8/30/08)

Source: Register of the Robert-Koch Institute (2008)



**Figure 3:** Opinion poll conducted by Infratest January 2008 in comparison to 2007 : “What would you recommend?”

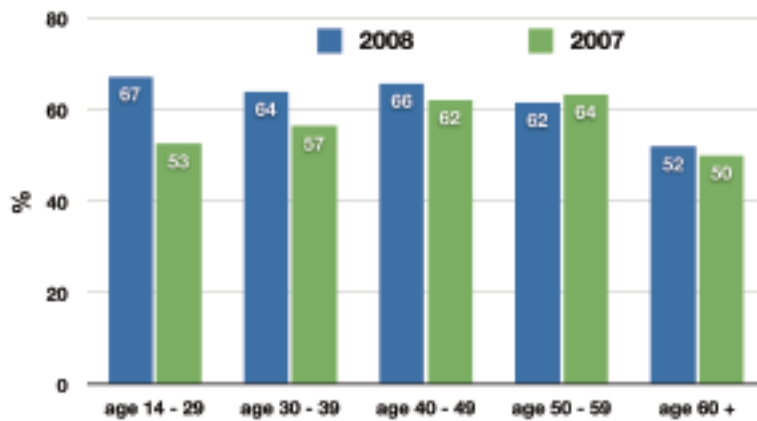
A: “Only adult stem cells or reprogrammed cells should be used for research but not embryonic stem cells”

B: “All cells and especially also embryonic stem cells should be used for research”

C: “don’t know”

D: no answer

Source: Bundesverband Lebensrecht, “Wie denken die Deutschen über die Stammzellforschung?” (2008)



**Figure 4:** Opinion poll conducted by Infratest January 2008 in comparison to 2007: Age distribution concerning answer A of figure 3:

“Only adult stem cells or reprogrammed cells should be used for research but not embryonic stem cells”

Source: Bundesverband Lebensrecht, “Wie denken die Deutschen über die Stammzellforschung?” (2008)

# THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL IN THE SECULAR STATE: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

HOSFFMAN OSPINO

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## Introduction

In the early 1990s, as hundreds of Catholic schools closed their doors around the United States, a number of Jesuit priests conceived the eccentric idea of opening a college preparatory school to serve the booming Hispanic population in southwest Chicago, a sector of the city with an overpopulated public high school, elevated dropout rates, and high levels of poverty. They had no money and no buildings. Against all odds, in 1996 the Cristo Rey Jesuit High School opened its doors with eighty students relying on a model where they would pay for their own education by working in local businesses. The school not only made good quality education affordable and available to poor students, but also garnered the support of businesses, community organizations, families, and Church institutions. The school became a transformative force in the area educating Christians in the Catholic Jesuit tradition while forming citizens with what is necessary to succeed in a country where educational achievement is vital for social mobility. The spirit of the Cristo Rey Jesuit High School would soon become a movement. Other religious communities and organizations became interested in the model. Twelve years later, nineteen schools are part of the Cristo Rey Network, nearly all of them serving in impoverished urban areas, educating more than four thousand students. Ninety-nine percent of graduates have been accepted to college; more than 900 businesses support the model; millions of dollars have been donated to endow the initiative.<sup>1</sup>

What makes the Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in southwest Chicago a unique experience? Does the Catholic identity of the school matter? Why do

hundreds of non-religious organizations support the work of the schools in the Cristo Rey Network? What does this relationship reflect? Could state institutions support the work of these schools?

The understanding and justification for Catholic schools in the United States has substantially evolved over the last three centuries. From centers of moral and religious formation in colonial times, to symbols of Catholic identity, to a vast system of parochial schools established to educate Catholic children among currents of anti-Catholicism in the nineteenth century, to institutions facilitating the organized entry of Catholics into mainstream culture by means of good quality education in the twentieth century (i.e., "Americanization"), and most recently to active participants in the definition of what it means to serve the common good.<sup>2</sup> Two notes shall help our reflection. First, all conversations about the Catholic school must attentively consider the historical period in which this institution was defined. This will save us from anachronistic assumptions that often stall the conversation around the questions to be explored in this essay. Second, all arguments in this essay apply to Catholic schools at all levels, from grammar schools to universities. Nonetheless, the examples and data cited are borrowed primarily from recent research on Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

This essay explores the contributions of the Catholic school in the U.S. society and envisions a horizon for collaboration between this institution and the secular state. While public discourse in the U.S. repeatedly stresses the secular dimension of its public structures, we cannot forget that the state, understood

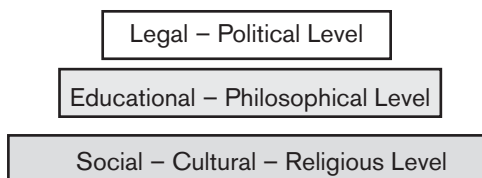
primarily as a political body constituted by the people and for the people, serves the larger social body which continuously affirms religion as an essential element to its identity. As educators, philosophers of education, and policymakers we cannot live forever in a world of dualisms asking, metaphorically, “what has Rome to do with Washington?”<sup>3</sup> when the question ought to be framed in the following terms: “what does Rome (i.e., the Catholic school) have to do with Washington (i.e., the state) to educate all with dignity, equality, and excellence in society, especially the underserved and the most vulnerable?”

Church, state, public, and private: these four words in the same thought often cause uproar in public debates about education in our society. In some circles, the four words practically exclude one another. We often hear about the radical separation of church and state, public school vs. private school, secular vs. religious, secular state vs. confessional school, etc. In other circles, church and state are envisioned as intimately united (e.g., theocratic approaches to social organization) where the state unrestrictedly supports religious institutions and the public systemically subsumes the private. These extreme perspectives are frequently buttressed by an either/or philosophy that is characteristic of many contemporary societies influenced by a modernist heritage. Can we think of some middle ground that at the same time provides a horizon for collaboration? We could speak of church and state in partnership for common educational goals, state support for educational initiatives sponsored by religious institutions, religious schools educating for democracy and the common good inspired by their religious convictions. This middle ground presupposes a both/and philosophy that affirms differences, yet requires that our human apprehension of reality is more complex than we can imagine—and so is the debate about the relationship between the Catholic school and the secular state.

Contemporary debates in the United States about the relationship between the religious school and the secular state are commonly framed in legalistic and political terms. Some arguments seek to safeguard the non-establishment clause in the Constitution or prevent any use of public funding for education in religious schools. Others attempt to prohibit the intro-

duction of curriculum that contemplates questions about life and morals from an explicitly religious perspective. However, affirming that an issue is legal or illegal, conservative or progressive, constitutional or unconstitutional does not necessarily solve central educational problems or respond to the complexity of the matter in question. The discussion cannot be framed exclusively in legal terms or partisan politics, though unfortunately this is much of what has occurred in recent decades. One clear consequence of such polarization is the lack of collaboration or a common agenda to respond to some of the most urgent needs related to the education of our children in the larger society: increasing racial and ethnic segregation in schools, appalling school dropout rates, inability of the public school system to adequately provide at least basic education to millions of children, decreasing contributions from the private sector to funding educational initiatives, social disparities that lead to continuous violence, expanded use of state and federal funds to support the education of students in schools not run by the governmental structures, etc.

Without dismissing the importance of the multiplicity of legal–political conversations that affect the development and mission of the Catholic school in the secular state,<sup>4</sup> I propose that such dialogue needs to be grounded essentially in a critical analysis of the dynamics and expectations emerging from other foundational levels of society and build upon them. In other words, we must look at the bigger picture. The largest and most basic level is that of social-cultural-religious relationships. On this level, women and men from all backgrounds interact with one another in multiple relationships that rarely separate life from faith, public action from private convictions, and cultural identity from social participation. In fact, life in the everyday enjoys an amazing interconnectedness that is often ignored or obscured in certain public conversations. A second level is that of educational-philosophical reflection. Here some members from the larger community (e.g., educators, philosophers, academics, religious leaders) identify the dynamics that make life possible—or impossible—in their contexts, articulate those dynamics with language that facilitate an organized conversation, and propose directions as to how to proceed when one particular issue is debated.



Discussions about the relationship between the secular state and the Catholic school, as well as with any other school whose identity is rooted in an explicitly religious tradition, need to maintain a creative balance among the various levels where those discussions take place. Moreover, they must acknowledge the complex dynamics existing at each level and the impact of such complexity in the lives of all involved in this relationship. Legal-political insights and decisions must reflect a serious engagement of the educational-philosophical analyses that may justify or contest any particular law or policy. At the same time, these educational-philosophical discussions would not make clear sense unless they are grounded in the real experience<sup>5</sup> of the large social body where questions about life in society, cultural identity, and religious convictions truly matter and are lived out.

The role that religion plays in the daily experience of most people in the U.S. cannot be downplayed: 83.9 percent of U.S. citizens expressly identify themselves with one religious tradition, mostly Christianity.<sup>6</sup> More often than not, religious convictions shape moral decisions, career discernment, family dynamics, political affiliations, public opinion, and educational choices. It is well known that a strong majority of people living in the U.S. are comfortable pointing to their faith tradition as a reference point to define their moral actions in public and in private. Such a standpoint is much stronger when people attend religious services on a regular basis. The legal, constitutional separation of church and state does not necessarily translate into separation of faith and life. The first relationship must be preserved; the second one must be respected.

Western societies like the United States inherited from modernity an ethical model that crowned the individual as the maximum point of reference for

human action. Within this understanding, all human action, private and public, primarily serves the interests and needs of the individual. Such an emphasis has altered the balance that must exist in the relationship between the individual and the community, and ultimately between the private and the public. The individual person emerges as source and end of social action relegating the community and other social institutions as secondary. Thus, what emerged was what philosopher Charles Taylor calls the “punctual self,” a disengaged individual who thrives in the realm of the private yet still holds immense power to make decisions that affect public life.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, a culture of separation constituted by punctual selves has yielded a fragmented society where self-interest and self-autonomy have failed to guarantee social cohesion.<sup>8</sup> A Catholic philosophy of education challenges the radical separation between the individual and the community, the private and the public. The common good does not result from the hard work of isolated individuals whose private lives have little or nothing to do with the public, but depends on the strength of communal relationships that build on a holistic understanding of human experience.<sup>9</sup>

If we accept the challenge to envision a creative balance across the three levels—socio-cultural-religious / educational-philosophical / legal-political—in the definition of the role of the Catholic school in a secular context, those of us who live and educate in the United States must face the following two questions: (1) what is particular about Catholic education among other educational approaches? (2) What does the contemporary Catholic school offer to U.S. society?

### The Catholic Educational Tradition

Catholicism constitutes an important force in the United States.<sup>10</sup> Catholic institutions such as universities, schools, hospitals, and other organizations rank among the most influential in their own fields.<sup>11</sup> One characteristic common to Catholics institutions and to people rooted in this religious tradition is the conviction to bring the best insights from their faith experience into dialogue with life in the wider society. It is true that not all understandings of what it means to be a Catholic in the U.S. are homogeneous,<sup>12</sup> yet in principle Catholics agree that their faith has an intrinsically

public dimension.<sup>13</sup> While the public implications of living the Gospel have been a concern for all Christians throughout the centuries, in the forty years after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) Catholic consciousness about the public dimension of faith has developed more rapidly and intentionally.<sup>14</sup>

The Catholic school is paradigmatic among the institutions rooted in this religious tradition in its conviction that faith has a public dimension which is not necessarily antagonistic yet has the potential to enhance life in the larger society. The religious dimension is intrinsic to the identity of the Catholic school. Thus, the idea of Catholic education emerges deliberately sustained by philosophical and theological principles rooted in the tradition of Catholicism while in dialogue with other sources of human experience. Such principles allow the Catholic school to contribute with a unique perspective to the common good and to the education of citizens. These principles become manifestly expressed in five interrelated areas: curriculum, school milieu, anthropological convictions, ethical commitments, and religious education.<sup>15</sup>

#### CURRICULUM

Catholic education espouses a model of critical correlation between the religious convictions sustaining the Catholic school and the various fields of knowledge that all students must learn. Because education is more than mere instruction,<sup>16</sup> curriculum development in the Catholic school is a comprehensive task that aims at establishing a constructive dialogue between the values that make the school Catholic and what students need to know to be good citizens. The concept of critical correlation suggests an open interaction among all parties crafting the curriculum guided by mutually respectful critique and sincere validation. This conviction demands that Catholic educators are faithful to the criteria proper to each field of knowledge as well as to the Catholic intellectual and religious foundations on which they stand.

#### CATHOLIC MILIEU

Contemporary research demonstrates that Catholic

schools function as intentional communities where nearly every dimension is deliberately designed to meet the educational goals of the institution and ultimately the goals of society in the formation of responsible citizens. This communal character is especially expressed in the strengthening of relationships among the various groups (e.g., students, teachers, administrators, parents, faith communities, government, community organizations, etc.) that interact to make the Catholic school a place conducive to integral learning, active citizenship, and faithful living of one's religious convictions. Because of the preferential option to serve the most needed populations in society, particularly in the context of the inner city, Catholic schools increasingly mirror the diversity of society and prepare students to enter a social world where respecting and embracing the other is essential to maintain the stability of the social body.<sup>17</sup>

#### ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS

Catholic tradition in its best formulations offers an integral understanding of the human person that seeks to maintain the balance between the intellectual and the spiritual, the social and the personal, the scientific and the intuitive. Often times this anthropology is at odds with Western, modernistic tendencies of separating one dimension from the other. Among the various ways in which this integral anthropology is actualized in the Catholic school we can mention three: (1) the use of a common curriculum for all students that reflects the conviction that all students can learn and that their experiences as human beings, including those of religious character, are important in the learning process;<sup>18</sup> (2) the affirmation of a positive, complementary relationship between faith and reason;<sup>19</sup> and (3) the understanding that all persons are integral members of communal bodies (e.g., society, church, family) where support and responsibility are complementarily given and received.

#### ETHICAL COMMITMENTS

Catholicism has developed a strong ethical tradition commonly articulated in what is known as Catholic Social Doctrine. During the last century this ethical tradition has been profoundly enriched through the constructive dialogue among traditional Christian



sources (e.g., Scriptures, early Christian writings), Catholic philosophy and theology, and the human and social sciences. At the heart of Catholic Social Teaching rest four principles that also permeate all processes of Catholic education: the dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity.<sup>20</sup>

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Catholic identity is intimately rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition that affirms the conviction that God and humanity are engaged in a life-giving relationship that shapes every dimension of our existence in history. According to Thomas Groome, “Catholic Christianity has reflected a deep commitment to education, from the beginning seeing it as an expression of God’s “work of salvation.”<sup>21</sup> Such conviction is reflected in the teaching of the foundations of the Christian tradition as part of the curriculum in the Catholic school, the celebration of rituals and practices that foster a Christian spirituality, and the living of one’s faith in the everyday as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Catholic school stands within the larger whole of the Catholic tradition, draws from its philosophical and theological traditions, contributes with its centuries-old educational experience, and affirms its commitment to the public—even when the public realm claims to be secular. By being rooted in a particular religious tradition and fully belonging to society, Catholic schools simultaneously encourage Christian discipleship and educate good Christians of society.<sup>22</sup>

### The Contemporary Catholic School: Contributions

Current literature about Catholic schools in the United States can be organized in two major groups. The first focuses largely on developing a better understanding of Catholic education and the nature of the Catholic school from rather philosophical and theological perspectives. The second group, whose literary production is increasingly abundant, focuses on quantitative research that reveals ever-new findings about multiple topics related to Catholic education by

studying life in particular schools. It would be impossible to do justice to both bodies of literature attempting to summarize what they offer in just a few paragraphs.<sup>23</sup> However, both sources coincide on some important contributions that Catholic schools offer to the U.S. society. I focus on three of these contributions that affirm the Christian character of these institutions and reflect the impact of religious education as part of the curriculum. Undoubtedly, all three contributions point to the common good in society.

### PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

The situation of Catholic schools in the United States in the last four decades is complex: while hundreds of Catholic schools have closed,<sup>24</sup> many of which were located in urban areas,<sup>25</sup> hundreds more continue to work in inner-city contexts serving the most marginalized populations in the United States. Without direct state funding and often without financial support from the institutional church, these schools have made a unique, yet risky choice: to serve the poor. Research demonstrates that their presence in poor neighborhoods truly makes a difference. Joseph O’Keefe and other researchers have discovered that students in inner-city Catholic schools achieve higher academic results than their peers in the public schools system, are nearly 50 percent less likely to drop out of school, and perform better in state-mandated standardized tests.<sup>26</sup> Most students in Catholic schools graduate and go to college.<sup>27</sup> Catholic schools facilitate that more minority parents become involved in the education of their children. These findings are significantly important for Hispanic and African-American students, approximately 27 percent of the total student enrollment in Catholic schools, two of the populations most affected by issues of class and racial and social division in the United States.

### OPENNESS TO DIVERSITY

The current student population in Catholic schools in the United States is more diverse than in previous decades. While much remains to be accomplished in this regard, more and more Catholic schools mirror the diverse nature of U.S. society and educate

students to live in contexts deeply marked by difference. The Catholic school surely emerges as a constructive alternative that educates for openness and the respect for the other in the midst of the increasing segregation that affects many neighborhoods and cities in the U.S. By encouraging a diverse population among students, faculty, and administrators, Catholic schools provide firm foundations to bridge differences in society, alleviate painful social tensions, and exercise responsible citizenship. It is important to observe that the diverse environment fostered in many contemporary Catholic schools in the United States has the potential of creating opportunities for dialogue at various levels. Religiously, ecumenical and interreligious dialogues flourish; culturally, intercultural relations prepare students to interact with different cultural traditions in society; politically, students holding different perspectives are able to look beyond their differences and work toward common goals. All this is more plausible when the school's curriculum and internal policies are permeated by convictions such as the dignity of the human person, the common good, and the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity.

#### EDUCATION FOR RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP

Renewed attention to the public dimensions of Catholic faith has led to a dynamic understanding of the contemporary Catholic school as a center for citizenship rooted in the principles of Christianity. Curriculum development, policymaking and pedagogies to educate students in Catholic schools continuously seek to maintain the balance between being faithful to the religious identity of the institution and its service to the larger society. Because both dimensions are essential to understanding the character of the Catholic school, we must affirm the importance of an integral analysis that takes into account the three levels proposed at the beginning of this essay. On the one hand, the student in the Catholic school does not forfeit his/her citizenship and responsibilities to the state. On the other hand, all citizens who are educated in Catholic schools—as well as those in any other school—remain rooted in communities and relationships that are intrinsically social, cultural, and religious. This dynamic is actualized when Catholic schools contribute to the renewal of neighborhoods, increase the levels of participation of parents and

neighbors in the education of the students, reduce the conditions of violence by promoting better understanding inside and outside the school, and empower students to move forward with their lives to be good citizens as well as responsible Christians.

It could be argued that none of these contributions are the direct result of any form of religious education or religious approach to the curriculum. I could agree with the observation to a certain point. The preferential option for the poor, the respectful embrace of diversity, and the development of responsible citizenship are not exclusively religious categories or outcomes per se. They should be the natural results of all processes of education that aim at building a just society and seek the common good of all. Catholic education intentionally seeks to foster those results inspired in the religious principles of Christianity in dialogue with human experience and the various sciences. Catholic education seeks to be as comprehensive as possible, affirming all levels of human experience in society without falling into radical separations between faith and life, the private and the public. As long as there are social inequalities in society, prejudice of any kind, and signs of irresponsible citizenship, there is place for Catholic education and any other form of religious-sponsored education that seeks to build a better society. Why should we not envision ways for the secular state to partner with the Catholic school?

#### Conclusion

The Catholic school has a lot to offer to U.S. society. The philosophical and theological underpinnings sustaining Catholic education continuously build the community of faith where the identity of the Catholic school is rooted and provide the grounds for a public role in the daily dynamics of our social reality. The educational approach of the Catholic school can be defined as holistic or integral as far as it builds on the various levels of human experience and seeks to make an impact both in the Church and society. By maintaining a creative balance between the public and the private, as well as between faith and life, the Catholic school effectively educates disciples and citizens. It would be unreasonable to demand citizens to give up their democratic responsibilities to live out their faith convictions or to ask believers to suspend their faith

when acting in public. Though there are instances when one dimension will be stressed more than the other, exceptions not necessarily must become the norm.

The Catholic school has made a commitment to working for the common good of all in society through quality education and with especial care for the marginalized and the underserved in light of the Christian tradition. However, the Catholic school cannot do this alone and neither can other institutions working on their own. There are many instances in which the Catholic school and the secular state can join efforts on projects that benefit the larger society. Any conversation about such a potential partnership must integrate the insights and concerns emerging from the three levels introduced in the first part of this essay: socio-cultural-religious / educational-philosophical / legal-political. Projects such as the Cristo Rey Network have proven that the Catholic school can work together with the private sector to transform the lives of thousands of students, families, and their neighborhoods. Much more could be accomplished if the state and the Catholic school worked together, thus demonstrating that church and state, faith and life should not be realities that stand on opposite sides.

## NOTES

1 For a description of the process how the Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Chicago and the Cristo Rey Network developed see G. R. Kearney, *The Cristo Rey Story: More than a Dream. How One School's Vision Is Changing the World* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2008), <<http://www.cristoreynetwork.org/>> (10 October 2008).

2 A brief historical overview about the history of the tradition of Catholic schools in the United States is offered by Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie E. Lee, Peter B. Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 15-54.

3 The original expression comes from early Christianity author Tertullian who asked "what has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Tertullian, "The Prescription of Heretics," in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., ed. Henry Bettenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 7.

4 One of these conversations centers upon the issue of vouchers. See for instance the collection of essays in Alan Wolfe, ed., *School Choice: The Moral Debate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). Also, D. McDonald, ed., *Catholic Schools and School Choice: Partners for Justice* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 1999). Other contemporary political debates concerning the mission of the Catholic school are described by Gerald M. Cattaro and Bruce S. Cooper, "Developments in Catholic Schools in the U.S.A.: Politics, Policy, and Prophecy," in *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*, eds. Gerald Grace and Joseph O'Keefe. Vol. 1 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 61-83.

5 Real experience here refers to the attentive analysis of the experience of people and groups in society in their everyday life. The term can be differentiated from what may be termed the constructed experience of intellectuals, elites, or bodies of power that often seek to impose their own apprehensions of experience responding to particular interests. This is not to assume that real experience is "more objective" than constructed experience. Nonetheless, through continuous reflection and engaged dialogue with the human and social sciences we should be able to acquire a better idea about the complex dynamics that define the character of a particular society and thus come closer to name real experience in a specific context.

6 The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, <<http://religions.pewforum.org/affiliations>> (10 October 2008).

7 Cf. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 159-176.

8 See David Hollenbach, "The Common Good, Pluralism, and Catholic Education," in *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, ed., Terence H. McLaughlin, Joseph O'Keefe, and Bernadette O'Keefe (Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press, 1996), 93. On the fragmentation of U.S. society see the work of Robert Bellah et al., eds., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 1st ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

9 Cf. Hollenbach, "The Common Good, Pluralism, and Catholic Education," 94.

10 Approximately 24 percent of the U.S. population self-identifies as Catholic.

11 In the United States there are 236 Catholic colleges and universities, 6,266 Catholic elementary schools, 1,352 Catholic high schools, 557 Catholic hospitals, 417 Catholic health care centers, and more than 1,735 local Catholic Charities agencies and institutions. Cf. <<http://www.usccb.org/comm/statisti.shtml>> (10 October 2008).

12 See Mary Jo Weaver and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Being Right: Conservative Catholics in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); Mary Jo Weaver, ed., *What's Left?: Liberal American Catholics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

13 The following works offer various understandings of the public dimensions of Catholicism in the U.S. society: Kristin E. Heyer, *Prophetic & Public: The Social Witness of U.S. Catholicism* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006); Thomas Patrick Melady, ed., *Public Catholicism: The Challenge of Living the Faith in a Secular American Culture* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996); David O'Brien, *Public Catholicism* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1989); Richard John Neuhaus,

*The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984).

14 Of special attention are four documents that emerged from the Council setting Catholicism in a renewed direction in its relationship with the larger society: *Gaudium et Spes*, on the Church in the modern world; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, on ecumenism; *Nostra Aetate*, on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions; and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, on the apostolate of the laity. All these documents can be found in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees and Declarations* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996), 163.

15 Thomas Groome identifies eight characteristics that make Catholic education unique: a positive anthropology, a conviction about the sacramentality of life, emphasis on relationship and community, commitment to history and tradition, appreciation of a wisdom rationality, spirituality, commitment to justice and the social values of God's reign, and catholicity itself. Cf. Thomas H. Groome, *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent* (Allen, TX: T. More, 1998), 60. My analysis of the Catholic educational tradition builds on Groome's own insights.

16 Cf. Anthony S. Bryk, et al., *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, 322.

17 Cf. *Ibid.*, 316. In the last decades the student population in Catholic schools has become increasingly diverse. By the year 2000, 24.7 percent of the student population in these schools belonged to minority groups (more than twice three decades earlier) and 13 percent was non-Catholic. See Richard McGrath, "Students in Catholic Schools," in *Catholic Schools Still Make a Difference: Ten Years of Research, 1991-2000*, eds., Thomas C. Hunt, Ellis A. Joseph, and Ronald J. Nuzzi, 2nd edition (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 2004), 84.

18 Cf. Joseph A. Ellis, "Faith Leadership," in *Catholic Schools Still Make a Difference: Ten Years of Research, 1991-2000*, eds., Thomas C. Hunt, Ellis A. Joseph, and Ronald J. Nuzzi, 2nd edition (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 2004), 6.

19 For a recent official analysis of this relationship see John Paul II's encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*, <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_15101998\\_fides-et-ratio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_15101998_fides-et-ratio_en.html)> (10 October 2008).

20 Catholic Church, *Pontifical Council For Justice And Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, #160*, <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html)> (15 October 2008).

21 Thomas H. Groome, *Educating for Life*, 46.

22 While I agree that the Catholic school has a responsibility to educate about the fundamental elements and values of the Catholic tradition in the best possible way (e.g., creeds, dogmas, practices), this responsibility must be exercised in the context of service to the larger society. The Catholic school builds the church and society; it educates Christians and citizens. Calls to emphasize one dimension over the other limit the potential of Catholic education in the secular state. See for instance John Haldane, "Catholic Education and Catholic Identity," in *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, ed., Terence H. McLaughlin, Joseph O'Keefe, and Bernadette O'Keefe (Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press, 1996), 126-135.

23 Two works attempt to summarize contemporary research on the Catholic school in the last thirty-five years: John J. Convey, *Catholic Schools Make a Difference: Twenty-Five Years of Research* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 1992) and Thomas C. Hunt, Ellis A. Joseph, and Ronald J. Nuzzi, eds., *Catholic Schools Still Make a Difference: Ten Years of Research, 1991-2000*, 2nd edition (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 2004).

24 In 1965 there were about 13,300 Catholic schools around the country. Forty years later the number has declined nearly 43 percent, even though the Catholic population has more than doubled.

25 More than 44 percent of Catholic schools in the United States are located in inner-city areas. See Joseph O'Keefe, "No margin, No Mission: Challenges for Catholic Urban Schools in the USA," in

*International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*, eds. Gerald Grace and Joseph O'Keefe. Vol. 1 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 23.

26 In 2000 33 percent of Catholic schools were located in urban areas, 13 percent in the inner city, 33 percent in suburban settings, and 21 percent in rural areas. Cf. Frank X. Savage, "Catholic School Demography: Changes from 1990-2000," in Thomas C. Hunt, Ellis A. Joseph, and Ronald J. Nuzzi, eds., *Catholic Schools Still Make a Difference: Ten Years of Research, 1991-2000*, 2nd edition (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 2004), 172. Savage builds on the research done by D. McDonald, *United States Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools 2000-2001: The Annual Statistical Report on Schools, Enrollment, and Staffing* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 2001).

27 In 1994 90 percent of twelve grade students in Catholic schools applied to college compared to 75 percent of twelve grade students in private schools and 50 percent of twelve grade students in public schools. Cf. Elizabeth A. Meegan, James B. Carroll, and Maria J. Ciriello, "Outcomes," in Thomas C. Hunt, Ellis A. Joseph, and Ronald J. Nuzzi, eds., *Catholic Schools Still Make a Difference: Ten Years of Research, 1991-2000*, 2nd edition (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 2004), 53.

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN GERMANY

SANDRA KRUMP

The main focus of this essay is the question of why we should have, allow, or even promote religion classes in public schools generally. Of course, there are different ways in which these religion classes are established in the different *Länder* (states) in Germany. In Bavaria, for example, there are denominational religion classes in each grade of each type of school. This is quite a different system from the new and—in my opinion—very problematic regulation in Berlin, where everyone has to attend moral education and religion classes can be chosen only as an additional elective subject.

## Legal Situation

The German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) states quite clearly how to realize religious freedom. In a very prominent position in Article 4<sup>1</sup> it says that religious freedom and the freedom to practice one's religion are guaranteed to everyone. Article 7<sup>2</sup> says that religion classes are compulsory at all public schools—religion classes are guaranteed by the state, and the religious bodies are responsible for the curriculum. However, no one can be forced to take part in these classes, and when one decides not to take part in the religion classes one must instead attend substitute classes that deal with ethical and philosophical questions; these classes are not the responsibility of a religious body but rather that of the state.

One can see here that there is quite a difference between the way religious freedom is guaranteed in the German Basic Law and in the constitutions of some other European countries, especially France, where the separation between church and state is extremely strict. This strict separation has led recently

to a renewed discussion of the French way of *laïcité*. The speech by Pope Benedict XVI during the welcome ceremony at the beginning of the apostolic journey to France in September 2008 was telling with regard to the relationship of state and church or religious bodies. On that occasion, Pope Benedict said: "At this moment in history when cultures continue to cross paths more frequently, I am firmly convinced that a new reflection on the true meaning and importance of *laïcité* is now necessary. In fact, it is fundamental, on the one hand, to insist on the distinction between the political realm and that of religion in order to preserve both the religious freedom of citizens and the responsibility of the State towards them; and on the other hand, to become more aware of the irreplaceable role of religion for the formation of consciences and the contribution which it can bring to—among other things—the creation of a basic ethical consensus in society."<sup>3</sup>

The Pope's statement gives us a clear indication of what the contribution of religion classes to society-building could be and wherein the interest of the state in having religion classes in public schools could lie.

## RELIGION CLASSES IN GERMANY AND THE SPECIAL SITUATION IN BAVARIA

The Bavarian Constitution repeats the regulations of the German Basic Law concerning religious freedom and religion classes. However, because the decisions on questions of education fall within the competence of the *Länder* in Germany, Article 131 of the Bavarian Constitution defines additional central educational goals.<sup>4</sup> These include: respect for God; respect for religious convictions; and respect for the dignity of



every human being.

These first three of some twelve central educational goals refer very closely to the education of the heart and of the character. They are followed by goals like sense of responsibility for nature and the environment; love for Bavaria and for the German people; sensitivity to the reconciliation of nations; open-mindedness for the good, the true, and the beautiful.

There is a crucial link between the first group of these goals and the second. After respect for God, respect for religious convictions, and the dignity of every human being, elements of responsibility are named. Here, one can see a progression: from certain convictions, where character formation is central in education, to active doing, where acting in the spirit of respect and responsibility is essential. This progression indicates that both state and society should be deeply interested in religion classes and in religious education in public schools.

### Pedagogical Issues

In Germany the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)<sup>5</sup> study have led to a discussion concerning the German school system in many aspects. The discussion and the study itself contain a lot of problematic aspects. Yet, for the purposes of this essay, it is interesting to focus on the basic theory of education which is defined by the developers of the PISA study as four ways to approach the world and to gain literacy:<sup>6</sup> cognitive, moral-evaluative, aesthetical-expressive, and religious-constitutive literacy.

The different subjects in school are assigned to these four categories as ways to become literate: Cognitive literacy is mainly gained in mathematics and the sciences whereas aesthetical literacy is formed in literature, music, and the arts. For the topic of religious education it is significant that the other two categories—the moral-evaluative and the religious-constitutive—are included as an equivalent approach to the world, as an equivalent part of education in school. This means that without the presence of religion (and philosophy) in the educational program, a crucial, existential approach to the world, a decisive part of human existence, would be missing.

Given that religion is a constitutive element of education, in what way does religious education, in particular, contribute to the goals and purposes that are important for the development of a child and that are of interest for the state and society? One could suggest the following answers:

■ Every child asks “the big questions,” which are mainly religious questions: What is good and bad? How can one achieve happiness? Why do I live? Why do harm and sorrow exist? Does God exist? One must answer these questions; this part of reality experience cannot be excluded from education.

■ Cultural heritage cannot be understood without knowledge of religion. And religion is not only a power that used to have influence on society and culture in the past—it is still shaping arts, culture, politics, the economy, and science today.

■ Today’s society is a pluralistic and open society with different religious convictions. Discussion, tolerance, and understanding are necessary—and they are only possible if one has a basic knowledge of other religious convictions and if one has his or her own conviction and can defend that conviction.

■ As we have seen, the German and the Bavarian constitutions guarantee the freedom of religion very prominently. But this means that young people must be given the ability to use this freedom. Therefore, they have to learn about their religion; they have to become able to discuss religious questions and to come to their own judgment about them.

■ Education is, in all respects, a process that does not work without a relationship between the individuals involved. Teachers do not only pass on information, they are, as people, an important part of the educational process itself. For this reason, denominational religion classes are central, and it is very important that the teacher is a believer. Students can ask him or her questions on religious issues in a very different way—and they will get answers of a different quality than a regular teacher’s answers, responses that are framed by reason and by the heart. In this way, the teacher can be a role model for living one’s faith.

This process of religious education takes part in the

context of public schools and thereby prevents indoctrination. It is important to stress that there is a difference between catechism in the parish and religious education in religion classes at school: It is the passing on of contents of faith versus the reasoning about these contents. Therefore, it is necessary to keep certain quality standards when establishing religion classes:

- Every teacher has to have an academic qualification.
- The curriculum has to satisfy scientific standards.
- The religious body appreciates the fact that religious education in public schools also means reasoning about the contents of the faith.
- The monitoring of religion classes is shared by the state and the religious body.
- The religious body is able to take over responsibility for the contents of the curriculum and to be accountable to the state for the contents, so as not to offend against the idea of man in the Basic Law and against basic rights and liberties.

Both education without religion and religious knowledge just as the introduction to a certain faith, or as the ability to take an active part in practicing religion, would be only a very limited kind of education.

However, when talking about education in general, one cannot deny that the state and society have their own goals, as the Pope himself pointed that out in his speech mentioned above. He talked about the “formation of consciences” and the contribution to “the creation of a basic ethical consensus in society,”<sup>7</sup> which brings us to the topic of religious education and society-building.

### Religious Education and Society-Building

First, children have a right to see the whole picture, to get to know every aspect of human existence—and this includes religious education. Because of special aspects of German society it is absolutely necessary that religion and religious education take place in schools: German society has a strong tendency not

to acknowledge one’s religious convictions in public, in fact not to talk about religious issues at all. Religion has become a very private thing. For example, a growing number of parents do not want to talk about their faith and religion with their children any more, to read the Bible to them, or to pray together—but they want the children to attend denominational religion classes and to be educated in religion. This is a strange way of educating. With regard to the needs of society, then, religious education becomes an even more important function of public education, and the existence of religion classes in public schools becomes more and more important. That it is part of the responsibility of the society to give young people the possibility to ask religious questions, to get answers to them, to discuss ethical questions, was also pointed out by the Pope in his speech during the welcome ceremony in France: “My greatest concern is for young people. Some of them are struggling to find the right direction, or are suffering from a loss of connection with their families. Still others are experiencing the limits of religious communitarianism. Sometimes on the margins and often left to themselves, they are vulnerable and must come to terms on their own with a reality that often overwhelms them. It is necessary to offer them a sound educational environment and to encourage them to respect and assist others if they are to develop serenely towards the age of responsibility. The Church can offer her own specific contribution in this area.”<sup>8</sup>

Second, religion classes in public schools offer the unique opportunity to discuss religious questions—not only to be introduced into the practice of one’s religion, but to think about one’s belief from an inside point of view within the context of public education. This is a very precious constellation for all of the actors involved:

- For religion itself, because there is the necessity to think about differences between the values and convictions of religion and the state.
- For the state, because ethical questions, problems, and weaknesses regarding the way the state or society deals with these questions are discussed from a religious and from a moral point of view. It is important to see that this questioning of the state, of society, does not mean taking a fundamental opposi-



tion because of religious indoctrination. The focus is on discussion.<sup>9</sup>

■ For the children and young people, because religion is on the one hand faith, conviction, and practice, but on the other hand it is absolutely necessary to look at one's convictions, to look at one's faith from the point of view that reason takes. It is the medieval *fides quaerens intellectum* that constitutes the necessity of religion classes in public education—for the benefit of a more and more pluralistic society.

Religion classes in public schools offer a unique opportunity to respond to the challenges of the future within a pluralist society: the need to respect different ways of living, of practicing one's faith and, at the same time, the need for a basic ethical consensus in society.

## NOTES

1 Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (GG) Art. 4: (1) Die Freiheit des Glaubens, des Gewissens und die Freiheit des religiösen und weltanschaulichen Bekenntnisses sind unverletzlich.

(2) Die ungestörte Religionsausübung wird gewährleistet.

(3) Niemand darf gegen sein Gewissen zum Kriegsdienst mit der Waffe gezwungen werden. Das Nähere regelt ein Bundesgesetz.

2 GG Art. 7: (1) Das gesamte Schulwesen steht unter der Aufsicht des Staates.

(2) Die Erziehungsberechtigten haben das Recht, über die Teilnahme des Kindes am Religionsunterricht zu bestimmen.

(3) Der Religionsunterricht ist in den öffentlichen Schulen mit Ausnahme der bekenntnisfreien Schulen ordentliches Lehrfach. Unbeschadet des staatlichen Aufsichtsrechtes wird der Religionsunterricht in Übereinstimmung mit den Grundsätzen der Religionsgemeinschaften erteilt. Kein Lehrer darf gegen seinen Willen verpflichtet werden, Religionsunterricht zu erteilen.

3 Welcome Ceremony and Meeting with Authorities of State; *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI*, 12 September 2008, <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2008/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20080912\\_parigi-elysee\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080912_parigi-elysee_en.html)>.

4 Verfassung des Freistaates Bayern, Artikel 131: (1) Die Schulen sollen nicht nur Wissen und Können vermitteln, sondern auch Herz und Charakter bilden. (2) Oberste Bildungsziele sind Ehrfurcht vor Gott, Achtung vor religiöser Überzeugung und vor der Würde des Menschen, Selbstbeherrschung, Verantwortungsgefühl und Verantwortungsfreudigkeit, Hilfsbereitschaft, Aufgeschlossenheit für alles Wahre, Gute und Schöne und Verantwortungsbewusstsein für Natur und Umwelt. (3) Die Schüler sind im Geiste der Demokratie, in der Liebe zur bayerischen Heimat und zum deutschen Volk und im Sinne der Völkerversöhnung zu erziehen. (4) Die Mädchen und Buben sind außerdem in der Säuglingspflege, Kindererziehung und Hauswirtschaft besonders zu unterweisen.

5 PISA is an international study that tests the knowledge and competence of fifteen year-olds in central subjects and compares the results of the different countries—also referring to the different school systems, social structures of societies, main goals of educational politics etc.

6 PISA 2001, Opladen 2001: 21.

7 Cf. Footnote 3.

8 Cf. Footnote 3.

9 Referring to the new discussion in France about the relationship between church or religious bodies and state, a definition of "laïcité positive" could be the following one: Separation of state and church means that church and state exist in different spheres: the political and the religious sphere—just as Christ said: "Render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mk 12:17). But this does not mean that the church or the religious bodies do not have to have the opportunity to be present in the public, to contribute to society. On the contrary: "laïcité positive" means that it is the business of the state to provide the church with the opportunity to be present in the public—for example by establishing religion classes in public schools.

# RELIGION IN SCHOOL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN EUROPE

PETER SCHREINER

*“Conversation doesn’t have to lead to consensus about anything, especially not values; it is enough that it helps people get used to one another.”<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

In the United States, religious education (RE) does not exist as a subject in public school; religious education does exist in nearly all European countries.<sup>2</sup> Two exceptions, France and Slovenia, are based on a strict separation of state and religion that has also shaped the education system. Likewise, in Albania there is no RE; the heritage of a “successful” communist period (Albania) has given religion a negative image in society and no place in the public arena, including schooling.

This essay deals with the situation of RE in Europe and the different models, developments, support, and critique by different stakeholders. It takes the situation in the U.S., first, as a mirror and related context and, second, as part of the audience. It is aware of but does not deal explicitly with initiatives in the U.S. that discuss issues of religion in schools like the American Academy of Religion with its “Religion in Schools Task Force” or other initiatives,<sup>3</sup> although these are interesting developments.

Operating with a comparative approach would be too ambitious for this text but at least a comparative orientation works as a leading motif to encourage further activities in the direction of comparative dialogue and encounter as it is encouraged by the manifold initiatives of AICGS. As it is stated increasingly in many (academic) discourses, a national perspective is no

longer sufficient because globalization and its advantages—as well as disadvantages—have to be dealt with beyond a national horizon, even if this does not dissolve a national perspective. This approach should become more relevant for education and also for special areas like values and religious education than it is now. A remarkable example of a comparative approach has been followed by the American scholar Richard Osmer and the German scholar Friedrich Schweitzer, two theologians, who brought together and discussed a Protestant perspective on religious education in the U.S. and in Germany. They use the framework of modernization, postmodernism, and globalization as important common features for both contexts and compare how central figures in RE in the U.S. and in Germany respond to these challenges.<sup>4</sup> In their project, they discuss a critical perspective of a static separation of state and religion and question the task of education in an increasingly multicultural and multi-religious context that has brought up the issue of public education and religion anew. We can learn from this project that RE is an important but not isolated part of a wider debate about pedagogy and religion, state and religion, modernization, and education and should be seen in this broader context.

Another aspect is the discussion about civil religion in the U.S. and in Europe, about the dynamics of religion, civil society, and citizens. Rolf Schieder characterized the United States as “a nation with the soul of a church,” whereas he states that “when Europeans think of religion, they immediately associate it with a church.”<sup>5</sup>

It is also helpful to take into account Charles Taylor’s profound analysis about the “Secular Age” where he

differentiates between three main understandings of secularization: “One understanding of secularity then is of public spaces. These have been allegedly emptied of God, or of any reference to ultimate reality. [...] In this second meaning, secularity consists of falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church. [...] The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.”<sup>6</sup>

And concerning the situation in Western societies he states: “The salient feature of Western societies is not so much a decline of religious faith and practice, though there has been lots of that, more so in some societies than in others, but rather a mutual fragilization of different religious positions, as well as of the outlooks both of belief and unbelief.”<sup>7</sup>

This conclusion is in line with data from scholars like Grace Davie (“believing without belonging”) and Daniel Hervieu-Léger (“belonging without believing”) as well as European and international values studies that give proof to the fact that Europe is not the a-religious region that it is often seen as.<sup>8</sup>

These are some characteristics of the background to religious education in Europe that will be introduced now.

### Religious Education as a Multi-Layered Subject

We have already mentioned that RE in schools exists in nearly all states of Europe. Taking into account the complexity of Europe both as a whole and also within many countries, it is no wonder that RE in Europe can be characterized as a multi-layered subject. The religious landscape differs in each of the states according to: majority religions, like Catholicism (mainly southern Europe, Poland, Slovenia, France, Lithuania, and Ireland), Orthodoxy (Greece, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Russia, Georgia, Serbia), and Protestantism (Scandinavian countries, Latvia), or mixed situations (e.g., Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Switzerland), the relation of religion and

society, ranging from friendly perception to hostile views; the school system, including public and private schools; and the historical state-religion relationship, ranging from state churches to a strict separation of state and religion like in France. Analyzing the existing approach to RE in a country should take into account these layers and their specific composition.

Although the contexts are different, it seems that teaching and learning in the classroom follow more or less common aims. At a European conference, a group of RE teachers from eighteen different European countries worked out a common agreement about main aims that any approach to RE should serve:

- To encourage students to be sensitive to religion and the religious dimension of life;
- To provide orientation regarding the variety of existing religious opportunities (including ethically-oriented guidelines for life that are based on religious and non-religious convictions); and
- To provide knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and experiences.

This agreement is an important starting point when we deal with the situation of RE in Europe. It documents a tendency of convergence in practice, although theoretical educational approaches may be different.

### DIFFERENT MODELS

When we try to systematize the complex situation of RE in Europe we can follow and elaborate further a useful distinction among types of religious education first made by Michael Grimmitt and John Hull. They distinguish between *learning* religion, *learning about* religion, and *learning from* religion.<sup>9</sup>

*Learning religion* describes the situation where a single religious tradition is taught from the inside, meaning that the teacher belongs to the respective faith community and the content of the teaching is exclusively controlled by the community. This type can be found in some countries, but in the discussion on RE, *learning religion* is seen mainly as the task of reli-

gious communities and not of public schools.

*Learning about religion:* religions are taught from the outside as knowledge about religions and belief systems following a descriptive and historical approach. There are courses in some American high schools, for example, on the Bible as literature. The essential point is that the Bible is not taught as a religious or sacred book, but as literature. Sometimes this kind of religious education is called “education in comparative religion,” or “religious studies.” It is seen in its important role in the prevention of religious intolerance and promoted by international organizations.<sup>10</sup>

*Learning from religion:* The focus of this type is on students’ reality and how they value religion(s) for themselves. “The question at stake is to what extent and in what ways, children and young people can gain educational benefit from the study of religion.”<sup>11</sup> This includes also exploring one’s own beliefs and questions of meaning and developing a sense of identity and belonging.

This differentiation of types is helpful for an overview, but it also has limitations when one looks to the purpose of education. In a traditional perspective, the transmission of given knowledge has been dominant and fits very well with learning religion and learning about religion. However, it overestimates the value of information and knowledge and neglects that learning needs also intelligence, understanding, and wisdom to lead to the possibility of a creative transformation for the learner. The more dialogue-oriented perspective on education as transformation trusts in the active capacity of each individual to search for meaning and focuses more on common questions for discussion rather than on ready-made answers from the teacher. In this vein, there is a fourth type of RE that can be described as learning through religion. This type aims to relate religious facts and knowledge with the context, the questions, and the interests of the students in a productive, interconnected way of dialogical teaching and learning.

#### Different Stakeholders—Common Aims?

An orientation about RE in Europe is also possible when we take into account who is responsible for RE

in schools. Again three main models can be identified:

■ RE is organized by the religious communities (denominational/catechistical, emphasis on learning religion, mainly a voluntary subject) e.g., in Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

■ RE is organized in collaboration between state and religious communities (denominational/non-denominational, obligatory or voluntary subject, emphasis on learning from and about religion) e.g., in England and Wales, Germany, Italy, parts of Switzerland.

■ RE is organized exclusively by the state (non-denominational, obligatory subject, emphasis on learning about religion) e.g., in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, some parts of Switzerland.

A fourth model can be added when we look to France with its strict separation of state and religion (*laïcité*) and the fact that no RE exists in the public schools (except in Alsace and Lorraine due to historical reasons). The agreement between the state and religious bodies includes that school is off for one day to provide space for the religious communities to organize RE; it is their own responsibility.<sup>12</sup>

Labels like “denominational”, “non-denominational”, or “religious studies” approaches to religious education fail to distinguish adequately among different approaches. For example, what is perceived as denominational can be understood differently in different cultures. In the English context, denominational is near to “indoctrination” whereas in Germany the term indicates a sponsorship of religious communities for RE and collaboration between state and religious communities. More significantly, labels do not necessarily indicate underlying hermeneutical approaches that show how students are made aware of their own religious tradition as well as of other religious traditions.<sup>13</sup>

#### What are the Problems and Challenges Encountered?

■ All approaches are challenged by the radically changed situations in European societies. Issues such as secularization, individualism, pluralism, and

globalization are markers of changes that influence the field of religious education. The concepts of culture and religion can no longer be seen as static or essentialist but are more process-oriented and shaped by individualization, migration, and mobility.<sup>14</sup> It is a difficult task for societies to organize living together in diversity while constructively using the tension between existing common and divergent values.

■ RE seems to be too narrow and limited when organized by a religious community for its own agenda. For example, after the political change in the 1990s, the Catholic church in Poland—still very influential in society—introduced RE in public schools, similar to the catechistical teaching in parishes. Students soon expressed their dissatisfaction with this “duplication.” It is more or less common understanding in religious pedagogy that it is not the task of the public school to encourage pupils to adopt a religion but that this should be organized by the religious communities in their own settings.

■ For some, RE seems too “light” when organized by the state alone, which has to be impartial and neutral concerning religious convictions. Recently, a debate in Norway questioned whether the subject becomes boring when teachers are no longer committed to motivate the students for active participation. Likewise, in Sweden where a pure scholarly religious knowledge approach was introduced years ago, the challenge of how students can be committed to deal with religions remains an important issue.

■ Another problem comes up when RE as a subject in school is overloaded by expectations. Society expects that RE acts as a problem-solver of conflicts in society such as discrimination, intolerance, or xenophobia. Education is a key for dealing with many of these types of problems. But as long as other parts of society do not play a supportive role and adapt social and internal policy, the effect of public education cannot be more than minimal. Parents also expect that school will provide a religious education which they cannot or will not provide at home; religious communities expect that the way religious traditions are presented in RE are authentic and coherent with their self-understanding. In some countries dialogue-oriented structures have been implemented to guar-

antee a constructive commitment of the religious communities even when the approach is non-denominational. (A good example for that is the work of the SACREs in England—the Standing Advisory Councils of Religious Education—where the different stakeholders of RE work together.)

■ Another important challenge is that RE should not be seen as an isolated area that is not connected with other subjects, the curriculum, and the ethos of the school. Religion in school means more than a subject as part of the syllabus. In Norway the general curriculum reform has shaped RE and in the Netherlands, where two-thirds of all schools are religiously-oriented, the issues about school identity have been closely linked to the development of RE. The debate on RE becomes artificial and isolated when it is not linked with school developments and curriculum ethos.

RE should be seen as a pedagogical subject with different reference disciplines including theology, religious studies, social science, pedagogy, education philosophy. The combination and value given to the specific disciplines is directly connected to the character of the overall approach.<sup>15</sup>

### What Do Public Opinion Polls Show about the Perception of Religious Education in Europe?

European Values Studies try to find out what Europeans carry in their mind concerning values, ideas, dreams, and conviction. It has become a valuable instrument for research and also policy advice.<sup>16</sup> Religion is an issue in the survey, but not specifically the perception of religious education in schools. A reason for that may be that RE is seen as a national concern; however, a “Europeanization of education” will increasingly affect the issue of RE. The situation is a bit different when we look on the national level.

Anton A. Bucher, an Austrian scholar, published an overview about what empirical basis we have concerning RE.<sup>17</sup> The empirical part is important because it can cool down some emotional arguments either by those who are in favor of an existing model or by those who definitely argue for a new approach. There are projects that ask students how they feel

about RE and studies that deal with the teaching and learning in RE. A survey by Zinnecker & Silbereisen<sup>18</sup> shows that RE is the most popular subject for 14 percent of students. The most popular is “sports.” Bucher himself organized a multi-variate data analysis in Austria where RE was ranked, in terms of popularity, fourth out of ten school subjects. Reasons for the popularity depend very much on what happens in the classroom. More qualitative studies are now being organized to find out what goes on in the classroom and to determine the outcomes of RE.<sup>19</sup>

Englert/Schweitzer<sup>20</sup> present a survey about research on religious learning in primary school. This is a wider scope than just RE. The context is that RE is seen as an integrated part of the educational mission/program of primary school. It is not contested that orientation in religion and world views and religious education are part of general education, but it is contested how this is organized in a time shaped by an increasing religious pluralism. There is a trend to dialogical-oriented models. Normally separated learning groups come together for periods of common learning and teaching (denominational-cooperative teaching).

RE is guaranteed in the German Basic Law Art 7:3 as a standard school subject that is organized by the state and “according to the tenets of the religious communities.” It is organized as a joint responsibility (*res mixta*) of the state and the religious communities. The main focus of RE in primary school is on the religious needs of students; the transmission of knowledge serves to deal with students’ questions, their day to day problems, and their current issues of interest. This is significant for a change in perspectives concerning methods. Two commonly used methods are “symbol didactic” and “religious elementarization.” Parents’ perspectives of these two methods have been evaluated through a representative study of EMNID.<sup>21</sup> The data show a high acceptance of RE by parents. A non-representative study in Baden-Württemberg indicates that 75 percent of parents see RE as “pretty important” or “very important.”<sup>22</sup>

When we try to identify some tendencies from the data it can be summarized as follows:

■ Differentiation is needed, there is not THE RE but

different approaches.

- RE is not the most unpopular school subject.
- The image of RE greatly depends on the method and atmosphere in the classroom.
- Religious socialization influences the perspective on RE.
- The majority of students like to learn about other religions.
- RE teachers are motivated to find innovative methods of teaching and learning.

## The Future

Will there ever be a centralized approach toward religious education in Europe? When we take the complex situation of RE in each European country into account, a centralized approach seems neither possible nor desirable. What we have is a discussion about common standards for all RE approaches that includes educational quality, teacher training, dealing with plurality, taking account of the right of the child to religion and religious education, as well as professional teaching. A valuable contribution that stimulates the debate are the following standards:

- Religion can and must be taught in line with the criteria of general education (educational quality);
- RE is of relevance to the public and must be taught in line with this relevance (contribution to general education);
- RE must include some aspects of interdenominational and inter-religious learning that are in line with the increasingly pluralist situation in many countries (dialogical quality, contribution to peace and tolerance);
- RE must be based on the child’s right to religion and religious education (child-centered approach based on children’s rights); and
- RE teachers must be professionals in the sense that they have reached a level of self-understanding



and professional reflection based on academic work which allows for a critical appropriation of their religious backgrounds and biographies (professional teaching).<sup>23</sup>

These proposals of standards are nurtured by comparative research and take into account the existing differences. They should be discussed further in an ongoing dialogue that can also benefit from developments and discussions in the United States.

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