

**DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG**

EDUCATIONAL SECULARIZATION WITHIN EUROPE AND BEYOND

**THE POLITICAL PROJECTS OF MODERNIZING
RELIGION THROUGH EDUCATION REFORM**

Edited by Mette Buchardt



**STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF
EDUCATION AND CULTURE**



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Educational Secularization within Europe and Beyond

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Edited by
Meike Sophia Baader, Elke Kleinau, and Karin Priem

Volume 6

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Contributors

Mette Buchardt

Professor and Head of Centre for Education Policy Research, Aalborg University, Aalborg and Copenhagen, Denmark. Buchardt's research comprises the interdisciplinary field of welfare- and social-state history, church and theology history and the history of education with an emphasis on the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. She has held visiting professorships and scholarships at the History Departments at University of Jyväskylä and Tampere University, Finland, Stockholm University and Umeå University, Sweden, and at Nordeuropa-Institut, Humboldt University, Germany, Dept. of Curriculum & Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison, US, and Section for Church History, University of Oslo, Norway. She specializes in the relation between education- and social reform in the European empires and states and the modern welfare- and nation states that emerged from them. In particular, she has headed research projects and published extensively on immigrant reception-, integration-, housing- and education politics in the development of the welfare state, and on modernization and secularization reforms.

Zuzana Danišková

Assistant Professor at Faculty of Education, Trnava University, Slovakia. She received her PhD in education at the Faculty of Education, Comenius University, Bratislava, in 2005, where she has also served as a teacher trainer. Her research focuses on social studies education, which combines historical, geographical, economical, ethical and civic perspectives.

Jeroen J.H. Dekker

Emeritus Professor of History and Theory of Education at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. He has been visiting Professor at European University Institute (Florence), Columbia University (New York) and University of Sassari (Italy) and visiting Fellow at Max Planck Institute for Human Development (Berlin). A former President and Honorary Life Member of ISCHE and BENG00, he is Honorary Editor of *Paedagogica Historica*, President of *Stichting Paedagogica Historica*, visiting Member of the Editorial Board of *History of Education*, Member of the Advisory Board of *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* and of the scientific committee of *Annali di storia dell'Educazione*. Finally, he is one of the editors of the six-volume *A Cultural History of Education in the Age of Enlightenment* (Bloomsbury, 2020). From 2016–2019, he was Member of the Dutch Committee for the Study on Institutional Child Abuse. He specializes in the history of education, childhood, parenting and children at risk from sixteenth to twentieth century.

Catriona Delaney

Postdoctoral Fellow with the School of Education, University College Dublin, Ireland. PhD in history from the University of Limerick. Delaney is Secretary of the History of Women Religious of Britain and Ireland and a member of the UCD ConventCollections team (<https://www.ucd.ie/conventcollections/>). Her research field is the history of modern Ireland, where she specializes in the history of education, the history of women religious and oral history.

Emma Hellström

PhD candidate in Sociology of Education, Uppsala University, Sweden, and part of the graduate school: *Schooling in Perspective: A Graduate School in History of Education*. Also, she is a coordinator of the interdisciplinary network: *Historical Studies of National Christianities*. Her dissertation focuses on

the relation between Christian education, secularization and democratization in Swedish primary schools during the twentieth century, and how this is connected to a wider development of a democratic welfare state. Hellström combines the fields of history of education and church history in order to grasp the complexity that surrounds issues regarding religion, Christianity, secularization and democratization.

Ondrej Kaščák

Professor of Education at the Faculty of Education, Trnava University, Slovakia, and the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. His research focuses on issues of ideological and power relations in the educational and school environment. Methodologically, he focuses primarily on qualitative approaches to researching education and school, discursive analysis and school ethnography.

Oleg Kyselov

PhD in Religious Studies, Senior Researcher at the H.S. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and Instructor at the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Alabama, US. Kyselov's field of specialization consists of theoretical and methodological problems of religious studies, sociology of religion, history of Soviet atheism and inter-church relations in Ukraine.

Kevser Muratović

Research Assistant and PhD candidate at the Department of Educational Science, University of Vienna, Austria. Muratović studied educational sciences, Islamic sciences and public law at the University of Tübingen, Germany. Her dissertation project focuses on the intersection of modern schooling, nation-building and class formation in the Ottoman Empire during the long nineteenth century. Moreover, her field of research comprises topics like traveling ideas, policy borrowing and post-colonial historiography.

Eszter Neumann

Sociologist of education working at the HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary. She obtained her PhD at the School of Education, Communication and Society at King's College London, UK. Neumann is the link-convenor of the sociologies of education network of the European Education Research Association. Her current postdoctoral research explores the social justice effects of the expansion of church-run schools, church-state relations and the education policy-making of the churches in Hungary after the right-wing populist government took power in 2010.

Simonetta Polenghi

Full Professor of History of Education in the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan, Italy, where she was the Head of the Department of Education (2010–2022). She was President of the Italian Society of Education (SIPED) (2017–20) and vice president (2013–17). Member of the Executive Committee of ISCHE (2016–21) and convenor of ISCHE 43 (2022, Milan), keynote speaker in various international conferences and director of three book series in the field of History of Education. In 2011, she was awarded with the Österreichisches Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst, and in 2015 awarded with the Comenius Medal from the J.A. Comenius National Pedagogical Museum and Library in Prague. Her research focuses on history of university (nineteenth century); history of childhood (eighteenth to twentieth centuries); history of schooling and pedagogy (eighteenth to twentieth centuries), with attention to special education, teacher training, school and media.

Deirdre Raftery

Full Professor of History of Education, University College Dublin, Ireland. She is an elected Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. She held an Ireland Canada University Foundation Award (2014) to conduct research at the Loreto Archives in Toronto, and a Fulbright at Boston College (2015) to work on the education of the Irish Catholic diaspora in the nineteenth century. She has been awarded visiting fellowships by the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, the University of Toronto, the University of Notre Dame, Durham University and Trinity College Dublin. In addition, she has co-edited *History of Education* (Taylor & Francis). Raftery's areas of specialization are nineteenth-century education, university and higher education of women in England and Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; education and the Irish diaspora in the nineteenth century; convent schooling for girls and education and development in the Global South.

George Sabra

Professor of Systematic Theology at the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon. His fields of interest and research comprise questions in systematic theology, ecumenism, Christianity in the Middle East, Christian-Muslim relations and dialogue, and university history, where he has conducted research about History of the Near East School of Theology, Beirut, and the History of American University of Beirut. Sabra has taught at several universities in Lebanon: American University of Beirut, Lebanese American University, University of the Holy Spirit and the Antonine University. He is the Editor of the N.E.S.T. Theological Review.

Sophie Pia Stieger

Research assistant and PhD candidate, Department of Educational Science, University of Vienna, Austria, and from 2024 a postdoc in history of education and education policy research, Department of Education, University of Zürich, Switzerland. In the context of her PhD project, she is currently exploring entanglements of religious history and the history of education in eighteenth-century France, with the aim of examining religious configurations that enabled or hindered the emergence of *sciences of the soul* and associated (educational) strategies. Her research interests further include the history of *Bildung* as a key concept in German educational science.

Daniel Tröhler

Professor of Foundations of Education at the University of Vienna, Austria. He has been invited research fellow at the University of Chicago and Stanford and visiting Professor in Oulu, Granada and Oslo. In 2012, he received the Outstanding Book of the Year Award of the American Education Research Association for *Languages of Education: Protestant Legacies, National Identities, and Global Aspirations* (Routledge, 2011). Tröhler's research interests include the international and transnational developments of the last 250 years, which he explores as a link between the modern history of ideas and the history of institutions in the context of a broader cultural history. By focusing on political and educational ideas and their materialization in school laws, curricula and textbooks, he compares different national and regional developments and examines their possible mutual influences. He is currently working on a political and educational history of ideas about the heart between 1590 and 1800.

Susannah Wright

Reader in Education Studies and Postgraduate Research Tutor in the School of Education, Humanities and Languages, Oxford Brookes University, UK. From 2014–2019, she was one of three editors of the peer-reviewed journal *History of Education*, and in 2020 she was appointed Hon.

Secretary of the History of Education Society (UK). In 2020, she was awarded the History of Education Society's Kevin Brehony Prize for the best sole-authored first monograph published in the English language in 2017–2020 for the monograph *Morality and Citizenship in English Schools. Secular Approaches, 1897–1944* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). Wright's academic background is as a historian, and she has focused predominantly on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, examining moral education and citizenship, and local studies of education and welfare. Her key research interests relate to the history of education, childhood and youth, with a focus on themes of secularism, and war and peace.

Mette Buchardt

Reforming Religion, State and Education in the Multiple Political Secularization Projects Within, Around and Beyond “Europe”. New Impulses for Historical Research

1 New Histories of Religion, State and Education Beyond French Enlightenment Reforms

It is commonly assumed that Europe is the cradle of Enlightenment with France as the jewel in the crown, and with Enlightenment, it is expected, follows secularization. Secularization is both a celebrated and a disputed concept, not only in academia but also in public and political debate. It is ascribed several meanings: From separation of religion and state or separation of religion and the public sphere to the decline or even dissolving of religion. To some post-millennial public and political debaters – as for the past centuries – secularization represents progress: The release of the human being from the chains of superstition, the freedom of mind and belief, a new and higher stage of human development. To others, secularization represents a loss: The loss of religion as such, of freedom of mind and belief, of cultural heritage, or even of the very basis of “Europe”. To others still, secularization seems to represent a certain Western European way to be religious in the right way, opposite not least people associated with Islam.¹ What, however, seems to be a common assumption across these positions is that “Europe”, more specifically “France”, is assumed to be a center from where Enlightenment and secularization spread, whether this is seen as the clear light or as the devastatingly cold darkness of modernity.

The same pattern has by large been the case in academia, though in a less emotional way. Sociologists and historians concerned with the changing relations of re-

1 Mette Buchardt, “Educating Migrant Children and Women in the Political Projects of the Welfare Nation-State and Secularization: The Danish ‘Extreme Case’ in Light of the French,” *World Yearbook of Education* 15 (2022): 251–66; Paola Mattei and Andrew S. Aguilar, *Secular Institutions, Islam and Education Policy France and the U.S. in Comparative Perspective* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), e.g. 1–59; Joan W. Scott, *Sex and Secularism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

ligion and state, including those who in this respect have devoted attention to the role of education, have throughout the twentieth century seen France as a focal point and if not cradle then at least an “ideal type” and center of secularization from where it spread to “the world”.² Secularist Enlightenment France has become a *lieu de mémoire*³ – a site of memory – but often with the emphasis timewise placed around a century later than the revolution, namely on the French *laïque* laws passed in 1881 and 1882, which separated religion and school, followed by the complete separation of religion and state in 1905. The French *laïcité* model implemented during the first decades of the Third Republic (1870–1940) has become a prototype as well as a mnemotope of modernity with the division of religion and state through education as the signifier. Though a symbol of radical separation of religion and state, research has however shown that the picture is more complicated; religion was not removed from the school but rather changed into new forms and reoccurred as morality and deism, and among the main crafters behind the reforms were religious modernists of Protestant affiliation such as Ferdinand Buisson (1841–1932).⁴ It can also be argued that *l'école laïque* (the secular school) with Robert Bellah's concept became a civil religious site of worship.⁵ This interpretation is obvious and tempting when seeing the magazine photo from *Le Petit Journal* that figures on the cover of this volume, picturing the parade of young girls at Place de la Concorde on the 21 June 1931, the fiftieth anniversary of the first of what is also called the Ferry Laws, named after the Minister of Education and later on Prime Minister Jules Ferry (1832–1893), passed on 16 June 1881. Besides taking the first steps to separate the school from the Catholic church, these laws also made

2 Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), e.g. 19–20; Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “Comparative Secularisms and the Politics of Modernity. An Introduction,” in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*, ed. Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3–24.

3 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989): 7–24.

4 Patrick Cabanel, *Ferdinand Buisson. Père de l'école laïque* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2016); Mette Buchardt, “The Nordic Model and the Educational Welfare State in a European Light: Social Problem Solving and Secular-Religious Ambitions when Modernizing Sweden and France,” in *The Nordic Education Model in Context: Historical Developments and Current Renegotiations*, eds. Daniel Tröhler et al. (New York: Routledge, 2023), 107–124. For the early modern background and the preconditions of Third Republic deism, see Mette Buchardt, “Church, Religion, and Morality,” in *A Cultural History of Education in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Daniel Tröhler (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), 25–46.

5 Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus. Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 96, no. 1 (1967): 1–21; see also e.g. Jean Baubérot, “The evolution of secularism in France. Between two civil religions,” in *Comparative secularisms in a global age*, eds. Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 57–68.

primary education free for girls as well as for boys.⁶ In this way, Ferry's *laïque* laws have become an imaginary, a postulate of modernity that in a self-referencing way proves that also women's liberation depends on Western secular modernity, as pointed out by Joan Scott, and what – drawing on Daniel Tröhler – can be seen as an educating celebration of the nation as sacred.⁷ However, or maybe rather exactly because of that, this volume is not about the actual events and processes concerning the *laïque* laws that have been thoroughly described and research-wise revisited elsewhere.⁸

In this volume, the French educational secularization model is confined to being analyzed for its role as a place of memory, a reference point and an empty signifier that occurs in several of the studies in this volume but is nevertheless methodologically peripherized, since their main focus is located somewhere else. The purpose of this volume is to bring together research that grasps the transformation of religion, state and education before and after the iconic events of the French revolution and the French *laïque* laws, scoping out the corners of what is today seen as Europe and going beyond it, without losing sight of its impact of these reforms, but also without reducing anything else to epigones and results of a “French modernity cradle”. The intention is hence to take a methodological point of departure in what Frederick Cooper has described as provincializing France, or, in the words of Jeroen Dekker, to “regionalize” the question of secularization reform in education.⁹

6 Cinquantenaire de l'école laïque, défilé [des jeunes filles] place de la Concorde, photographie de presse [Agence Rol, Négatif d'une photographie parue dans Le Petit journal (Paris. 1863–1944) = ISSN 1256-0464, 1931, ark:/12148/bpt6k6325548/f1 21 juin 1931, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF).

7 Scott, *Sex and Secularism*; Daniel Tröhler, “Magical enchantments and the nation's silencing. Educational research agendas under the spell of globalization,” in *World Yearbook of Education 2022: Education, Schooling and the Global Universalization of Nationalism*, eds. Daniel Tröhler, Nelli Piattoeva, and William F. Pinar (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2022), 7–27.

8 Among the important newer works; Cabanel, *Ferdinand Buisson*; Céline Borello, *La république en chaire protestante, XVIIIe-XIXe siècles* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2017).

9 Frederick Cooper, “Provincializing France,” in *Imperial Formations*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler et al. (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press / Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2007), 341–377; Jeroen J. H. Dekker, “In Search of Multiple Compatibility: Modernization, Secularization, Religion, and Education in History,” *Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 11, no. 2 (2021): 174; Mette Buchardt, “The Political Project of Secularization and Modern Education Reform in ‘Provincialized Europe’: Historical Research in Religion and Education beyond Secularization, R.I.P.,” *IJHE. Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 11, no. 2 (2021): 164–70.

“Secularization” has been seen as a sociological condition that one could either embrace or reject. The overarching core question when approaching education historically and when approaching education as a site for transforming religion is however rather a question of political, including cultural political, conditions and productions: Education is hence in this volume understood as an arena for battles around and negotiations of the political project of secularization. More specifically, it is explored how the reforming of education has functioned as an arena for secularizing efforts, and which new educational and pedagogical forms as well as forms of state were created. This question calls for further exploration of the relation between education politics and secularization politics, a task this volume endeavors to take on. To do so, the volume collects and connects scholarship from senior scholars to early career scholars and across the fields of history and historical sociology of education, church history and historical religion research and political history. In the twelve chapters, the changed and transformed role of religion from early modernity and up until the post-Cold War decades is elucidated by scholars in different methodological ways, including from different theoretical approaches and not least based on source studies in different spatial contexts, but all taking up the challenge of how to move on *after* leaving the secularization hypothesis behind by means of common interest in the different forms of political secularization reforms and reform intentions that used education as an aim, an arena and a tool.

2 From Early Modernity to Post Cold War – From European Empires to African, Middle Eastern and European Nation States

The volume connects early modern history scholarship with modern and contemporary history scholarship and aims not only at provincializing the French revolution and Third Republic restoration, but also at taking up the challenge formulated by prehistorians Smail and Shryock as provincializing modernity.¹⁰ This is mirrored in Sophie Pia Stieger’s opening chapter on the medicalization of education in eighteenth-century France, where the normally assumed link between French medicine and anti-clerical secularism and its consequences for education is disputed. Jeroen J. H. Dekker’s chapter, on the other hand, shows how the changed role of

¹⁰ Daniel Lord Smail and Andrew Shryock, “History and the ‘Pre,’” *The American Historical Review* 118, no. 3 (2013): 709–737.

religion mirrored in the visualizations of the bodily expression of emotions of children and parents from the Middle Ages and up until the Enlightenment can be understood as a precondition of the education reforms that aimed at reorganizing the religion-state relations centuries later. At the other temporal end of the volume, it is shown that the transformation processes that took the shape of political reforms reorganizing the relation between state and religion through education did not finish in the mid-twentieth century: As demonstrated by Oleg Kyselov in his chapter on the atheistic curriculum at universities in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic during the twentieth century and the curricular de-secularization in the post-Soviet republic of Ukraine, and by Ondrej Kaščák, Eszter Neumann and Zuzana Daniskova in their chapter on the reform history of Slovakia and Hungary through the twentieth century and up until the present, the politics of secularization cannot be confined to a fixed history of progress that started in the late nineteenth century and finished during the twentieth. Rather, the politics of secularization and the politics of de-secularization are to be understood as shifting political forms and positions, in these cases mirroring the shift from a Soviet model of socialist dictatorship, including its educational atheisms and the nationalist renaissances that followed in the post-Soviet period along with educational de-secularization reform. Religion did not disappear with Enlightenment and nineteenth- and twentieth-century state modernization, just as the transformation of religion dates further back and is located elsewhere than French – and German – late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century enlightenments.

As its geographical and geopolitical frame, the volume features contributions that in varying degrees shed light on states and territories across the Empires and (upcoming nation-)states that were previously made up by political entities such as for instance the British Empire (Wright; Tröhler; Raftery and Delaney), the Ottoman Empire (Muratović; Sabra), the German Empire (Dekker; Tröhler), the French Empire (Stieger; Buchardt; Raftery and Delaney; Muratović; Sabra), the Habsburgian Empire (Polenghi; Kaščák, Neumann and Danišková) and the Russian Empire and its heir, the Soviet Union (Kyselov; Buchardt; Kaščák, Neumann and Danišková). At present, the nation states that emerged from these empires are either located within the borders or seen as on the borders of Europe in the sense of the European Union – whether they are EU members such as Sweden (Hellström), Ireland (Raftery and Delaney), Italy (Polenghi) and Slovakia and Hungary (Kaščák, Neumann, and Danišková), EU-related such as Switzerland (Tröhler), disputed candidate states such as Turkey (Muratović) and Ukraine (Kyselov) or departed from the EU such as the UK (Tröhler, Wright). Finally, the volume contains analysis of states that are at present seen as part of other regions and geopolitical zones such as Lebanon (Sabra) and Senegal (Buchardt), or they have been independent states under shifting forms all along the way from early modernity and up until the present

such as the Dutch and the Swiss republics (Dekker; Tröhler). This means that the volume contains cases that deal with the development from European empires and independent republics to modern African, Middle Eastern and European nation states. The purpose of the volume is not to cover all regions and territories within what was and what became and what stopped being “Europe” as a geopolitical entity, but rather to bring together new research that each in its own way complicates and adds to our knowledge on the history of religion, state and education in the political history of European metropolises and colonies in perpetually moving between what has been seen as centers and what as peripheries. However, no selection is without limits. The Spanish and Portuguese empires and the states that today are described as Latin America, the regions where different forms of Orthodox Christianity have dominated and where Islam has been a factor, by some described as the Balkans, not to mention more recent regionally based and cross- or beyond-confessional studies within the areas that were Prussia, later the German Empire and later the twentieth century German republics, offer important lines for future research to consider, just to mention a few cases and features that are not covered by the volume.¹¹

Despite the spatial limitations and shortcomings, the volume nevertheless offers and brings together new historical research and thus also new possible re-

11 Ezequiel Gomez Caride, “Latin America, the social question, and the Andean Assemblage,” *Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 11, no. 2 (2021): 180–183; Zira Box and Ismael Saz, “Spanish Fascism as a Political Religion (1931–1941),” *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 12, no. 4 (2011): 371–389; Mette Buchardt and Simon Holleufer, “Reconfiguring religion and state through education? A mid-20th century comparison of education reforms in Social Democrat-Social Liberal Denmark and Francoist-Falangist Spain,” the panel “The Global and Local Political Project of Secularization and Modernization Through Education Reform and Its Technologies, Objects, and Forms,” ISCHE 43, International Standing Conference for the History of Education, September 2022, Milano, Italy; Tamar Groves and Ignacio Navarrete-Sánchez, “A question of community? Catholic educational associations and the struggle over citizenship education in Spain (1978–2006),” *European Journal of Education Research* (under publication); Ayşe Zişan Furat, “A Cultural Transformation Project: Religious and Educational Policy of Austro-Hungarian Empire in Bosnia (1878–1918),” in *Balkans and Islam: Encounter-Transformation-Discontinuity, Continuity*, eds. A. Z. Furat and Hamit Er (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 63–84; Gianna Katsiampoura, “Orthodox Church and Science Education Policy in Modern Greece,” *Advances in Historical Studies* 8, no. 2 (2019); Meike Sophia Baader, *Erziehung als Erlösung. Transformation des Religiösen in der Reformpädagogik* (Weinheim/München: Juventa Verlag, 2005); Karin Friedrich, *Brandenburg-Prussia 1466–1806. The Rise of a Composite State* (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Urban Claesson, “A Hidden State Pietism? Perspectives on the Era of Absolutism during the reign of Charles XI,” in *Pietismus und Neuzeit: Ein Jahrbuch zur Geschichte des Neueren Protestantismus*, eds. Manfred Jakobowski-Tiessen, Anne Lagny, Fred van Lieburg, Christian Soboth, Udo Sträter, and Jonathan Strom (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 19–26.

search directions related to secularization reform and education reforms in a way which understands these reforms as broader political projects of reforming religion and state-relations from early modernity and up until the present – at the same time sidelining and revisiting Europe as perpetually moving political entities, but also going beyond.

3 Beyond R.I.P. Secularization in Historical Research in Religion, State and Education

The contributions in this volume stand upon nothing but an empty space, but in different ways draw on the methodological approaches that developed and disputes that occurred within scholarly discussions during the long twentieth century about religion as a social phenomenon. Dating back from the work of the early twentieth-century sociologists such as Max Weber and Émile Durkheim and onwards, the social theory on secularization gained prominence during the century, to be critiqued not least among sociologists of religion by its end. Despite what was partly predicted across the social sciences, including in their popular reception, religion did not seem to disappear along with modernization and rationalization efforts. Instead of disenchantment (see also Dekker and Stieger, this volume), religion during the 1990s seemed to be vibrant and even enjoying a comeback. The renaissance of religion with the revitalization of religion in the former state-socialist dictatorships in Eastern Europe, and the way especially Islam and Christianity became visible on the geopolitical stage in the form of religio-political fundamentalisms, were among the factors that caused this change of perception. The reactions to migration across Europe equally contributed.¹² However, also an acknowledgement of a solid continuity in religious practices and attitudes among individuals and communities in Europe and for example North America was part of the empirical argumentation. People were still practicing religion and nourishing spiritual conceptions, just as indifference and non-attendance in relation to religion seemed to have been the case in the medieval period. What characterized the scholarly debate was, however, also that it was not so-called institutional secularization that was questioned. Quite on the contrary, it seemed to be held as an established fact that religious institutions in not least Europe during the

¹² Buchardt, “The Political Project of Secularization”; Mette Buchardt, “Religion and Modern Educational Aspirations,” in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. Michael Peters (Singapore: Springer, online 2016 (printed 2020)); Buchardt, “Educating Migrant Children and Women,” 251–66.

nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries had lost power, having become separated from state institutions and thus from the state. Education frequently figured as a prime example of this in scholarly debates.

An example of the latter is the position taken by sociologist of religion Rodney Stark, a scholar of for example the history of Christianity, in his discussion essay with the iconic title *Secularization, R.I.P.* While arguing against secularization theory scholars such as Karel Dobbelaere, Stark summarized the latter's understanding of secularization as deinstitutionalization; "a decline in the social power of once-dominant religious institutions whereby other social institutions, especially political and educational institutions, have escaped from prior religious domination", and added that "if this were all that secularization means, there would be nothing to argue about".¹³ However, for the R.I.P. Secularization sociologists as well as for their pro-secularization counterparts, the tendency was by large that education remained an example not analyzed in depth.¹⁴ Much historical research during the twentieth century about social reform and thus also education reform across Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, delivers knowledge to sustain the point that education was a major target point for changing state-church relations. Since especially the 2000s, historical scholarship has also increasingly pointed out that the picture of a sharp differentiation, when it comes to divisions between religion and state-driven education and its connected knowledge corpuses in the form of curricula, pedagogies and education theory, is not adequate. The relation between religion, education and state – also after the nineteenth century – developed in a far more complicated way. Moreover, historical education research has challenged the dominating twentieth century-progressive narratives on modern schooling and demonstrated how religion has played a role in especially modern European educational efforts.

13 Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P.," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 249–73; Karel Dobbelaere, "Some Trends in European Sociology of Religion. The Secularization Debate," *Sociological Analysis* 48 (1987): 107–37.

14 Buchardt, "Educating Migrant Children and Women," 251–66. This is an equivalent to what Tröhler, Gotling et al. point to with regard to education as an often mentioned but rarely deeply analyzed part of the history of nationalism and the nation state; Daniel Tröhler and Veronika Maricic, "Education and the Nation: Educational Knowledge in the dominant theories of nationalism," in *Education, Curriculum and Nation-Building: Contributions of Comparative Education to the Understanding of Nations and Nationalism*, ed. Daniel Tröhler (London: Routledge, Oxford studies in comparative education, 2023), 7–33; Nicole Gotling, "Framing the National Mind of Students: A Textbook Case of the Prussian Wars: Educational Historiographies and Narratives in Prussian, Danish, Austrian, and French History and Geography Textbooks, From the Prussian Wars Until the Interwar Period." PhD diss., Institut für Erziehungswissenschaft, Universität Wien, 2022.

This has resulted in not least research on how religion has been used and transformed in the modern civilizing mission of schooling, in nation-building through schooling and in the languages of education, and as such circulated globally.¹⁵ Rather than seeing modern schooling as increasingly secularized in the meaning of separated and cleansed of religion from nineteenth century onwards, it might in light of this scholarly development make more sense to understand *educational modernity* in its European forms as what historian of education Fritz Osterwalder has described as a sacralization of education that accompanied educationalization of the public sphere (see especially Stieger, Tröhler, Muratović, Buchardt, this volume).¹⁶

A result of the showdown around the secularization hypothesis is that new theoretical and methodological approaches across the social sciences and the humanities have been launched, something which is also mirrored in this volume. Within the frame of postcolonial theory, poststructuralist-inspired scholars have described secularization as a liberalist ideology spreading Western domination

15 Baader, *Erziehung als Erlösung*; Fritz Osterwalder, “Pädagogische Modernisierung – Pädagogisierung der Öffentlichkeit und Sakralisierung der Pädagogik,” *Pädagogische Modernisierung. Säkularität und Sakralität in der modernen Pädagogik*, eds. Michèle Hofmann, Denise Jacottet, and Fritz Osterwalder (Bern, Stuttgart, Wien: Haupt Verlag, 2006), 237–261; Bernadette M. Baker, “Western World-Forming? Animal Magnetism, Curriculum History, and the Social Projects of Modernity,” in *New Curriculum History*, ed. Bernadette M. Baker (Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers, 2009), 25–68; Thomas S. Popkewitz, “From Virtue as Pursuit of Happiness to Pursuing the Unvirtuous: Republicanism, Cosmopolitanism, and Reform Protestantism in American Progressive Education,” in *Schooling and the Making of Citizens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Comparative Visions*, ed. Daniel Tröhler et al. (New York & London: Routledge, 2011), 219–239; Daniel Tröhler, *Languages of Education. Protestant Legacies, National Identities, and Global Aspirations* (New York/London: Routledge, 2011); Mette Buchardt, “Evangeliets samfundsnyttige pædagogisering: Liberalteologiens transformation på det pædagogiske felt med Edvard Lehmanns virke som eksempel” [The societal utilization of the gospel. The transformation of liberal theology in the pedagogical field with Edvard Lehmann as example], *Uddannelseshistorie, Selskabet for Skole- og Uddannelseshistorie* 45: 96–128; Mette Buchardt, “Pedagogical Transformations of ‘Religion’ into ‘Culture’ in Danish State Mass Schooling 1900s–1930s,” *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 49, no. 1 (2013): 126–38; Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Carlos Martínez Valle, “Church, Religious Institutions, the State, and Schooling,” in *Handbook of Historical Studies in Education: Debates, Tensions, and Directions*, ed. Tanya Fitzgerald (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd., 2019).

16 Osterwalder, “Pädagogische Modernisierung”; Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1996); Buchardt, “Pedagogical Transformations”; Mette Buchardt, “Cultural Protestantism and Nordic Religious Education: An incision in the historical layers behind the Nordic welfare state model,” *Norddidactica* 2 (2015): 131–165.

outside and well as inside “the West”.¹⁷ This methodological approach is taken up in Kevser Muratović’s study in this volume, unraveling how language policies from the late years of the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish republic transformed but did not remove the role of Islam in what she defines as “Educational nation-building”. Further, historians have complicated and contradicted the picture of the Western colonial empires as a secularizing force. Rather, colonialism reinforced religion and religious difference as a governing strategy, whereas missionaries the other way around have influenced and helped transform, pluralize and renew religious education in the metropolitan terrain.¹⁸ In this volume, George Sabra contributes to this research line by tracing the missionary roots of American University of Beirut (AUB), founded by US American missionaries under the Ottoman Empire and further developing in light of liberal Protestantism during the French Mandate period, to turn into its present strictly secularized form with no place for religion in the Republic of Lebanon post WWII and decolonization. Also, Mette Buchardt unfolds how Senegalese Socialist decolonial state crafters developed a “*laïcité* model” which was meant to integrate religion as an active and productive educating force for the new state, and at the same time created considerable distance to the French republican empire model as well as the post-WWII imperial powers, the USSR and the US. Though all three studies point to the imperial entities and their models as a point of reference for the modernizing reform actors under study, these actors and reforms cannot be reduced to epigones of imperial modernities.

17 Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood, eds., *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley, CA: Townsend Center for the Humanities/University of California, 2009); Scott, *Sex and Secularism*.

18 Parna Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion. Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011); Susan Thorne, “The Conversion of Englishmen and the Conversion of the World is Inseparable: Missionary Imperialism and the Language of Class in Early Industrial Britain,” in *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1997), 238–262; Rob Freathy, Stephen G. Parker, and Jonathan Doney, “Raiders of the Lost Archives: Searching for the Hidden History of Religious Education in England,” in *History, Remembrance and Religious Education*, ed. Stephen G. Parker et al. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), 105–137.

4 Educating, Reforming, Modernizing – The Actors and the State

Among the new *post-R.I.P.* secularization lines of historical research are also studies of the ideological project of secularisms and secularist movements, for example historian Susannah Wright's work on the engagement of English anti-religious secularists in developing moral education and citizenship.¹⁹ In this volume, Wright further develops this line of research in a study of the curricular reform work fronted by the Moral Instruction League in English schools in late nineteenth century and up until the end of WWI, and the interests they shared with liberal Christians. The importance of discovering new actors and unexpected alliances in the intersecting area of secularization and education reform processes, including the development of reform ideas, has in newer research been demonstrated by for instance Daniel Tröhler who has taken up the Protestant backgrounds and styles of thinking of allegedly secular German and US-American pedagogic theorists, whereas Mette Buchardt's research has pointed to the influence of religious modernist reformers, namely theologians of liberal theological and cultural Protestant affiliation in Nordic twentieth-century secularizing education reform processes, often in alliance with social democrats.²⁰ In this volume, Emma Hellström takes a step further and elucidates how the post-WWII education reform in welfare-state Sweden aiming at democratization still included religion in a new political and moral guise. In continuation, Hellström's chapter illustrates that educational secularization agents of reform were not only politicians, leading association activists and publicly well-known intellectuals including theologians and clergy, but also for instance textbook authors. In Simonetta Polenghi's chapter on the tension between religious and secular ethics of the Italian Habsburg dominions from Joseph II to political unification, textbooks make up the main source corpus of the study. This method makes it possible for Polenghi to bring to the fore the fact that the Austrian re-catholicization in the post-Napoleonic era was less deep-seated than previously and often claimed in research.

¹⁹ Susannah Wright, *Morality and Citizenship in English Schools: Secular Approaches, 1897 – 1944* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

²⁰ E.g. Tröhler, *Languages of Education*; Buchardt, "Cultural Protestantism"; Mette Buchardt, "Between 'Dannelse' and 'Real Life'. National Cultural Christianity in a Nordic Cold War Education Reform Process," *IJHE. Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 10, no. 2 (2020): 188–202; Sophie Pia Stieger and Daniel Tröhler, "The Discovery of the Soul as a Place of Pilgrimage within: German Protestantism, Psychology, and Salvation through Education," *Religions* 14, no. 7 (2023) (online).

The broadening out of the research optics regarding reform actors is also powerfully accomplished in Deirdre Raftery and Catriona Delaney's contribution to this volume, a longitudinal history of the changing fate of the convent school in Ireland as a prism for a gradual secularization reform process, that shows the central role of women religious in the ongoing transformation process of religion and education in what is today the Republic of Ireland. It is, in continuation, a future task for historical research to go deeper into and expand our expectations of what could possibly have made up the gallery of reform actors. A point is here that the closer we come research-wise to the concrete forms of education, the more the usually not so powerful and well-known actors, teachers, textbooks authors, etc., appear as central knowledge brokers and micro-political actors, and the less the landscape of educational secularization actors shows up as consisting of white cis-male actors of some kind with varying degrees of Christian affiliation only, even though such actors were often the ones at the front stage.²¹

The question of the actors in reform processes also leads to the question of how to limit or maybe rather broaden out what we understand as education reform. "Education reform" is often used as confined to central political efforts to change public education. In this volume, the understanding of education is more comprehensive. Education can be formal schooling within a state education system, but historically it has also been in the hands of religious institutions and private actors, be they patrons, organizations or corporations, a picture that still rings true at present. Moreover, education cannot be confined to formal educational institutions, but entails broader public enlightenment activities as well. Further, educational efforts can be understood as broader features of the state, as is the case in for instance Muratović's and Buchardt's contributions about respectively (Young-)Turkish and Senegalese republican reformers. "Education" and "educationalizing" can be understood as a feature of the state.²² In his contribution to this volume, Daniel Tröhler finds important roots of the modern nation state and its sacred and educational character in Swiss Reformed Protestantism and traces the resonance of these confessional reforms to modern nation states across Europe and their educational programs. In doing so, Tröhler's contribution

21 Joan W. Scott, "Gender. A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053–1075; Mette Buchardt, "Educational Biblical Nationalism and the Project of the Modern Secular State," *Croatian Journal of Education* 22, no. 2 (2020): 133–50; Mette Buchardt, "Epilogue: Textbooks as a prism for the politics of secularization and 'cultural heritage'," in *Secular Schooling in the long twentieth century: Christianity and Education in Norway, Sweden, and The Netherlands*, eds. Merethe Roos, Johannes Westberg, and Henrik Edgren (De Gruyter (under publication)).

22 See also Buchardt, "The Nordic Model and the Educational Welfare State."

also transcends the established – and problematic – periodization among historians, breaking down barriers between early modern history and the study of the ideological project of the “modern” nation state and its educational project of forming citizens.

Elaborating on the diverse optics of the contributions, in order to understand the political reform intentions that went across religion, state and education since early modernity, we should look at the micro politics of what Jona Garz, Fanny Isensee, and Daniel Töpfer conceptualize as small forms of education as well as broader national and social imaginaries of the state and its modes of functioning.²³ This brings us finally to the notion of modernity, or rather modernizing efforts. Whereas modernity and modernization in much historical scholarship have been associated with progress which again has been ascribed positive qualities, the overall optics of this volume are to understand modernization as multiple historically and contextually anchored political projects of planning and reorganizing states and people in order to develop or proclaim new ways to govern them and often subscribing to narratives of progress and change. This brings the understanding of “reform” and “reforming” in this volume very close to the notion of “modernizing”. Whether subscribing to or rejecting the possibilities of studying modernization – modernizing reform efforts – empirically historically, a shared feature of the contributions to this volume is their point of departure in a rejection of the twentieth-century scholarship that left out religion as part of modernity since religion was seen as opposite of progress and thus of modernity. In this sense, the volume contributes with historical scholarship of “modern education” by connecting what can be described as educational modernities with educational secularizations, in a way that neither celebrates nor takes for granted that modernity exists/has existed, but which at the same time underlines that the politics of modernization certainly took place and entailed not only separation of religion and state, but also the reinforcement, transformation and renewal of the religion, state and education relations. That also means religion can be understood as a quite vibrant part of the allegedly secular – in the sense of non-religious – educational efforts, historically as well as at present. This volume in other words takes on the further discussions, not about *if* secularization in the sense of institutional separation took place, but rather *what secularization as a political project contained*, and with what consequences for education, citizenry and society. It invites the reader to reconsider what research into religion and state within the field of

²³ Jona Garz, Fanny Isensee, and Daniel Töpfer, “Knowledge in the Making: Methodological Considerations on the Production, Dissemination, and Usage of ‘Small Forms in Education’,” *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 9 (2022): 39–62.

history of education can be – in interdisciplinary overlaps with historical religion research and as part of political history.

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²⁴ IJHE. *Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 11 (2021–2), 163–195: Buchardt, “The political project of secularization” and e.g. Dekker, “In Search of Multiple Compatibility.”

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Sophie Pia Stieger

Replacing Priests with Doctors? The Medicalization of Education in Eighteenth-Century France and the Question of Secularization

Abstract: During the nineteenth century, the French medical field was often suspected of wanting to put the doctor in the place of the priest, and many historians have linked secularization processes in France closely to a sacralization of medicine. Thus, France lends itself as a case study to investigate *when* and *how* the medicalization of education was linked to attempts at secularization. However, instead of examining the more tangible institutional secularization of education in the nineteenth century, this chapter problematizes the rather nebulous narrative of an ideological secularization of education through medicine in the second half of the eighteenth century, when medical reasoning became increasingly relevant in political, philosophical, and educational debates. First, selected medical treatises are used to trace the early ‘medicalization of education’ in the knowledge production of French physicians from the middle of the eighteenth century. Secondly, to challenge simplified ideological oppositions of religion and medicine, intersections of educational, medical, and theological reasoning in these texts are elucidated and connected to theological arguments that preceded them. Finally, I suggest that when medical knowledge was put in the ideological service of the anticlerical wing of the French Enlightenment, it came to be associated with opposition to religion and the Catholic Church.

1 Introduction

France has been called both the cradle of modern medicine and of the modern ‘secular nation-state’ – two particularities that seem not to be wholly unrelated. Historians and sociologists such as Jacques Léonard, Jean Baubérot and Raphaël Liogier have pointed out a particular ideological affinity between medicine, republicanism, and secularism, and linked secularization in France closely to a sa-

cralization of medicine.¹ During and after the nineteenth century, more doctors were involved in French politics than anywhere else in Europe; and especially amongst anti-clerically minded republicans in the Third Republic, one could find a striking number of *physician-legislators*.² After the defeat of Napoleon and the collapse of the Second French Empire, this period was marked by efforts of republican forces to ‘free’ the newly established French republic from its political and ideological ties to the Catholic Church.

Accordingly, many of these physician-legislators were outspoken secularists, like Jean-Marie Lanessan (1843–1919), who wrote polemically against the power of Catholicism in France and advocated for a radical separation of state and church. Putting his faith in scientific progress and secular education instead of the Christian God, Lanessan predicted that once the people of France were properly educated, they would turn away from irrational religion, and the Church would “collapse before science”.³ As spaces of education increasingly became spaces of health propagation and sickness prevention in the nineteenth century, these *physician-legislators*, considering themselves scientific and secular authorities in educational debates, also commented on school reform issues. This is, for example, reflected in the propagation of medical inspections of school buildings, the establishment of physical and health education programs, or the introduction of various hygiene measures.⁴ As medicine increasingly found its way into education, some of its most vocal advocates wanted to push the Church out of it. Against this background, it is not surprising that the rise of medicine triggered suspicions amongst many French Catholics that doctors wanted to replace the priest as authority in questions of human nature and correct behavior.

Instead of looking at the nineteenth century and the more tangible institutional secularization of education or the political secularism of the *physician-legislators*, I will be going back to the second half of the eighteenth century when medical reasoning became increasingly relevant in political, philosophical, and educational debates.⁵ This period is sometimes described as a turning point when a ‘secular education

1 Jacques Léonard, “La médicalisation de l’État : l’exemple des premières décennies de la IIIe République,” *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l’Ouest* 86, no. 2 (1979); Jean Baubérot and Raphaël Liogier, *Sacrée médecine: histoire et devenir d’un sanctuaire de la Raison* (Paris: Entrelacs, 2011).

2 Jack D. Ellis, *The Physician-legislators of France: Medicine and Politics in the Early Third Republic, 1870–1914*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

3 Jean-Louis de Lanessan, *Église et l’État. Conférence sur la séparation de l’Église et de l’État faite à Chaumont et Lettres sur le Concordat* (Paris: Roret, 1884), 33.

4 Séverine Parayre, *L’hygiène à l’école, une alliance de la santé et de l’éducation (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles)* (Saint-Etienne: Presses Universitaires de Saint-Etienne, 2011).

5 Sean M. Quinlan, *The Great Nation in Decline. Sex, Modernity and Health Crises in Revolutionary France c. 1750–1850* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007).

based on human nature' began to replace 'religious ideas of education'. It is also the time in which scholars located the beginnings of *medicalization*. The term medicalization generally refers to processes by which 'non-medical' phenomena are 'made medical' and by which medical terms, argumentation patterns, and interventions are extended to phenomena, problems, or behaviors not previously perceived as medically relevant. It is also used to conceptualize a broad historical change and linked to other grand narratives about the eighteenth century, such as rationalization and, importantly for this chapter, secularization. That the expansion of medicine came at the expense of religion was, for instance, already suggested by Illich and Zola, two of the very first authors to use the term medicalization.⁶

The question *whether* and *how* the early medicalization of education in eighteenth century France was linked to secularization cannot be decided by historical evidence alone but also depends on what notion of 'the secular' or 'secularization' one subscribes to. While oversimplified secularization narratives seem to persist in academic, and even more so, in popular literature, amongst many scholars, secularization has become somewhat suspect and in need of analytical clarity. After all, secularization is a notoriously fuzzy term, hiding a variety of different, not always compatible meanings and empirical claims about historical reality.⁷ In this chapter, I want to specifically challenge nebulous claims of an 'ideological secularization' through the rise of natural sciences like medicine in which a supernatural, religious framework for changing, healing, and also educating people was replaced by a secular, scientific framework (see also Tröhler, this volume). Ideological secularization in this sense does *not* refer to the rise of secularism as an ideology or ideologies of secularization but to retrospective narratives that claim a 'becoming-secular' of certain fields of knowledge, arguments, or sets of beliefs.⁸ By looking at the involvement of doctors in questions of education and the shift towards medical

⁶ Irving Kenneth Zola, "Medicine as an Institution of Social Control", *The Sociological Review* 20, no. 4 (1972): 487–504; Ivan Illich, *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1975).

⁷ For an overview see Charles Turner, *Secularization* (London/New York: Routledge, 2020).

⁸ In recent years, for example, Todd H. Weir (2014) or Victoria Smolkin (2018) have produced fruitful studies of secularism as ideology and political project that make visible the complex and shifting negotiations of boundaries between the secular and the religious in different historical contexts. Similarly, the contributions of Wright, Kyselov and Kaščák, et al. in this volume approach secularization as ideological and political strategy rather than an inevitable historical development. The point of contention in this chapter is not with secularization-scholars like them, who are well aware of the shortcomings of traditional accounts of secularization. Rather, this article wants to complicate popular ideas of secularization as (anti-religious) rationalization or *Verweltlichung* that (still) find their way into histories of education despite the promising research that is currently done on the issue.

reasoning in educational texts through a genealogical lens,⁹ I aim to problematize contemporary accounts of medicine as ‘secular, natural science’ that, during the Enlightenment, freed itself from a religious framework and then contributed to its downfall. A close reading of (neglected) sources against the background of their *own* historical and ideological context allows to reveal the inadequacy of essentialized oppositions or ideological alliances that are often taken for granted in such retrospective secularization stories.

To do so, four popular educational writings written by doctors around the middle of the century are introduced in the first part of the chapter: Le Camus’ *Medecine de l’Esprit* (1753), Brouzet’s *Essai Sur l’Éducation Médicinale Des Enfants* (1754), Vandermonde’s *Essai sur la Manière de Perfectionner l’Espèce Humaine* (1756) and Desessartz’ *Traite de l’Education Corporelle* (1760). These treatises are situated in their broader historical context to make sense of the heightened involvement of medical practitioners in education from this time on. Secondly, to show that there is more continuity and mutual reinforcement between claims made in the context of the medical field and within contemporary theological frameworks than one might expect, intersections of educational, medical, and theological reasoning are highlighted in these texts, as well as in earlier writings by Catholic clergymen. In closing, I want to propose an alternative account of how ‘medicalization’ and ‘secularization’ came to be related by sketching how medicine was placed in the service of the Enlightenment. I suggest that this discursive shift enabled a redefinition of medicine as a secular science that can be directed against religion and the Catholic Church, which set the stage for the ideological alliance of medicine and political secularism found in later educational debates.

2 Conquering New Frontiers: The Early ‘Medicalization’ of Education

Around the middle of the eighteenth century, when France was still an absolute monarchy under Bourbon rule, several medical self-help books and treatises by physicians appeared that included claims about educational issues. These books discussed the (individual and social) benefits of medicine, propagated hygiene and dietary regimes, and their authors wanted to instill the concern for health

⁹ Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique. Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013).

and the improvement of their own and their children's bodies into people's minds. For example, Antoine Le Camus (1722–1772), a physician at the famous Medical Faculty in Paris, proposed in his widely read two-volume treatise *Médecine de l'Esprit* (1753) that medicine should expand to “cure not only the vices of the body but also of the mind.”¹⁰ Accordingly, he dedicated over a hundred pages of the first volume explicitly to education. Camus argued that the term education had always a double meaning, signifying both “the way of instructing young children and directing their conduct according to a certain practical morality, or according to certain customs” and “the care we take to feed, raise and look after these same children”.¹¹ These two sides of education, which he termed the *éducation spirituelle* and *l'éducation corporelle* or the *régime de vivre*, are mutually dependent on each other and further correspond to the two sides of man, his spiritual and bodily being. While wrong moral conduct can make people sick, moral judgments also depend on the proper functioning of the organs and senses, and therefore the success of moral education relies on the correct *éducation corporelle*. Only a functioning body, Le Camus argued, enables us to receive and retain impressions, which allows us to learn moral norms from others.¹² With an understanding of ‘educated’ as meaning healthy and functioning, Camus proposed that medical knowledge was essential to achieving an ‘educated’ body that enables a person to judge and reason correctly.

Only a year after Camus' treatise, Pierre Brouzet (c.1714–1772), physician to king Louis XV, published his *Essai Sur l'Éducation Médicinale Des Enfants* (1754). Similarly, he wrote that:

To bring up a child in the general sense contained in the word education, however, is not only to enlighten his spirit and form his heart for God, for society and for himself . . . but also to take care of his creation, to watch over his birth and the growth of his body, to prevent damage to his organs and his juices, to ensure the order and course of his bodily functions; in a word, to make an adult or a man out of a child; this is the aim of education, which we shall call medical.¹³

The very broad definition of *education medicinale* on which these authors base their arguments for more medical authority over educational matters is striking. For both Camus and Brouzet, ‘medical’ or ‘corporal’ education encompassed all

¹⁰ Antoine Le Camus, *Médecine de l'esprit. Où l'on traite des dispositions et des causes physiques qui, en conséquence de l'union de l'âme avec le corps, influent sur les opérations de l'esprit*. Volume 1 (Paris: Ganeau, 1753), 4.

¹¹ Le Camus, *Médecine I*, 257.

¹² Le Camus, *Médecine I*, 258–279.

¹³ Pierre Brouzet, *Essai sur l'Éducation Médicinale des Enfants et sur leurs Maladies*. (Paris: Cavelier et fils, 1754), ii–ijj.

care, maintenance, and improvement of the body. Medicine is thus not only concerned with healing the sick body but with ensuring the functioning and perfection of the body in general. Like Camus, Brouzet assumed a close relation between ‘medical’ education and moral education, between the functioning of the intellect and will and the functioning of the organs.¹⁴ Brouzet’s medical education was not primarily education about health and diseases, or the instruction of medical professionals, as we might assume from today’s usage of the word, just as Camus’ corporeal education was not physical education in the sense of exercising. Rather, both terms referred broadly to the betterment of the bodily human existence and the right ‘way of living’. An equally broad conception of medicine as a general science of the human body supported these notions of education. Both the label ‘medical’ and ‘medical education’ contained much more than a narrower, contemporary understanding of ‘the medical’ allows for.

Pushing even further than his contemporaries, whose broad notions of medicine and education he shared, was Charles-Augustin Vandermonde (1727–1762). He was a prominent physician and editor of one of the earliest medical journals, and strongly believed that with the help of medicine it was possible to intellectually, morally, and aesthetically perfect humanity as a whole. In his two-volume *Essai sur la manière de perfectionner l’espèce humaine* (1756), Vandermonde discussed a variety of different ways to improve bodies, ranging from how to feed and wash children or regulating their passions to countering moral and physical degeneration through eugenic strategies of planned reproduction. He, too, repeated the already familiar argument that intelligence and morality depend on the senses and a healthy body:

As almost everything we know comes from the senses, and as it is the nature and quantity of our knowledge, which give us more or less *esprit*; I think that by proposing the means of correcting our senses from childhood our soul would be better instructed, we would be more perfect, and that in this way we could make all men more spiritual than they are.¹⁵

Such a medical optimism was shared by yet another promoter of ‘medical’ bodily education, the French physician Jean-Charles Desessartz (1729–1811). In his *Traite de l’éducation corporelle ou Réflexions pratiques sur les moyens de procurer une meilleure constitution aux citoyens*, Desessartz appealed to the “Public and espe-

¹⁴ Brouzet, *Éducation Médicinale*, preface, 307–314, 346ff.

¹⁵ Charles-Augustin Vandermonde, *Essai sur la manière de perfectionner l’espèce humaine*. Volume I (Paris: Vincent, 1756), xiv.

cially to fathers and mothers”¹⁶ to stop neglecting the bodily education of children. He also argued that the right *éducation corporelle*, based on medical knowledge and the expertise of doctors, would counteract the depopulation and the degeneration of French society. Desessartz understanding of *éducation corporelle* was again not the same thing as physical education in the modern sense but construed very broadly, ranging from the diet and behavior of the mother over all measures needed to preserve a child’s life, to “forming in him a temperament which puts him in a position to support the inevitable inconveniences of life.”¹⁷

From the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, French physicians made the body a target for educational intervention and claimed it for the medical field – but their claim was not uncontested. For example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) famously gave much importance to the education of the body in his *Émil*, and he was not a doctor. In fact, he was wary of physicians and made no secret of it: “What do we care if they make corpses walk?”, he wrote in his famous treatise on education, “it’s men we need, and we do not see any coming out of their hands.”¹⁸ Some contemporaries maintained that Rousseau nevertheless heavily drew on ideas from doctors or even that there was nothing in *Émile* that could not be found in earlier (medical) texts.¹⁹ However, Rousseau himself did not acknowledge any such influence on his educational ideas. Instead, he referred to Locke, Rollin, Fleury, and de Crousaz – none of whom, except the former, had anything to do with medicine. Since the revaluation of the body in education did not exclusively come from the ranks of doctors, and one might just as well speak of an “educationalization of medicine, at a time when the boundaries between disciplines had not yet been defined”²⁰ as of a “medicalization of education”. This highlights a difficulty in conceptualizing the medicalization of education: In the eighteenth century, medicine did not exist in the form we know it, and neither did education. In this sense, ‘healing and educating’ or ‘medicine and pedagogy’ were not inherently different spheres assigned to different kinds of experts with different kinds of knowledge. For the doctors in

16 Jean-Charles Desessartz, *Traité de l’éducation corporelle des enfants en bas âge* (Paris: J.-T. Hérisant, 1760), iii.

17 *Ibid.*, xxj.

18 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Émile, ou de l’Éducation*. (La Haye: J. Néaulme, 1762), 62–63. See more extensively: Philippe Casassus, “Les idées de Jean-Jacques Rousseau sur la médecine,” *Médecine* 13, no. 7 (2017).

19 See e.g., an anonymous comment from June 30th, 1762 in Louis Petit de Bachaumont, *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l’histoire de la république des lettres en France* (London: John Adamson, 1777), 106–108.

20 Danièle Tosato-Rigo, “In the Shadow of Emile: Pedagogues, Pediatricians, Physical Education, 1686–1762,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 31, no. 5 (2012): 449.

question, it was clear that education was (at least partly) a bodily affair and that medicine was responsible improving the body; of course, they conceived education as a medical matter. The early medicalization of education, then, is not so much to be understood as education being inherently ‘non-medical’ and then becoming ‘medicalized’ through the external encroachment of ‘the medical’. After all, neither of those entities were fixed in themselves or clearly differentiated from the other. It was indeed a novelty that, from the mid-century on, physicians increasingly started publishing on morality, self-help, and education, but so was the fact that suddenly so many educators did. In this sense, the ‘medicalization of education’ happened alongside a broader societal tendency to ‘educationalize’ aspects of human existence, which previously had been neither within the expertise of doctors, nor educators. The rise of medical writings on educational matters thus coincided with a general upsurge in educational literature, both facilitated by the expansion of the print market and fueled by optimism towards social reform under Louis XV’s reign.²¹ Driven by the newfound belief in the perfectibility of man, educators, physicians, and other groups envisioned for themselves a novel role as socially useful knowledge-producers. Although they shared the belief that with the right knowledge and the right interventions, it was possible to change individuals and all French society for the better, they could not agree who would get to define and dictate the means of improvement. Against this discursive backdrop, the ‘medicalization’ of education can be better understood as an expression of the struggle to refashion what medicine is and can do for society.

By the time physicians started to get involved in (child) education, the medical field was still confusingly homogenous and characterized by both internal and external struggles for the monopoly on healing and a new scientific status of medicine in general.²² Physicians were neither very effective in healing people nor were the borders between the quack, the popular healer, and doctor always clear. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, physicians were the only medical actors trained and officially licensed by universities. They were officially the highest ranked and responsible for diagnosis and explanations of the workings of the human body and thus their medical ‘practice’ was mostly theoretical. After the physicians came the surgeons, who, often under a learned physician’s surveillance, operated or handled interventions like bloodletting. They were considered more as craftsmen than doctors, and only in 1743, when surgery was separated from the guild of barbers, it began to change into a respectable profession. Even

²¹ Chloe Louise Underwood, “Exercising Virtue: The Physical Reform of the Leisured Elite in Eighteenth-Century France.” (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2001), 164–178.

²² Laurence W. B. Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

lower were the spicer-apothecaries, and the largest part of the medical field, a vast “medical penumbra” of unlicensed medical practitioners.²³ In eighteenth-century France, especially in rural areas, many people still preferred to consult such popular healers or no doctor at all. Neither the knowledge nor the success gap between unlearned healers and learned physicians were as significant as the latter made it out to be and while physicians might have ranked highest amongst the doctors, they had little power and less access to the wider population.²⁴

With such unclear and shifting boundaries between what could legitimately be called ‘medical’, the indeterminacy of the medical field in eighteenth-century France complicates both the idea of medicalization as well as simple narratives of secularization. While the anticlerical physicians of the Third Republic saw medicine as an unambiguously secular science distinct from and even opposed to religion and the Church, the early involvement of doctors in education around the middle of the century paints a more complex picture. This discrepancy goes to show that the ideological alliances and battle lines of the late nineteenth century cannot uncritically be applied to the eighteenth century: As the physicians’ educational writings reveal, the distinction between medicine and (institutionalized) religion was not (yet) as clear cut, and their relation not as antagonistic as their successors would have us believe.

3 Unexpected Intersections: Medical and Theological Arguments for Bodily Education

The writings of Desessartz, Brouzet, Le Camus, and Vandermonde on the education of the body served to extend the domain of medicine in the second half of the eighteenth century. They also served to assert medical authority against other groups who laid claim to education. Strikingly, not one of these doctors seems to question the power of the Catholic Church, neither in questions of education nor in general. None of them voiced any criticism of religious ideals or norms, nor mentioned the clergy among those responsible for wrong education. Vandermonde, who did not hold back with harsh words for parents and nurses, even praised colleges run by religious orders. According to him, people were not only “very well educated in the sciences as morals” in these institutions, but they also

²³ Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 230–273.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 284–328.

“contribute to the perfection of their bodies.”²⁵ It seems that the doctors in question did not aim to replace the priest, at least not in institutionalized education, nor do their educational writings indicate any opposition to the clergy or religion. Quite the contrary: They argued for the religious merits of their work and relied on theological justifications for their claims to secure the scientific authority over the education of the body for themselves.

Regardless of their differences, all the educational-medical writings I examined share an underlying framework of reasoning about the human being and its relation to the world that is more or less explicitly embedded in a Christian framework. The human being is understood in sensualistic terms as an ensouled body or embodied soul, as a compound of an interdependent ‘physical’ and a ‘moral-spiritual’ existence in their worldly union. The extent to which such an understanding of mankind is theologically justified is most apparent in Le Camus’ treatise. In several passages, he posited that God created man so that his soul is intertwined with matter and can be affected by it. Furthermore, God had arranged nature according to eternal laws, including laws that govern “the formation of man”,²⁶ which the physician can discover. For Le Camus, medicine thus served to illuminate divine creation and to envision an education that aligns with the God-given nature of man. Referencing Aristotle, who was officially elevated by the Catholic Church to the position of philosophical authority on matters of the soul by the Council of Vienne (1311–1312) and the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517), he wrote:

If we consider that God must have created the souls the same in essence, as his benevolence leads us to believe, souls can only be differently modified through their union with bodies. Moreover, if God has not placed any vice in souls, as his justice persuades us, the defects we perceive in our understanding and in our will can only be blamed on the vices of our body.²⁷

Working from the assumption of a perfect soul created by God, the body then becomes the prime target of (educational) improvement. A year later, Brouzet made a very similar argument:

[T]he essence of the soul is invariable in itself; it is only from the different constitution of the organs to which it is linked in different individuals that the infinite variety that we observe in the twists of the mind, in the character and in the inclinations of men depends on.²⁸

25 Charles-Augustin Vandermonde, *Essai sur la manière de perfectionner l'espèce humaine*. Volume 2. (Paris: Vincent, 1756), 114–115.

26 Le Camus, *Médecine I*, 173.

27 Le Camus, *Médecine I*, 7–8.

28 Brouzet, *Education Médicinale*, xj.

Initially, Brouzet claimed this without giving a theological reasoning for his arguments about the soul. However, in a later passage he referenced the Abbé Condillac as an authority on these matters. Condillac, who was a Catholic priest, held that after the Fall, God had deprived the soul of its original powers, and thus human knowledge has become dependent on the body.²⁹ Although Brouzet did not explicitly emphasize that his understanding of the soul is in line with a theoretical position also held by members of the Catholic clergy, he did argue for the usefulness of medical education for religion. In addition to moral education that moves the soul through words alone, *l'éducation médicale* affects the soul by producing bodily changes, for example by “modifying, altering or combating the passions with each other.”³⁰ This could prevent moral danger and was necessary because “the duties of religion” and “the society to which [man] is destined require the sacrifice or at least the wisest use of most of these passions.”³¹ Medicinal education thus contributed not only to a healthy life but to living a life in accordance with what man “owes to God and society.”³²

In Vandermonde’s writings, there are also numerous passages that explicitly express his attachment to a Christian worldview. For him it was “certain that there is an immediate relationship between body and soul”³³ that is ordained by God. Furthermore, he argued, God made each soul perfect and equal in essence, which must mean that differences between humans are bodily in nature. Therefore the human being must be changed through changing the body.³⁴ Vandermonde claimed that the relationship between body and soul has degenerated over time and that our senses, instead of being the “instruments of our happiness and the flame of all our actions,” have become the “source of our confusion and accomplices to our misfortune.”³⁵ Thus, one must improve the body to “correct the senses and bring them back to that first state of innocence and truth in which the Creator formed them.”³⁶ Desessartz is the only one of the physicians examined here that did not justify bodily education with explicit reference to God or religious duties. However, he did cite traditional Church authorities and contemporary theological works, such as St. Augustine (on the sinfulness of not helping those in need) or the *Physico-Theology*

29 Étienne Bonnot de Condillac. *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1746), §8.

30 Brouzet *Education Médicinale*, 312.

31 *Ibid.*, 315.

32 *Ibid.*, 316.

33 Vandermonde *Essai I*, v.

34 Vandermonde *Essai II*, 288–289.

35 Vandermonde *Essai I*, iv.

36 *Ibid.*, vi.

(1713) of the Anglican clergyman William Derham.³⁷ His treatise does not contain any passages that indicate a rejection of religion or a challenge to the power of the clergy either. But it does contain the same sensualistic understanding of the human being that Desessartz shared with fellow physicians – and not only them. The physicians' ideas about God as author of nature or about the union of body and soul were not new; and neither were their views on the importance of health and functioning senses for correct thinking. The physicians were all repeating and building on arguments that Catholic clergymen had made before them.

Contrary to the assumption that a theological perspective dismisses the physical world in favor of a spiritualistic outlook, amongst French theologians in the early eighteenth century it was common to employ a sensualistic style of reasoning that recognized the body's crucial role in knowledge acquisition. The already mentioned Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–1780), whom Brouzet references in his argument for medical education, is until today the probably best-known representative of sensualism – and he was a Catholic priest. Claude Buffier (1661–1737), a Jesuit theologian and an editor of the *Journal de Trévoux*, was another example of a Catholic priest who adhered to a sensualistic worldview during the first half of the eighteenth century. His *Traité des premières vérités* (1724) already contained the arguments that our physicians used three decades later to argue for education of the body. Although according to Buffier, the (rational) soul itself is undoubtedly incorporeal and immortal, its actions still depend on an intimate union with the body. This is how God, as author of all nature, has created the human being.³⁸ Against the Cartesians, Buffier argued that it is not the cogito that cannot be doubted but the sensible body. Not our thinking, but our bodily existence is the first philosophical truth, and it is a truth on which even religion hinges:

Divine revelation and human authority are imprinted on us only through the testimony of the senses. That is, either with our eyes, which have seen the wonders of the Almighty, or with our ears, which have heard the speeches of men speaking to us on behalf of God.³⁹

Only through our bodily sensibility can we know anything, including the truths of religion.⁴⁰ For Buffier as well it is the body that must be educated, the senses that

³⁷ Desessartz *Éducation corporelle*, xvii, 19.

³⁸ Claude Buffier, *Traité des premières vérités et de la source de nos jugements, où l'on examine le sentiment des philosophes de ce temps sur les premières notions des choses*. Volume 2 (Paris: Didot, 1724), 1–18, 56–67.

³⁹ Claude Buffier, *Traité des premières vérités et de la source de nos jugements, où l'on examine le sentiment des philosophes de ce temps sur les premières notions des choses*. Volume 1 (Paris: Didot, 1724), 14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14–44.

must be improved, for “it is true that our organs give us perfect certainty only when they are perfectly formed” but “there is scarcely one of our organs that is not defective in some part”.⁴¹ However, unlike the doctors who came after him, Buffier was not as convinced that the medical field would provide a solution since he doubted that it could produce any certain knowledge. Although he did not classify medicine as a science, Buffier nevertheless concluded that “there is no profession in the world from which we have more to hope”.⁴² While the Buffier was only hesitantly optimistic, others set out to sacralize medicine. The devout Jansenist⁴³ doctor Phillippe Hecquet (1661–1737), for example, argued that medicine deserved to be the most noble of all arts. For him, medicine was tasked with preserving God’s creation according to his laws revealed in scripture and nature, making it sacred rather than profane.⁴⁴

French Catholic theologians such as Condillac and Buffier illustrate the pitfalls of all too quickly assigning medicine, sensualistic reasoning, or the body to the secular realm. In the eighteenth century, medicine still “drew heavily from the well of the Church”.⁴⁵ This was true both in terms of making sense of the human condition, health, and disease as well as when it came to medical practitioners. The Catholic Church had long been involved in shaping the field of medicine.⁴⁶ Nursing orders were dedicated to the care of the sick, devout laymen and laywomen saw it as their religious duty to practice medicine, journals associated with religious orders were popularizing medical knowledge, some clergymen doubled as physicians and some secular doctors had studied theology and originally wanted to become priests. Ideas and arguments moved from theological to medical debates, and vice versa. The borders between the medical and the religious field were porous, their do-

41 Ibid., 107.

42 Claude Buffier, *Premières Vérites II*, 115.

43 Jansenism was an inner-catholic reform movement that first crystallized around the controversy of how to reconcile divine grace and human free will. As part of a broader rigorist reaction to what was perceived as lax morality of religious orders like the Jesuits, the Jansenists emphasized human depravity and propagated a return to austere morality and the theological authority of Augustinus. Despite accusation of an ideological proximity to Protestantism, which ultimately led to their political persecution, the Jansenist movement gained many supporters, not least in France. O’Connor, Thomas, “Jansenism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Régime*, ed. William Doyle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 318–336.

44 Phillippe Hecquet, *La Médecine Théologique ou la Médecine Creee, Telle qu’elle se fait voir ici, sortie des mains de Dieu, Créateur de la Nature, et régie par ses Loix*. Volume 1. Paris: Cavelier, 1733), ii–xii, xx–xlv.

45 Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 18.

46 See extensively Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World* and Guenther B. Risse, *Mending Bodies, Saving Souls. A History of Hospitals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

mains and interests often overlapping. The interweaving of religious and medical arguments in the physicians' educational writings was not unusual, but typical of their time. There were of course tensions between the different interest groups in the medical field, including tensions between ecclesiastical and secular medical practitioners. However, it would be an oversimplification to speak of medicine in eighteenth century France as being an inherently secular or irreligious domain.

Hasty assignments of medicine to the 'secular' usually hide equally hasty assumptions about who has authority over and legitimate knowledge about which objects and which ideas belong to which discursive field in the first place. It is a common assumption that the world or the body are 'secular' objects and that natural explanations are 'secular explanations', while the realm of 'the spiritual', the after-life, the soul, and supernatural explanations belong to religion and the space of the Church. Thus, a shift towards the body and natural explanations in education is seen as evidence of secularization in the sense of *Verweltlichung*. Becoming more 'this-worldly' seems to further imply less 'religious'. Yet, the early medicalization of education shows such clear opposites collapse on closer examination: The so-called natural, this-worldly explanations of doctors are both medical *and* religious explanations in line with theological currents that were prominent at the time. Even decades before doctors used them to expand their power, a valorization of the body and popularization of sensualistic arguments could be found within theology. A turn towards natural explanations had already been facilitated by the Catholic Church which itself played a crucial role in what is sometimes called the *Disenchantment* of the world (see also Dekker, this volume).⁴⁷ In combatting medical superstition, exposing false miracles, and fighting charlatans, learned physicians often joined hands with the clergy against the 'supernatural'. We also tend to think of medical experts as secular practitioners. While doctors might be privately religious, their medical knowledge is empirical and scientific. In contrast, priests or nuns focus on salvation and base their knowledge on the scriptures and faith. Medicine heals sickness, the Church deals with sin. However, such retrospectively applied, schematic oppositions omit the blurred boundaries and homogeneity of the medical field in eighteenth century France. Nothing about medicine makes it inherently anti-religious or an inherently secular affair, and neither are underlying dichotomies such as medicine and religion, doctor and priest, natural knowledge and supernatural belief a given. Instead, these binaries are contingent products of specific historical trajectories and shifting discursive formations. They are also the result of

⁴⁷ This notion of secularization is originally based on Weber, 'Wissenschaft als Beruf,' *Max Weber: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1982), 593–597.

struggles between different groups for the power over the definition and the domination of certain domains of life.

4 Boundaries in the Making: Medical Knowledge in the French Enlightenment

The early medicalization of education was an opportunity to valorize medicine and assert it as a socially useful science. To assert themselves as experts in social reform, physicians utilized a space that had begun to establish itself alongside the traditional spaces of power: The emerging public sphere.⁴⁸ Around the middle of the century, the public sphere had become the site of publicized health panics. Concerns about sicknesses and depopulation, which seriously threatened the economic and military power of France, could spread amongst the political and intellectual elite. Regardless of whether this fear was justified or not, the medical field was able to use such health scares to assert itself as a useful science in the nascent public sphere⁴⁹ and to argue for the necessity of ‘medical’ or ‘bodily’ education. This new public domain was not a ‘secular space’ in the sense that it was devoid of religion or that no Church members participated in it. On the contrary, the very emergence of the public sphere was linked to religious controversy, and in France in particular to the Jansenist newspaper *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, wanting to mobilize the laity to further their religio-political causes.⁵⁰ However, from the middle of the century on, the public sphere would also become the site of religious skepticism and anti-clericalism. In the context of the absolutist state’s population policy and the heightened optimism in social reform, medicine could change its image in the eyes of a new class of public, intellectual elites – who, in turn, used it for their own causes. Among them were the *philosophes* and other ‘enlightened’ thinkers who started to incorporate medical knowledge into their philosophical and political arguments.

The Enlightenment is often considered as the age of reason – in France, it can just as well be considered the age of *sensibilité*. In much of the literary and scholarly production associated with the French Enlightenment, the body was a central theme and a shared sensualistic epistemology framed discussions about knowledge, truth, and speculations about human nature. Thus, medicine functioned as

⁴⁸ Tim C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660–1789* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002), 103–181.

⁴⁹ See extensively Quinlan, *Nation in Decline*, Brockliss and Jones, *Medical World*, 379–398.

⁵⁰ Blanning, *Power*, 157–158.

a central field of reference for all kinds of arguments and metaphors.⁵¹ Some historians argue that this ideological elevation of medicine in the context of the Enlightenment preceded the actual “scientific and technological revolutions that would later make medicine truly effective.”⁵² In any case, the association of medicine with the Enlightenment proved mutually beneficial: Medicine was placed in the service of ‘the Enlightenment’, which gave doctors an expert status in matters of human nature and possible progress, while the *philosophes* received scientific authority to bolster their arguments. In the famous *Encyclopédie*, for instance, the flagship project of the *philosophes*, medicine is heralded as a “noble and divine science” that is “more important than any other”⁵³ and physicians function as authorities on the question of what education is. With explicit reference to Le Camus and Brouzet, *education* is defined in the *Encyclopédie* as

the care with which we nourish, educate, and teach children; thus, education has as its object, 1. the health and good constitution of the body; 2. the sincerity and the instruction of the mind; 3. manners, that is, the conduct of life, and social qualities.⁵⁴

In line with other medico-educational writings as discussed, the improvement of the body is a necessary component of education, and even the education of the mind is reviewed in sensualistic terms. Interestingly, the main source for the argument that thinking depends on the body is the Jesuit theologian Claude Buffier. This illustrates how even in the *Encyclopédie*, medical and theological arguments were still intertwined – although this project quickly came under suspicion of going against the Catholic Church. As the century progressed, at least on an ideological level, the association of medicine with skepticism of religion and the anti-clerical wing of the French Enlightenment began to solidify. By the end of the century, sensualistic reasoning about human nature had come to be identified with secularist groups such as the *ideologués* and decried by their opponents as materialistic and irreligious.

51 See extensively Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology. Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of the Eighteenth-Century France*. (Baltimore/London: John Hopkins University Press, 1998) and Elizabeth A. Williams, *The physical and the moral. Anthropology, physiology, and philosophical medicine in France 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

52 E.g., Jean Baubérot, “Laïcité, médecine, éthique et politiques publiques (XIXe–XXIe siècle),” *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health* 5 (2018): 59.

53 Jean-Joseph Ménéuret, “Observation,” *Encyclopédie, ou, Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers (1751–1780)* ed. Denis Diderot and Jean-Baptiste d’Alembert, Volume 11 (Paris: Durand, 1755), 315.

54 César Chesneau Dumarsais “Éducation,” *Encyclopédie, ou, Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers (1751–1780)* ed. Denis Diderot and Jean-Baptiste d’Alembert, Volume 4 (Paris: Durand, 1755), 397.

A multitude of different events and developments that unfortunately lie beyond the scope of this chapter converged to enable such a shift. The religious scandal surrounding La Mettrie will serve as one example of such an event that strengthened the association of medicine with Anti-Catholicism. Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709–1751) was one of the few doctors amongst the *philosophes*, and he was also one of the most radically anticlerical among them. Although La Mettrie was certainly not a typical doctor – he strongly criticized his profession, and his anticlerical opinions cost him his position – he continued to further the production of an antagonistic image by publicly using medicine against religion. In particular, La Mettrie used medical knowledge to question the immortality and immateriality of the soul, and in doing to, he made strikingly similar sensualistic arguments about the dependence of morality and thinking on the body to those of Le Camus and his fellow physicians.⁵⁵ So similar indeed, that Le Camus explicitly distanced himself from La Mettrie, stating that his conclusions were neither materialist, nor did they in any way question the immortality and immateriality of the soul.⁵⁶ This suggests that in the middle of the century the combination of medical arguments and an attack on religious dogma or the Church was neither typical nor inevitable. Nevertheless, the scandal around La Mettrie’s medical materialism contributed to a hardening of the fronts and increased suspicions about sensualistic arguments, and with them medicine. This ideological association of medical knowledge with the irreligious wing of the Enlightenment facilitated a discursive shift that set the stage for the later alliance of medicine and political secularism.

5 Concluding Remarks

In the nineteenth century, medicine was put in the service of political secularism, but the changing relationship between ‘religious’ and ‘medical’ reasoning predating this alliance evades simple secularization narratives. The case of the early medicalization of education in France from mid-eighteenth century onwards illustrates that schematic oppositions implied in many of the nineteenth century progress narratives fail to grasp the complex reality of the religious and medical landscape of the eighteenth century. A closer examination of early modern discussions contributes to understanding how certain narratives came to be that are taken for granted and instrumentalized in the political debates of the nineteenth

⁵⁵ Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *L’Homme Machine* (Leyden: Elie Luzac, 1748).

⁵⁶ Le Camus, *Médecine I*, xvii–xxii.

century – e.g., that medicine is not only secular but antithetical to religion. When the physicians tried to carve out a new space of authority for themselves in the field of education, this did not come with an inherent opposition against the Church or religion. Their educational writings do not reveal a linear progression of supernatural, religious ideas to secular, scientific ideas but rather the inadequacy of applying these binaries retrospectively to a time in which ‘the medical’ and ‘the religious’ were (still) intertwined. Instead, their ‘medical view’ on education was legitimized by sensualistic arguments and a valorization of the body and nature that had gained traction and approval within Catholic theology years before doctors discovered the topic for themselves. That very similar lines of reasoning would turn against religion and the Church was not a historical necessity. Rather it was the contingent outcome of professionalization efforts and the trajectory the medical discourse took during the French Enlightenment. This ideological drifting apart of ‘medicine’ and ‘religion’ in the eyes of the public, even before they were clearly delineable on a practical level, would then shape the further development of medicine vis-à-vis the Catholic Church.

Although it is perhaps easier to determine which actors and institutions belong to ‘the secular’ or ‘the religious,’ it makes sense to shift perspectives and examine historical processes of discursive boundary-making when it comes to ideologies, arguments, and fields of knowledge. As scholars, we should abandon the idea that certain arguments or ideas necessarily belong to a static discursive field and carry within them a fixed ideological alignment: Instead of assuming that “the secular” and “the religious” are opposing entities that have always existed and that medical reasoning inherently belongs to the former, research can then focus on when and how such opposites arise, how ideas move between different fields, and are reconfigured or abandoned when their ideological alliances shift.

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Jeroen J.H. Dekker

From Sacral to Profane: The Visualization of Parental and Children's Emotions in Early Modern Europe

Abstract: The changing role of religion mirrors in the visualizations of the bodily expression of emotions of children and parents. In early modern Europe – the period between the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment – the humanizing approach of this subject within sacral art brought its holy characters closer to people's emotional world and became a source of inspiration for secular art. This took place mainly in urbanized areas with a working art market made possible through the early capitalist economy, the so-called European Megalopolis, as is the case with Flanders, Tuscany, part of Germany, part of Spain, and the Dutch Republic. Those examples show how sacral art inspired the profane visualization of emotions of child and parents. Moreover, they reflect the increasing impact of an educational mindset and illustrate the compatibility of a stronger focus on human emotions and a more intensive rather than weaker impact of religion on daily life. Therefore, this case from early modern Europe can put the secularization reforms in modern Europe in a broader, long-term perspective.

1 Introduction

This contribution deals with the changing visualization of the bodily expression of emotions of children and parents in early modern Europe, roughly the period between the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment. The humanizing approach of this subject within sacral art in sculptures, frescos, and paintings brought its holy characters closer to people's emotional world. Moreover, it became a source of inspiration for secular art. This development took place mainly in urbanized areas with a working art market made possible through the early capitalist economy, the so-called European Megalopolis. The examples analyzed below are situated in this region, in particular in Flanders, Tuscany, part of Germany, part of Spain, and the Dutch Republic.¹ Those examples show how sacral art inspired the profane visualization of emotions of child and parents and they reflect the increasing impact of an educational mindset expressed in the concepts of “senti-

1 Braudel, *Le temps du monde*.

ment de la famille” and “sentiment de l’enfance” by Philippe Ariès. Moreover, it illustrates the – for contemporaries self-evident – compatibility of a stronger focus on human emotions and a more intensive rather than weaker impact of religion on daily life. Therefore, this case from early modern Europe can put the secularization reforms in modern Europe in a broader, long-term perspective.

In the following we will first discuss the pros and cons of the use of the psychological concept of emotion in historical research (section 2). After turning to the impact of sacral art on secular art (Section 3) we focus on the visualization of the bodily expression of emotions within three popular subjects in sacral art, the Madonna, the Christ child, and the Holy Family, and how its humanization served as a breeding place for the depiction of the bodily expression of emotions in secular portraits of the same subjects, namely mother and child, the child, and the family (section 4).

2 ‘Emotion’ in Early Modern Europe?

The attention for emotions of children and parents with its early modern Europe compatibility of secularization of art and intensifying of religion can put the secularization in modern Europe in a *longue durée* perspective. But there is something tricky going on with the word emotion: an ever-lasting discussion of what is an emotion, and questions about how to use this psychological concept in historical research.² On the question what is an ‘emotion’ a famous answer was given one hundred-forty years ago by the American psychologist William James (1842–1910). In his article in *Mind* (1884), entitled ‘What Is an Emotion?’ and considered as the start of psychological emotion research, he argued: “Common sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run; we are insulted by a rival, are angry and strike. The hypothesis here to be defended says that this order of sequence is incorrect, that the one mental state is not immediately induced by the other, that the bodily manifestations must first be interposed between, and that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike, or tremble, because we are sorry, angry, or fearful, as the case may”.³

² Dekker, *Children’s Emotions in Europe*, 11.

³ James, ‘What is an Emotion?’, 190; the same formulation in James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, 449–450. Cf. Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 9–10.

James thus thought that not an emotion causes bodily changes but that the awareness of bodily changes causes an emotion.⁴ James's answer was soon questioned and across time psychologists continued to disagree about this question. Thomas Dixon summarized this process as "the history of a keyword in crisis [. . .] at the heart of modern psychology". Because of that "little scientific consensus on the answer to his question" the problem was "the very category of 'emotions'".⁵ Other psychologists shared Dixon's opinion and stated that "after over a hundred years of psychological study, we lack consensus regarding the very definition of emotion."⁶ The objection that 'emotion' was used too broadly so that it did "cover almost all of human mental life"⁷ is related to the question about how to use this psychological category in historical research.

Many historians approach this question with skepticism, quite understandable in particular because psychological categories often serve the ambition to approach psychological topics with, in the words of James, a "natural-science point of view".⁸ The underlying polarity between psychology and life sciences with a nomothetic gaze searching after general laws, and humanities like anthropology and history with a focus on the individual and the unique,⁹ refers to Wilhelm Windelband's classic dichotomy from 1894 between nomothetic natural sciences and idiographic humanities.¹⁰ This polarity should not prevent historians from benefiting from psychological categories in historical research together with a high sensitivity for variations over historical time. But at the same time using 'emotion' could be problematic for early modern Europe because only from mid-eighteenth century 'emotion' started to be used more frequently as a synonym for passions and affections, the concepts used until then.¹¹ When René Descartes (1596–1650) entitled his book on emotions from 1649 as *Les passions de l'âme*, this was in accordance with the scholarly standards of his time.¹² The slow-moving change of terminology went in particular from the end of the nineteenth century together with a change of what emotions actually are.¹³ The introduction by philosophers, biologists and psychologists of 'emotion' in the course of the nineteenth

4 Boddice, 'Medical and Scientific Understandings', 30.

5 Thomas Dixon, "Emotion", 338.

6 Cunningham and Kirkland, 'Emotion, Cognition', 369. Other objections in Albano, 'The puzzle', 494–497; Downes and Trigg, 'Editors' Introduction, 8, 3–11.

7 Dixon, "'Emotion'", 342–343.

8 Frijhoff, 'Emoties', 285; James, *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. 1, 183–184.

9 Cf. Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 5, 7.

10 Dekker, 'Images as representations', 706–07; Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 75–146.

11 Oatley, 'Emotions', 141–142; Dixon, *From Passions*, 13.

12 Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*.

13 Dixon, *From Passions*, 5, 9; cf. Mulligan and Scherer, 'Toward', 346–347.

century as an over-arching category went together with a change from a theological and moral understanding of passions and affections, or states of the soul, into a seemingly neutral and scientific understanding of emotions as states of the mind.¹⁴ This brought Dixon to the conclusion that using emotion as a covering category in historic research would implicate anachronism and presentism and opposed its use for periods like early modern Europe.

Still there are reasons for using it also for that period, as Julie Ellison makes clear. She proposes to use “‘emotion’ as a catch-all term covering a wide variety of concepts used in the past, such as ‘passions’, ‘sensibility’, ‘sympathy’, ‘sentiment’ and ‘affection’”. She so combines ‘emotion’ with the variety of categories used in the past.¹⁵ This usage of emotion as over-arching category corresponds with what many historians of emotions, among them pioneers such as Barbara Rosenwein and Ute Frevert, are doing.¹⁶ For the rest, the use of modern concepts and theories is common in many studies within social, economic, political, and cultural history, as in studies on economic growth fueled by modern economic theory. Also for research into the history of emotions the most important condition is that this use would not affect the leading role of time-bound discourses and terminologies.¹⁷ Therefore, ‘emotion’ will be used here heuristically, i.e. with sensitiveness for historical change, and will cover all categories across time including states of the soul and of the mind, such as passions, affections and emotions. Also the distinction in basic emotions could be used as a heuristic tool. Although opposed fiercely by James, many studies including those by Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes in early modern Europe and later by many psychologists deal with taxonomies, often organized in so-called basic emotions, mostly including happiness, sadness, fear, surprise, disgust, and anger.¹⁸

14 Oatley, ‘Emotions’, 135; Dixon, “‘Emotion’”, 339–340; cf. Deigh, ‘William James’, 5–8.

15 Dixon, *From Passions*, 16, quoting Ellison, *Cato’s Tears*; Dixon, *idem*, 11.

16 Rosenwein, *Generations of feeling*; Frevert, *Emotions in History*; Frevert et al. (eds.), *Emotional Lexicons*; cf. Plamper, *The history of emotions*, 11–12.

17 Bantock, ‘Educating the emotions’, 122; Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 147.

18 Mason & Capitanio, ‘Basic Emotions’, 239, referring to Ortony & Turner, ‘What’s basic’; Frijda, *The Emotions*, 72–75; Selvaraj et al., ‘Classification’; Ekman and Cordaro, ‘What is Meant by Calling Emotions Basic’; Sykora et al., ‘Emotive ontology’, 19–26; Cambria et al., ‘The Hourglass’, 144–157; Tracy and Randles, ‘Four Models’, 399.

3 Sacral Art as the Breeding Place for Secular Art on Parental and Children's Emotions

Initially sacral art focused on the holiness of its main characters. But from the medieval Renaissance in the thirteenth century, when sacral art still dominated the artistic interpretation of the world, emotions of those characters became more tangible. They came closer to people's own emotional equipment, standards, and communities.¹⁹ Sacral art, distancing itself from the Byzantine tradition of showing at most almost freezing emotions of its characters, now started to show more human emotions, among them sadness, pain, and fear, mostly associated with the suffering of Christ and the compassion of the Virgin,²⁰ and joy and happiness in depictions of the Holy Family or of the Madonna with child. Those more visible and recognizable emotions could better move the emotions of the believers and support them in the assessment of emotions, then mentioned passions and affections, through the framework of capital sins and virtues that "provided a theological and moralizing filter through which good and evil might be evaluated".²¹

This development also affected the visualization of emotions of childhood and parenting. It was the materialization of more emphasis on what Philippe Ariès in 1960 mentioned 'sentiment de l'enfance' and 'sentiment de la famille', which refers to respectively an idea of childhood as a specific stage of life during which the child was an *animal educandum*, and to the family as the main educational institution. For the rest, instead of Ariès' idea of a revival of this educational mind-set from the twelfth century, I would prefer to focus on its time-bound manifestation, in this case on its visualization in sacral and later also profane art.²²

This change in style and mind-set resulted in looking the most important holy characters more like human beings. They descended, sometimes almost literally as with the Madonna, from their holy throne, and became more recognizable, understandable and appealing by coming closer to the people's own emotional world. Sacral art also became the breeding place for profane art. As R.W.Southern wrote about this emotional turn in his classic *The Making of the Middle Ages*

19 Reddy, 'Historical Research', 312; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*; Rosenwein, *Generations of feeling*; Rosenwein and Cristiani, *What is History of Emotions*; cf. Haemers, 'In Public', 150–151; cf. Alston and Harvey, 'In Private', 141, Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, passim, and Duncum, *Images of Childhood*, 4–5.

20 Simons and Zika, 'The Visual Arts', 94–95; Megna, 'Dreadful devotion', 72; Southern, *The Making*, Plates II and III, on the visualization of dreadful devotion.

21 Simons and Zika, 'The Visual Arts', 100; cf. Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 53–55.

22 Ariès, *L'enfant*, 23–41. Cf. Dekker & Groenendijk, 'Philippe Ariès's Discovery', 133–147, and Dekker, 'Educational Space in Time', 3–6.

(1953), “[i]t would be a mistake however to suppose that these new ways of thought and feeling had an existence only in connexion with the religious life.”²³ Indeed, religious art was both a vehicle and a manifestation of this turn and inspired the emerging secular art. This adoption and adaptation took place in a culture impregnated by a rather strengthening than weakening Christian religion, which modernized through the impact of the Protestant and the Roman-Catholic Reformations and gained more control on the daily life of the individual believers (See also Tröhler and Polenghi in this volume).

The first step in this adoption and adaptation process was the addition of members of well-to-do families to the holy characters within sacral triptychs, which later became the breeding place for the family portrait. This initially focused on the family lineage and the father as head of the family with a depending configuration of the other family members. But gradually this genealogical configuration changed into a configuration with happy children in the center accompanied by pride parents. Also children’s portraits became popular.²⁴ In the Southern and Northern Netherlands, most concerned the very young, evidence of children’s great emotional value for their parents. In countries such as the Dutch Republic the production of such paintings and drawings answered a great demand from the broad middle-class for the visualization of daily life, in particular family life, parenting and childhood.²⁵

We now go more in detail into this development by looking at examples of the emotional turn in the relationship between mother and child, the individual child, and the family, both in sacral and secular art.

4 The Emotional Turn in the Visualization of Childhood and Parenting

From the Frozen Madonna to the Emotional Relationship Between Mother and Child

The emergence in painting of an emotional relationship between mother and child becomes clear when entering room A4 at the start of the chronological route in the Uffizi Museum in Florence. There you can compare in real time three

²³ Southern, *The Making*, 229.

²⁴ Early examples in Mareel, *Children of the Renaissance*.

²⁵ Van der Woude, ‘De schilderijenproductie’, 239.

paintings of the Madonna by artists from Florence and Sienna in a flourishing period in Tuscany just before *The Plague*. Giotto di Bondone (1266/67–1337) was the most innovating with *Virgin and Child enthroned, surrounded by angels and saints (Ognissanti Maestà)* (c. 1300–1305), an early visual materialization of the emotional turn. The large painting, 325 x 204 cm, was originally made for the church of Ognissanti in Florence when “the artist was already extremely well known and greatly in demand all over Italy”. The innovative step towards humanization is evident through a more human-like face of Maria, the position of the mother’s right hand tenderly holding the child’s right knee, and the embodiment of the two main characters. Maria and Jesus wear rather transparent clothing, an innovation which makes visible “the full plastic nature of the bodies”, Maria’s breasts to emphasize her motherly role, and Jesus’ somewhat chubby arms and legs to emphasize his childhood.²⁶

The two other paintings were produced some years earlier by Cimabue (before 1251–1302), Giotto’s teacher and Florence’s most important painter of the thirteenth century, and by Duccio di Buoninsegna (c. 1255–1318), the then most famous painter of Sienna. Turning to those depictions of mother and child in the traditional Byzantine style of early medieval Italian painting makes even more noticeable the subtle but explicit step to more humanization by Giotto. In Cimabue’s *Virgin and Child Enthroned, and Prophets (Santa Trinita Maestà)* (c. 1290–1300), Maria and Jesus are enthroned. The very seriously looking Maria wears all-concealing dark clothing in contrast with the more transparent clothing in Giotto’s Madonna. Moreover, instead of tenderly holding the child’s right knee as with Giotto she points to her son Jesus who, “[d]ressed like a philosopher from ancient times, [. . .] is blessing and holding a rolled scroll”.²⁷ Also Duccio’s very large *Virgin and Child enthroned, surrounded by angels (known as the Rucellai Madonna)* (c. 1285) was made in the traditional Byzantine style. Maria “is seated on a richly carved wooden throne” with her shoulders “covered by a banner, symbolising her honour and status”. Jesus, sitting on her knees and “dressed in traditional ancient robes”, blesses “with his right hand” the people. Yet, this Madonna, made some years before that of Cimabue, looks more like a human mother than Cimabue’s Madonna. This is visible through her right hand which does not point to the blessing Jesus as token for the audience

²⁶ Giotto, *Virgin and Child enthroned, surrounded by angels and saints (Ognissanti Maestà)* (c. 1300–1305), tempera on wood, 325 x 204 cm (Florence: Galleria degli Uffizi); text by Daniela Parenti, <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/virgin-and-child-enthroned-surrounded-by-angels-and-saints-ognissanti-maesta>, accessed 23 August 2023.

²⁷ Cimabue, *Virgin and Child Enthroned, and Prophets (Santa Trinita Maestà)* (ca. 1290–1300), tempera on wood, 384 x 223 cm (Florence: Galleria degli Uffizi); text by Daniela Parenti.

that he is the future savior, but holds the child tenderly by the knee.²⁸ Thus around 1300 the humanization of the Madonna took off with Giotto taking the most far-reaching steps, with some years later the Sienese painter Pietro Lorenzetti (c. 1280/85–1348) going further with *Virgin and Child* (1310–1320), in which mother and child look with affection to each other while Maria holds hands with her child. Artist and commissioner wanted to show an emotional relationship between mother and child.²⁹

After the recovery from *The Plague* which did cut deep into society, economy, and culture, Europe recovered remarkably fast and the accelerating economic growth facilitated the extraordinary flourishing of the arts.³⁰ The Madonna was further humanized, in particular in Flemish fifteenth century painting, as with Jesus as a real infant in a loving relationship with his mother in *Virgin and Child* (c.1455–1460) by Dirk Bouts (c. 1415–1475).³¹ Special was the *Maria lactans*, the breast-feeding mother, as a subject developed in Italy and soon also popular in the Southern Netherlands. In *Maria with the Child Jesus* (c. 1500) by Madonna-painter par excellence Jan Gossaert (c. 1478–c. 1535), Maria with almost Botticelli-like transparency looks endearing at her child and holds him with her right hand. The child, with in his hand an apple, holds his head to Maria's right breast. The child is not interested in drinking but Maria isn't offering her breast to him either.³² In *Madonna with sleeping child Jesus* (c. 1520) by the German painter Hans Holbein the Elder (1460–1534) who was influenced by the Flemish style, Maria sits on a couch in an aristocratic-like blue dress with "the naked, half-sleeping Christ Child placed on her exposed breasts."³³ Also the alternative of breast-feeding was visualized as in *Virgin and Child with a Bowl of Pap* (sa) by Gheeraert David

28 Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Virgin and Child enthroned, surrounded by angels (known as the Rucellai Madonna)* (c. 1285), tempera on wood, 450 x 290 cm (Florence: Galleria degli Uffizi); text by Daniela Parenti, <https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/virgin-and-child-enthroned-surrounded-by-angels-known-as-the-rucellai-madonna> accessed 23 August 2023.

29 Pietro Lorenzetti, *Virgin and Child* (1310–1320), tempera on panel, 71 x 41 cm (Pienza: Museo Diocesano), <http://palazzoborgia.it/museo/> accessed 27 August 2023; Autin Graz, *Children in Painting*, 30–31.

30 Lederer, 'Religion', 31; Broomhall, 'Medical', 25, 27.

31 Dirk Bouts, *Virgin and Child* (c.1455–1460), panel (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art).

32 Jan Gossaert, *Maria with the child Jesus* (c. 1525), panel, 47.7 x 37.8 cm (Berlin: Gemäldegalerie Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin). Cf. Lorenzo Lotto (1480–1557), *Nocturnal nativity* (c. 1527–28), canvas, 55.5 x 47.5 cm (Siena: Pinacoteca Nazionale), with the child's umbilical cord visible, Laneyrie-Dagen, 'Enfant réel', 87–91. Cf. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies*; idem, *Wet Nursing*.

33 Hans Holbein the Elder, *Madonna with sleeping child Jesus* (c. 1520), panel, 74.1 x 56.2 cm (Berlin: Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen), Kemperdick and Roth (eds.), *Holbein in Berlin*, 82–85, quote on 82.

(c.1460–1523). A beautiful Madonna feeds her baby with porridge in which, however, the baby is not interested. He looks concentrated with a satisfied appearance to the “juicy cherries” in his right hand. David went considerably further with humanization than Giotto, Cimabue and Duccio. He transformed Maria into an elegantly dressed mother who stays in a stylish room with a “little bit of make up”. This new mix of sacral and profane enabled the customer to both show his devotion and look at a devoted mother recognizable for the customer's social class.³⁴

This humanization of the Madonna prepared the way for its profane counterpart of caring and loving mothers, in the Dutch Republic produced in great numbers by painters such as Nicolaes Maes, Gerard Ter Borch, Pieter De Hoogh, and Frans Van Mieris. This occurred within genre painting and in portraits. Special are the drawings on mother and child by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) which bring us near to daily life. In *Sheet of Studies of Heads and Three Sketches of a Woman Holding an Infant* (c. 1635) three breastfeeding mothers nurture their almost sleeping babies.³⁵ Also the emotional relationship between child and nurse was depicted with *Catharina Hooft with her Nurse* (c. 1619–1620) by Frans Hals (1582–1666) as an outstanding example. The configuration of this canvas is rather similar to that of the Madonna, including the presentation of an apple as in Gossaert's Madonna. But the apple's Christian symbolic meaning, which refers to Eve who ate of the forbidden food in the Paradise, has faded to the background. One year-old Catharina, born on 28 December 1618 in a well-to-do Amsterdam family as only daughter of Geertruyd and Pieter Jansz Hooft, ignores the apple. She plays with a golden instrument with bell while child and nurse show a variety of pleasant emotions including happiness and cheerfulness, and love and care.³⁶ Also inspired by the Madonna is *The Sick Child* (c. 1660) by Gabriel Metsu (1629–1667), according to Brown characterized by the “tenderness of the mother for her child echoing . . .] the theme of the

34 Gheeraert David, *Virgin and Child with a Bowl of Pap* (sa), panel, 33 x 27.5 cm (New York: Aurora Trust), Autin Graz, *Children in Painting*, 120–121; for further humanization cf. Tobey, *L'art d'être mère*.

35 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Sheet of Studies of Heads and Three Sketches of a Woman Holding an Infant* (c. 1635), 22 x 23 cm (Birmingham: The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham/The Bridgeman Art Library), Slive, *The Drawings*, 44–46, figure 4.3. Cf. further Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 73.

36 Frans Hals, *Catharina Hooft with her Nurse* (c. 1619–1620), canvas, 86 x 65 cm (Berlin: Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen), Luijten et al., *Dawn*, 601; Gersdorff, *Kinderbildnisse*, 162; Dekker, *Beauty and Simplicity*, 177–78; Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 73. Cf. Buvelot et al., *Frans van Mieris*, 172, on a drawing of William Paets in his cradle by Van Mieris as preliminary study for a drawing of William and his nurse.

Virgin Maria and the Holy Child.”³⁷ Those portrayals visualize mother and child as part of daily life and often contain a message about good motherhood with the recommendation of either breastfeeding yourself or finding a good wet-nurse.³⁸

From the Holy Christ Child to a Humanized Child

Also the visualization of the young child was inspired by sacral art. The visualization of Jesus Christ took place within the Madonna but also in portraits with other children such as future John the Baptist and child-like infant angels, and in family portraits of the Holy Family as member of that family. The transformation of a blessing holy character into a human infant started in sculpture with as an early example the marble *Natività* (1301) in Pistoia’s church of Sant’ Andrea by the Tuscan sculptor Giovanni Pisano (1248–1315). Traditionally the infant Jesus was depicted as a two or three years old perfect and blessing child, but Pisano’s *Natività* shows a new-born child with appropriate movements.³⁹ In fifteenth century Flemish painting this approach was developed further. In *Saint Luke drawing the Virgin* (1435–1440) by Rogier van der Weijden (1400–1464) the main character is neither Saint Luke nor the virgin. It is the infant. It can’t sit up or hold its head up yet, is smiling near to the motherly breast, and satisfied after the feeding. In *Worship of the Shepherds, or, Portinari Triptych* (1476) by Hugo van der Goes (1440–1482), the Portinari family in the left and right parts of the triptych looks at “a baby lying on the ground [. . .], with a thin body, wrinkled skin, a long bust, unable to raise his back from the ground or his head”.⁴⁰

Secular painting adopted this focus on the young child. The drawing *Willem Paets in his cradle* (1665) by Frans van Mieris (1635–1681), commissioned by Willem’s father Cornelis Paets, burgomaster of Leiden, shows a three-month-old baby

37 Gabriel Metsu (1629–1667), *The Sick Child* (c. 1660), canvas, 32 x 27 cm (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum). Brown, ‘. . . Niet ledighs’, 147. Cf. De Jongh, *Tot lering*, 171; Durantini, *The Child*, 22; Haak, *The Golden Age*, 489; Schama, *Embarrassment*, 522.

38 Cf. a profane adaptation of *Maria lactans* by Pieter Fransz de Grebber (c. 1600–1652/1653), *Mother and Child* (1622), panel, 99 x 73 cm (Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem), Dekker, ‘Looking at Filtered Realities’, 39.

39 Laneyrie-Dagen, “Lorsque l’enfant paraît”, 33–37, 53–58. Giovanni Pisano, *Natività* (1301), marble, pulpit (Pistoia: Sant’ Andrea).

40 Laneyrie-Dagen, *L’Invention*, 146–149, quote on 149; Rogier van der Weijden, *Saint Luke drawing the Virgin* (1435–1440), panel (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts); Hugo van der Goes, *Worship of the shepherds / Portinari Triptych* (1476), wood (Florence: Galleria degli Uffizi), Laneyrie-Dagen, “Lorsque l’enfant paraît”, 29–41, Laneyrie-Dagen, ‘Enfant réel’, 98–99. Cf. Le Brun, ‘La dévotion à l’Enfant Jésus’. Cf. Dekker, *Children’s Emotions in Europe*, 53–54.

who sleeps satisfied with closed eyes. Van Mieris made also a drawing of Willem together with his nurse who looks tenderly to him.⁴¹ Bartholomeus van der Helst (1613–1670) portrayed with *Boy with Spoon* (c. 1644) a real baby, probably his son Lodewijk, unclothed as was not unusual to emphasize his masculinity.⁴² The *Unidentified Boy* (1638) by Willem van der Vliet (c. 1584–1642) looks like a pocket-size adult with fancy clothes and a crucifix referring to a child from a well-to-do Delft catholic family. Moreover, the portrait is provided with several symbols such as a basket of flowers, and behind the child is visible an impressive panorama. But behind this adult-like decoration and environment the face and gaze of a joyful toddler with chubby cheeks emerge.⁴³ The same contrast shows Agnolo Bronzino (1503–1572) with *Giovanni de' Medici* (1545), son of Cosimo and Eleonora de' Medici. Behind the aristocratic decoration emerges a smiling boy with laughing eyes and the round face of a two-year-old toddler.⁴⁴

Not only happiness but also emotions like grief and anxiousness occurred in children's portraits. Again the sacral model offered inspiration with the child Jesus as "an ideal model of the little one we wish to have". In *The Circumcision* (1461) by Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506) Jesus, anxious while undergoing his circumcision, gets protection of his comforting mother. In the meantime, a boy who stands in the audience with his mother watches all this with great curiosity. Eventually it becomes too scary for him and he no longer dares to look. He puts his finger in his mouth and turns away from the event towards his mother, just as Jesus was seeking comforting protection.⁴⁵ Matthias Grünewald (1470–1528) made a striking secular example in the drawing *Head of a crying child* (1515–1520). An

41 Frans van Mieris, *Willem Paets in his cradle* (1665), drawing, 10 x 13 cm (Paris: Institut Néerlandais); Frans van Mieris, *Portrait of Willem Paets as a child* (1665), drawing, 29.4 x 23.3 cm (London: British Museum), Buvelot et al., *Frans van Mieris*, 172–74.

42 Bartholomeus van der Helst, *Boy with Spoon* (c. 1644), canvas, 100 x 130 cm (Private Collection), Bedaux & Ekkart, *Pride and Joy*, 182–83; on masculinity in child portraits Laneyrie-Dagen, "Lorsque l'enfant paraît", 43–45.

43 Willem van der Vliet, *Unidentified Boy* (1638), panel, 93 x 76 cm (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum), Bedaux & Ekkart, *Pride and Joy*, 164–65.

44 Bronzino, *Giovanni de' Medici* (1545), panel, 58 x 45.6 cm (Florence: Galleria degli Uffizi), Autin Graz, *Children*, 64–75; Laneyrie-Dagen, 'Enfant réel', 127, 145, 149. Whether the boy is Francesco (born 1541), Giovanni (born 1543), or Garzia (born 1547) remains uncertain. Increasingly also girls were portrayed, e.g. Cornelis De Vos (1584/85–1651), *Susanna De Vos* (1627), panel, 80 x 55.5 cm (Frankfurt am Main: Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Städel Museum), Bedaux and Ekkart, *Pride and Joy*, 142–43, and Dekker, 'Story Telling', 166. Cf. Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, ch.3.

45 Andrea Mantegna, *The Circumcision* (1461), panel, 86 x 43 (Florence: Galleria degli Uffizi), Laneyrie-Dagen, "Lorsque l'enfant paraît", 43–44. See further Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 96.

extremely upset child throws his head back, keeps the mouth wide open and shows emotions ranging from anxiousness to rage.⁴⁶

The Humanization of the Holy Family

Next to the “sentiment de l'enfance” also the “sentiment de la famille” became stronger and most clearly in two family scenes, the happy and cozy family and the exhausted family on the flight. Those scenes were adopted and adapted in secular family portraits which transformed from genealogical portraits into pictures of an emotional family space.

In illuminations in early fifteenth century Northern-Netherlandish Books of Hours the Holy Family is depicted in “intimate scenes” situated in “cozy middle-class interiors that anticipate the great seventeenth century Dutch tradition of depicting interior scenes”. An example is *The Holy Family at Table* from the *Book of Hours of the Master of Catharina van Kleef* (c. 1440), in which Maria feeds her child while Joseph eats his soup in an atmosphere of intimate family life. This brings the Holy Family near to “experiences of ordinary life”.⁴⁷ Those illuminations, a product of the *Devotio Moderna* and intended for a market of pious burghers in the Netherlands and German Westphalia, are an early example of the visualization of the Holy Family as an emotional unity. Two centuries later, in *The Holy Family Asleep with Angels* (c. 1645) Rembrandt portrays also for us recognizable young parents. They are exhausted – Joseph lies sprawled on the ground – but satisfied and full of affection and concern for their baby, who sleeps in a cradle next to Maria, alert although she seems to sleep.⁴⁸

Profane family portraits increasingly showed the child in the center with parental pride and children's joy, in upper-class families often together with references to the family lineage, as in *The family of the Amsterdam burgomaster* (c. 1663) by Gabriel Metsu (1629–1667). On the left is visible the pride father, Jan Hinlopen, together with his six-year-old son, dressed like a prince; on the right

⁴⁶ Matthias Grünewald, *Head of a crying child* (1515–1520), drawing, 24.7 x 20.2 cm (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, KdZ 12319), Roth, *Matthias Grünewald*, no. 25, 69–70, 181 (quote).

⁴⁷ Master of Catharina van Kleef, ‘The Holy Family at Table’, *Book of Hours of Catharina van Kleef* (c. 1440), (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library), M. 945 and M. 917, Pl. 46b, Defour, *The Golden Age*, 152–157, quote 156. Cf. Alexandre-Bidon, *L'enfant*, 210; Dekker, *Het verlangen*, 32–36. Cf. Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 62.

⁴⁸ Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Holy Family Asleep with Angels* (c. 1645), drawing, 17.3 x 21.1 cm (Fitzwilliam Museum, Louis C.G. Clarke Collection, Cambridge), Slive, *The Drawings*, 197, 199. See also Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 60–61.

the mother together with the wet-nurse, together with three daughters, the two youngest in the arms of their mother and the nurse respectively. But in the spotlight is the eldest four-year-old daughter. She sits on the ground with a well-trained dog, symbol of good education.⁴⁹ Those pictures of joyful children with pride parents became popular among well-to-do burghers in the Northern part of the European Metropolis.⁵⁰ Jan Steen (1626–1679), famous for his ironic genre paintings, also made serious canvasses like *Prayer before meal* (1660), about a lower-class devout family in an environment of simplicity, affection and devotion. He emphasized the moral value of the family's simplicity by including a quote from the Old Testament Book of Proverbs, 30: 7–9, about not striving after the “abundance of the treasure of richness”.⁵¹

Also the visualization of not cheerful emotions like sadness and fear started in sacral art, for example in the subject of the Flight to Egypt about an exhausted family with their baby on the flight. The reason for this flight was the imminent murder of the child, because Herod, King of Judea, ordered his soldiers to slaughter all boys under the age of two in order to kill the future, just-born king of the Jews. In *Flight to Egypt* in Book of Hours of Kunera van Leefdael two parents with a baby are on the run for soldiers who were ordered to kill their child. Maria sits on the donkey and holds the baby with affection while Joseph, who leads the donkey, looks with a caring expression back to his wife and son. People could easily sympathize with the visualization of the inner emotions within this recognizable scene.⁵² The scene became popular among many artists including Albrecht Dürer

49 Gabriel Metsu, *The family of the Amsterdam burgomaster Gillis Valckenier* (c. 1657), canvas, 72 x 79 cm (Berlin: Gemäldegalerie Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz), Von Gersdorff, *Kinderbildnisse*, 86–87; <https://www.wikiart.org/en/gabriel-metsu/the-family-of-jan-jacobsz-hinlopen>, accessed on 14–10–2021; Dekker, *Beauty and Simplicity*, 172. Until recently, the canvas was entitled *The Family of the Amsterdam burgomaster Gillis Valckenier*. Now most clues go in the direction of the family of Hinlopen, another wealthy Amsterdam family.

50 Bedaux and Ekkart, *Pride and Joy*, 221, referring to Jan Mijntens, *Willem van den Kerckhoven and His Family*, (1652–1655), canvas, 134 x 182 cm (The Hague: Haags Historisch Museum).

51 Jan Steen, *Prayer before dinner* (1660), panel, 52.7 x 44.5 cm (Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire: Walter Morrison Collection). See Perry Chapman, *Jan Steen*, 139–141; Gruschka, *Der heitere Ernst*, 85–86; Dekker, ‘Beauty and Simplicity’, 173; Dekker, *Educational Ambitions*, 51; Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 63.

52 Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle, ‘Flight to Egypt’, *Book of Hours of Kunera van Leefdael* (c. 1415), ff. 1–192 Master of the Morgan Infancy Cycle, ff. 193–316 by Master of Maria van Gelre (Utrecht: Universiteitsbibliotheek), Ms 5.J.26, f. 98^r, Defoer, *The Golden Age*, 64–65; cf. Wüstefeld, *Middeleeuwse boeken*, 115. Cf. Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 66.

(1471–1528).⁵³ *The Rest during the Flight to Egypt* (1659) by the Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664) is already almost profane for without religious indications. The picture in Contra-Reformation baroque style could well serve as a general visualization of parents on the run, who bend over their child when resting for a moment and enjoy their child while it drinks from mother's breast.⁵⁴

In early modern Europe also the mental processing of sadness, grief and panic because of the loss of a child became visible in profane family portraits which include the children already deceased. With this well-to-do parents who could pay such portraits emphasized that all children, dead and alive, would always remain part of their family.⁵⁵ Parents also frequently, in particular in the Southern and Northern Netherlands, had a painting made of their child on its deathbed. This genre of the so-called funeral children's portraits is further evidence for strong parental affection.⁵⁶

5 Conclusion

Profane art about parental and children's emotions was strongly indebted to the humanization of sacral art. This humanization mirrors the increasing attention for a more realistic representation of childhood, in particular infancy, and it made sacral art a breeding place for secular portraits of family and child. This process started with the addition of portraits of members of the commissioner's family to the side panels of sacral triptychs. Those panels subsequently developed into autonomous and profane individual portraits of the family, and this occurred in modernizing Europe in many countries, among them Flanders, parts of Germany and Italy, and the Dutch Republic. Initially, those family portraits were a

53 Albrecht Dürer, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (1511), drawing, 27.9 x 20.8 cm (Berlin: Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, KdZ 3866), Anzelewsky and Mielke, *Albrecht Dürer*, 69, Kat. 67. Cf. Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 66.

54 Francisco de Zurbarán, *The Rest during the Flight to Egypt* (1659), canvas, 121 x 97 cm (Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts / Szépművészeti Múzeum), Autin Graz, *Children*, 142–143; Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 67.

55 E.g. Anonymous, *The Great Elector Frederick of Brandenburg and his wife Louise of Orange and their children* (Berlin: Schloss Oranienburg), Jarzebowski, *Kindheit*, 44, with three dead children depicted as angels in the background; Jan Mijtsens (c. 1614–1670), *Willem van den Kerckhoven and His Family* (1652/1655), canvas, 134 x 182 cm (The Hague: Haags Historisch Museum), Bedaux and Ekkart, *Pride and Joy*, 221–223, with five children depicted as angels. Cf. Laneyrie-Dagen, "Lorsque l'enfant paraît", 47, 29; cf. Dekker, *Children's Emotions in Europe*, 70.

56 Bedaux, 'Funeraire kinderportretten', 92–99; cf. Dekker, 'Images as representations', 709–714.

kind of extensive individual portraits of the father with wife and children added for genealogical reasons. In the course of the sixteenth century the well-to-do increasingly wanted to put the spotlight on their children, with the genealogical purpose fading. People wanted to show to themselves and to others their parental pride, their parental love, and their children's happiness. In that way they demonstrated their child's *sui generis* and their own "sentiment de l'enfance". The humanization in sacral art of the Madonna, the child Jesus, and the Holy Family served as inspiration for profane visualizations of child and family.

This process shows a for contemporaries self-evident compatibility of religion and secularization. That contrasts with the so-called secularization thesis which assumes a rather linear idea of historical progress, with secularization, modernization and rationalization pushing back religion to the margins of society (See also Tröhler and Stieger in this volume).⁵⁷ It is true that in early modern Europe's profoundly religious culture secularization clashed frequently with the political ambitions of the church. Secularization and modernization went together with a decrease of ecclesiastical political power, accelerated through the Reformation which resulted into the permanent rupture of the unity of the Christian church and weakened its political power (See also Wright and Kascak, Neuman & Daniskova, this volume).⁵⁸ But in the meantime the spiritual power of the church increased rather than decreased. Faith became stronger, for it was applied more efficiently and effectively as a result of the church's modernization through the Protestant and Roman-Catholic Reformations.⁵⁹ People's daily faith was intensified through a large supply of catechisms, also for children, and of other religious texts, enabled through the printing press. Religion remained the foundation of the "collective mentality" as a mental structure of *longue durée* and at the same time became a major incentive of modernization.⁶⁰ Max Weber saw the role of religion decreasing from the seventeenth century in favor of empirical sciences as part of the process of rationalism, by him characterized as the disenchantment of the world (See also Stieger in this volume).⁶¹ Most scientists, however, combined until far in the eighteenth century religion and science. Great empirical scientists such as the biologist Jan Swammerdam (1637–1680) saw their study of what they called the "book of nature" as a way of getting more insight into the

57 Buchardt, 'The political project of secularization', 164–166.

58 Dekker, 'In search', 171.

59 Dixon, 'Church, religion, and Morality'; Dekker, 'In search', 172; Groenendijk, 'The Sanctification'.

60 Cf. Lucien Febvre's classic *Le problème*; Dekker, 'In search', 173.

61 Weber, 'Wissenschaft als Beruf', 593–94, 597.

wonders of God's creation: for them science was a way to God, the Creator of that book of nature.⁶²

In this culture, characterized by the compatibility of religion, modernization and secularization, the humanization of the visualization of emotions of children and parents in sacral and profane art shows the increasing impact of an educational mindset which was expressed in Ariès' concepts of "sentiment de la famille" and "sentiment de l'enfance".

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Daniel Tröhler

Secularization, the Education of the Heart, and the Modern Nation-State: The Case of Swiss Reformed Protestantism and its European Resonance

Abstract: Using the example of the configuration and impact of the Swiss Reformation, especially in England, this chapter starts from the assumption that a distinction must be made between formal-institutional and cultural secularization. It discusses the thesis that it is hardly possible to speak of a significant disappearance of religiosity as a cultural attitude and uses the example of Rousseau in particular to show how, in the eighteenth century, patriotism, which linked the heart as a central Christian category with the free city-state, became the basis of nationalism. Nationalism, in turn, was combined with the constitutional state to form the modern nation-state, which must constantly renew the national identity of its citizens not least through education.

1 Introduction

“Secularization” is a term, like “modernization” or “globalization,” that seeks to summarize a historical passage of time. This summing up normally has a before, a during, and an after of this period. While the sensible use of these terms is hardly possible before the beginning of such a period, they are used somewhat more frequently in the course of it in order to fill these developments with meaning, whether by world enlighteners, concerned critics, or astute analysts, as for instance with “Europeanization” or “globalization.” As a rule, however, these terms are often used when people look backward, as in the case of “Christianization,” “industrialization,” or “confessionalization.” “Secularization” is used as a term of this last category, referring to a more or less completed process in the past whose result is interpreted as (still) valid and formative for us. In this sense, the interpretation of this past has to do with our present self-understanding, with how we understand ourselves historically and how we see the present and the future.

Like all other similar terms, secularization has a *descriptive* aspect related to facts, and it has an *interpretive* aspect, which gives meaning to those facts.¹ The factual, *descriptive* aspect related to secularization is relatively simple: the Church and its personnel undeniably no longer have the same power as they once did to shape people's lives. Today, no one is burned at the stake for saying that the earth is not the center of the universe or for questioning or even ridiculing the doctrine of the Trinity. The Church has no exclusive formal power to intervene in our private lives anymore, in most parts of the world it no longer keeps birth records, and schooling has largely become a matter for the state (or private companies). Accordingly, there is less need for trained theologians to regulate politics or people's private affairs. Conversely, there is an obvious need for other academic specialists from the humanities and social sciences. The overall thesis of this chapter is that these phenomena are expressions of institutional secularization that does indeed concern the Church, but they are not necessarily expressions of cultural secularization, which concerns people's religiosity.²

It is obvious that what is interesting about "secularization" is not so much its factual, *descriptive* aspect, but its *interpretive* aspect: What does this obvious change *mean*? As a rule, "secularization" implies the assumption that people have become less religious precisely because the importance of the Church and its personnel has declined. The inherent thesis of the common understanding of "secularization" therefore states that the decline in the formative power of the Church as an institution must be equated with the decline in people's religiosity, which can be seen, among other things, in the drastic decline in regular church attendance. The Church is losing power, people are not going to church anymore, so they are less religious: that, in broad strokes, is the interpretation. In this interpretation, the institution and inner attitude or mindset are thus causally related to each other: less church (power and attendance) equals less religiosity.

The thesis for this chapter is that the causal interpretive assumption related to "secularization" (i.e., the loss of importance of the Church has led to less religiosity among people) is not simply wrong. Rather, it is an expression of a misinterpreta-

1 For the sake of simplicity, I ignore that the identification of facts is, of course, dependent on interpretation.

2 William H. Swatos, Jr., and Kevin J. Christiano, "Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept," *Sociology of Religion* 60(3) (1999), 209–228; Philipp S. Gorski, and Ateş Altınordu, "After Secularization?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 34(1) (2008), 55–85; Ezequiel Gomez Caride, "Rethinking Institutional Secularization as an (Im)possible 'Policy,'" *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(5) (2015), doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v23.1729>; Mette Buchardt, "The political project of secularization and modern education reform in 'provincialized Europe.' Historical research in religion and education beyond Secularization, R.I.P.," *International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 11(2) (2021), 164–170.

tion in the perception of us “modern” people in general and academics in particular, who do not understand the discourses by which they are shaped and who believe that they are free from discursive contexts, that is, that they are rational, unrestricted, objective. The thesis is that religiosity is far less dependent on the Church than traditional assumptions of secularization suggest,³ and religion has not simply disappeared in modernity, but has found other forms of institutions than the Church to give it expression and support. The authoritative institution of modernity is the idea of the nation, nurtured and sustained by the modern constitutional state, the nation-state, and its central actors are academically trained humanists and social scientists, including educationalists, who generally speak a religious, mostly Protestant, *langue* in which they perform academically.⁴

I will make this thesis plausible in six steps. First, starting from the English Reformation under Henry VIII and its fundamental consequences, I deal with the two aspects (descriptive and interpretative) of secularization and the sanctification of the nation in the case of 16th century England (2), before going into Zurich in the sixteenth century (3), the breeding ground of the English Reformation policy. Then I return to England in the seventeenth century to show how the religious zeal of Reformation circles brought with it new formal-organizational secularization to better implement religious beliefs by developing the category of patriotism, love of country, with an orientation of classical republicanism (4). I then return to Geneva, to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to show how the state is substituted for the Church in order to bind the disposition of the heart to the fatherland and thus define patriotism as an educational goal (5). Drawing on this Rousseauian conceptualization of the educationalized fatherland, the final chapter shows how the idea of the nation came to occupy that of the fatherland, how patriotism and nationalism became intermingled, and how this amalgam became the basis of the modern public school by binding the heart to the nation (6). In a brief outlook, I aim to reconstruct why, on the basis of these developments, formal secularization could be mistaken for cultural secularization (7).

3 Anthony F.C. Wallace. *Religion* (New York: Random, 1966); Jeffrey K. Hadden, “Toward desecularizing secularization theory,” *Social Forces* 65(3) (1987), 587–611.

4 Daniel Tröhler, *Languages of Education. Protestant Legacies, National Identities, and Global Aspirations* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

2 English Reformation, Secularization, and the Sanctification of the Nation

Originally, the term secularization meant the act of “desacralization” of a sacred building such as a church or, as in the case of England, all monasteries after Henry VIII founded the Church of England in 1534. This “secularization” meant, however, not only a desacralization of buildings (that is only the negative side), but also a “worldization” or even a “nationalization” of the Church as such: the head of the church was now not an ordained priest, such as the Pope in the Catholic Church, but the King or Queen (of England). The order of precedence is significant. One did not become king of England because one was the head of the Church but vice versa, and this Church had a decidedly national (“Anglican”) orientation.

While the Church of England initially made few liturgical changes, apart from replacing Latin with English (echoing its national dimension), thus remaining quite Catholic in its rituals, theologically, it professed a moderate Protestantism, initially more Lutheran, later mixed with a moderate Calvinism.⁵ How the incorporation of the (former Roman) Church into the (English) monarchy functioned is shown by Queen Elizabeth I’s famous speech in the face of the threatened invasion of England by the Spanish Armada in 1588. On the one hand, Queen Elizabeth I derives her monarchical self-confidence directly from God (not from the Church). On the other hand, she points out that her monarchical strength also depends on the loyal, kind-hearted, and good-willed subjects for whom she was prepared to die in battle if necessary:

I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust.⁶

We see here, on the one hand, a shift from an ecclesiastical to an increasingly “national,” as we would say today, religious world orientation, which is closely related

⁵ For the history of the Reformation in England, the back and forth between Reformed Anglicans and Catholics, the story of “Bloody Mary,” and the exodus to Switzerland from where new Reformed Protestant political ideas came back to England, see Alec Ryrie, *The Age of Reformation: The Tudor and Stewart Realms 1485–1603* (London: Routledge, 2017, 2nd edition).

⁶ Elizabeth I, Queen of England, *Tilbury Speech* (1588), accessed November 10, 2023, <https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item102878.html>.

to Protestantism (but not exclusively attributed to it).⁷ On the other hand, it becomes apparent that this “nationalization” depends on dispositions that have something to do with sentiments (“loyal hearts and good-will of my subjects”). This is significant when the undisputed core Christian category since Augustine, the heart, is now directed to the sovereign who is the head of the Anglican Church. In this sense, these shifts in institutional secularization, which are easy to *describe*, have *interpretatively* nothing to do with a departure from faith or a decline in religiosity. On the contrary, the consequences of the schism, exemplified here by the separation of the Anglican from the Roman Catholic Church, probably led to rather more than less faith, and too many people were willing to kill and die for their religious beliefs. The unity of the Church across Europe was broken and was no longer considered sacred by many, especially Protestants. Accordingly, church personnel no longer had to be ordained: In most Protestant churches, all baptized persons are expected to minister in the name of Christ.

3 Swiss Reformation in Zurich: Zwingli

The idea that one must win the heart or soul of the people, that is, create their loyalty, in order to be able to ensure a stable social and political order did not appear first in the republics of the early modern era by chance. The argumentation and vocabulary were aimed at a certain formation or education that were not exclusively Christian, but (also) classically republican, as the example of the city-state of Zurich in the sixteenth century shows.

Long before the Reformation at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Zurich had adopted a guild constitution (1336), which granted political power to elected craftsmen who had to swear a public oath not to abuse their office for their own ends.⁸ Over the coming centuries, Zurich secured more and more sovereign rights within the Roman Empire of the German Nation and developed into a city-state. Initially closely allied with the Roman Pope, Zurich repeatedly came into conflict with the Bishop of Constance, in whose diocese Zurich lay and who claimed extensive control over the religious and civil life of the people of Zurich. The city

⁷ Especially in German-language research, these processes are understood as “confessionalization,” which refers to the interlocking development of church, state, and society after the Reformation; see Heinrich R. Schmidt, *Konfessionalisierung im 16. Jahrhundert* (München: Oldenbourg, 1992).

⁸ Jürg E. Schneider, “Städtegründung und Stadtentwicklung,” in *Geschichte des Kantons Zürich. Bd. 1*, eds. Sebastian Brändli et al. (Zürich: Werd Verlag, 1995), 241–268.

council increasingly questioned the bishop's jurisdiction over the clergy and the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts over the laity in general. By the end of the fifteenth century, the monasteries and convents had fallen completely under the city's jurisdiction; the council now even had a say in the choice of the new abbot of the Fraumünster monastery and in the appointment of the ecclesiastical benefice of the Grossmünster monastery.⁹ In 1506, still before the Reformation, the council finally officially subjected the local clergy to the city's lower jurisdiction.

The custom with Rome arose in connection with the criticism of mercenaryism, which was a thorn in the side of many contemporaries in Zurich: for ethical reasons, one should die for the fatherland, if anything, and not for money in a foreign country. In this context, the theologian Ulrich Zwingli, a well-known critic of the mercenary system,¹⁰ was appointed pastor at the Grossmünster in 1518. With the support of the city council, Zwingli began to introduce the Reformation in the domain of Zurich starting in 1520. The implementation program represents the marriage of Reformed theology and classical-republican politics by creating a public space: Zwingli had important steps of the Reformation process controversially discussed in so-called disputations before the city council, whereupon the council decided independently on the measures and their implementation.¹¹ Zwingli also organized public meetings: the "Prophezei," in which experts discussed the books of the Old Testament in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, would become the basis of the Zurich Bible translation. As a public educational institution, the "Prophezei" formed a teaching and working community of experts, setting standards for the language and biblical knowledge that Protestant clergy should acquire or deepen in the sense of lifelong learning in a public, that is, republican, context.¹²

This intersection of the public sphere, religion, and politics was an expression of secularization, but only on the formal-*descriptive* side (and not on the inten-

9 Magdalen Bless-Grabber, "Veränderungen im kirchlichen Bereich 1350–1520," in *Geschichte des Kantons Zürich. Bd. 1*, eds. Sebastian Brändli et al. (Zürich: Werd Verlag, 1995), 438–470.

10 From the 15th century onwards, numerous young Swiss served as mercenaries in foreign armies. For many contemporaries, this was politically unethical behavior and there was resistance to it. See John Casparis, "The Swiss Mercenary System: Labor Emigration from the Semiperiphery," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 5(4) (1983), 593–642.

11 Edward, J. Furcha, ed., *Huldrych Zwingli, 1484–1531: A Legacy of Radical Reform: Papers from the 1984 International Zwingli Symposium McGill University, Montreal* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1985).

12 Emidio Campi, "Prophezei," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (RGG). 4. Edition, Volume 6* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003), 1716; Jan-Andrea Bernhardt, "Die Prophezei (1525–1532) – Ort der Übersetzung und Bildung," in *Getruckt zu Zürich: ein Buch verändert die Welt*, eds. Martin Rüschi and Urs B. Leu (Zürich: Orell Füssli, 2019), 93–113.

tional side, which is decisive for the *interpretive* aspect of secularization). This *formal* aspect can be seen, for example, in the fact that the city council dissolved the monasteries in the Zurich dominion and transferred the ecclesiastical properties and rights into the possession of the city (a principle adopted a few years later by Henry VIII in England).¹³ The secularization of the monasteries and ecclesiastical foundations provided the city with large amounts of land and income so that taxes only had to be levied exceptionally until the nineteenth century. With the Reformation, the supervision of the church, the school, and the poor relief system also passed from the Catholic Church to the city of Zurich. The associated expenses were covered by the income of the former monasteries and convents.

However, the *interpretation* of the secularization-process in Zurich suggests anything else but a disappearance of religiosity, for what followed was the greatest possible increase of it within the framework of what can be called a Christian republic, in which the pastors were state employees who organized themselves independently in the synod and advised the political power holders on “important matters.”¹⁴ Zurich was a de facto Christian Protestant (Reformed) republic, as politics had to hedge against the supreme body of pastors presided over by the *Antistes*, the head of the Reformed Church of Zurich whose primary task was to represent the church externally and to mediate between the city government and the clergy.

A new field now opened up in terms of education. While the guilds themselves continued to organize the training of craftsmen, as before, the “politicized” clergy now had to be educated in a completely new way, namely in line with the ideals of the reformed Protestant Republic. Zwingli’s only writing in this regard dates from 1523 and was formally addressed in Latin¹⁵ to his stepson, Gerold Meyer (1509–1531), the then 14-year-old son of the widow Anna Reinhart whom Zwingli had married. The text, *The Christian Education of Youth* (1526/1899), is not about the general education of the people but about the education of theologians with regard to their crucial role in the Zurich Republic.¹⁶

¹³ The peasants revolted and were put down and were to have only very limited political and economic rights until 1798: the Helvetic Revolution.

¹⁴ Michael Mente, “Von dem Amt eines verordneten Decani. Einblicke in die Geschichte des Dekanenamtes in der Evangelisch-reformierten Landeskirche des Kantons Zürich,” *Zwingliana* 39 (2012): 93–129.

¹⁵ Ulrich Zwingli, *The Christian Education of Youth*. Translated from a Reprint of the Original Swiss Edition of 1526 (Collegeville: Thompson Brothers, 1899).

¹⁶ It was translated into several languages. The first English translation was published in Ipswich in 1548.

The first of the three parts of *The Christian Education of Youth* is about educating future pastors to believe in the knowledge that God and Providence are the source of all things. The second part focuses on self-discipline, with Christ as the ethical standard. The third part is the decidedly social or political part. It begins with Zwingli reminding us of the mutual harmony and commitment of people. “A free and noble youth¹⁷ should reflect on his duties to others, in the following manner: Christ suffered death in my stead and became my Savior; therefore I should offer my services to the good of all men and must not think that I belong to myself, but to my neighbor.”¹⁸

From the very beginning, the youth should be educated in justice, faith, and steadfastness so that they can serve the Christian republic [*Reipublicae Christianae*], the fatherland [*patriae*], and each individual.¹⁹ In other words, the trained theological state-bearer will, Zwingli refers here to Seneca, “consider the state to be a unity, like a house or a family, indeed, a single body, in which the members at once rejoice, mourn, and help one another, so that whatever happens to one, happens to all.”²⁰

Zwingli’s ideal is a guild republic which, like any other republic, is defended by a militia system to which theologians also belong.²¹ While in principle the Christian is to abstain from arms, according to Zwingli, he must learn fencing (“arm our hands and train them for the conflict”) with the aim of “protecting the fatherland and those whom God commends to us” in case of danger.²² This claim reads almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy, as Zwingli died (along with his stepson) in 1531 in the Second War of Kappel while defending their own faith against soldiers from five Catholic cantons. The Reformation in Zurich did not suffer, however, since the theologian Heinrich Bullinger, arguably one of the greatest scholars of the sixteenth century,²³ followed in Zwingli’s footsteps, becoming *Anti-*

17 Latin original: *mens*, that means ‘soul’ rather than ‘youth.’

18 Zwingli, *Christian Education*, 84. Latin original: *set ut omnibus omnia siamus*, ‘to become everything to everyone.’

19 Zwingli, *Christian Education*, 84.

20 Free translation from the Latin original, see printed translation in Zwingli, *Christian Education*, 86.

21 His (idealized) model is ancient Marseille, an influential Greek city-state from the seventh century BC that existed for about 1,000 years, Zwingli, *Christian Education*, 82–83.

22 Free translation from the Latin original, see printed translation in Zwingli, *Christian Education*, 82.

23 Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi, eds., *Architect of Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504–1575. Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004); Emidio Campi, *Heinrich Bullinger und seine Zeit. Eine Vorlesungsreihe* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2004). Bullinger was a personal friend and advisor to many lead-

stes in 1531, a post he held for 34 years. Under him, the institutionalization of the Zurich Christian Republic was consolidated in the hands of elected guild masters, who were accountable to the church and its state-employed personnel,²⁴ a model that met with (not undivided) interest in much of Europe.

4 The Dawn of the Commonwealth of England: Milton

Secularization, as we can *describe* it relatively simply by focusing on apparent facts, although its *interpretation* is often contrary to the intuitive conclusion (that institutional secularization causes a decrease in religiosity), was a European process found predominantly, but not exclusively, in Protestant countries, less in Lutheran ones than in those that were more oriented towards the Swiss Reformation. While the Scots tended to lean more toward Calvin, the English were closer to Zwingli's political theology.²⁵ However, Zwingli's successor, Bullinger, became decisive. He took in Protestant refugees in Zurich during the reign of ("Bloody") Mary I, and they in turn brought Bullinger's writings to England after the monarch's death in 1558 and disseminated them there. It is generally assumed that Bullinger wrote one of the most popular Protestant theological works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁶ Between 1550 and 1560, there were 77 Latin editions of Bullinger's *Decades* in England, a compilation of 50 sermons that Bullinger published from 1549 to 1551. The work had been quickly translated from Latin into German, French, Dutch,²⁷ and En-

ing figures of the Reformation era. He corresponded with Reformed, Anglican, Lutheran, and Baptist theologians, as well as with Henry VIII, Edward VI, Lady Jane Grey, and Elizabeth I of England; Christian II of Denmark; Philip I of Hesse; and Elector Frederick III of the Palatinate. His approximately 12,000 letters are digitally accessible: <https://www.bullinger-digital.ch>.

24 Pamela Biel, *Doorkeepers at the House of Righteousness: Heinrich Bullinger and the Zurich Clergy 1535–1575* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991).

25 Gottfried W. Locher, "Zwingli's Einfluß in England und Schottland. Daten und Probleme," *Zwingliana* 14(2) (1975): 165–209; Walter J. Hollenweger, "Zwingli's Einfluss in England," *Zwingliana* 19(1) (1992): 171–186.

26 Peter Opitz, "Bullinger's *Decades*: Instruction in Faith and Conduct," in *Architect of Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504–1575. Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought*, eds. Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 101–116.

27 For a time, the Dutch even required by law that all Dutch merchant ships carry a copy of the *Decades*, which led to their proliferation in the Americas and Asia (see Opitz, *Bullinger's decades*).

glish; in the 1550s, some 137 English editions were recorded under the title *House book*.²⁸

Like all developments, the history of the Swiss Reformation cannot be reduced to individual authors and is not a linear evolution. When ideas move, they also “morph,” as the comparatist Robert Cowen cautioned (Cowen, 2009),²⁹ and this is all the more true in this case because England was not a republic but a monarchy with a hierarchical state church, the Anglican Church. In England, there were tensions not only between interest groups sympathetic to Catholicism and Anglicans, but also between Anglicans and the more radical “Puritans,”³⁰ some of whom were Calvinist Presbyterians, others anti-institutional “Independents,” some of whom emigrated to the American colonies in the early seventeenth century to found the “city upon the hill.”

One of those “Independents” was John Milton, a classical republican-inspired advocate of secularism and a deeply devout Protestant, who published *Paradise lost* (1667), arguably one of the most immortal works of English Protestantism. In his involvement in the political and anti-clerical movement, Milton opposed the episcopal power in the Anglican Church. In his *Areopagitica* (1644),³¹ with reference to an ancient political model of social order, he critically examined the Presbyterian-dominated Parliament of England, which had introduced strict censorship practices. Milton’s ideals lay, as with Zwingli, in the Greek and Roman republics³² and included a formal secularization and a republican-religious democratization.³³ None other than the anti-Presbyterian Thomas Hobbes³⁴ recognized this program and complained bitterly about Milton’s ideal of “democraticals”³⁵ or “democratical men.”³⁶

Hobbes held the universities, which had promoted the classical languages, responsible for plans for the political reconstruction of England, ones in which the

28 Calvin’s *Institutiones* experienced only two English editions in the same period.

29 Robert Cowen, “The Transfer, Translation and Transformation of Educational Processes: And their Shape-Shifting?” *Comparative Education* 45(3) (2009): 315–327.

30 See Ryrie, *Age of Reformation*.

31 John Milton, *Areopagitica; A Speech of Mr. John Milton for the Liberty of Unlicens’d Printing, to the Parliament of England* (S.n., 1644).

32 David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Milton and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

33 John Milton, *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Commonwealth*, ed. Evert M. Clark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915).

34 Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth or the Long Parliament. Edited for the First Time from the Original Manuscript by Ferdinand Tönnies* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1889), 20–22, 163–164.

35 Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 30.

36 Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 20.

church (as represented by Presbyterians) and the religiously motivated social and political ideals (Independents) – quite contrary to what he had called for in his *Leviathan* in 1651³⁷ – were to have fundamental public significance. By “studying Greek and Latin,” the students had learned to appreciate “the democratic principles of Aristotle and Cicero, and from the love of their eloquence fell in love with their politics.”³⁸ This in turn enabled them to discredit the king as a “tyrant” and arouse passions for an English republic, the Commonwealth, to be implemented in 1649³⁹ as a result of the English Civil War from 1642 to 1651, culminating in the execution of King Charles I in 1649.

Like Zwingli, Milton also saw the need for educational reform, which in seventeenth-century England was reflected less in a politically and militarily expanded curriculum of theological education than in the formation of an elite that was less tied to the traditional institutions of tertiary education. He envisioned a kind of national elite school. “Education,” Milton emphasized, was “one of the greatest and noblest designs that can be thought on, and for the want whereof this nation perishes.”⁴⁰ Yet, his curricular vision was not simply a reading list with an impressive variety of classical authors that the students were expected to read in Latin and Greek. Milton offered a civic humanist blueprint for political revival at a time when the outcome of the Civil War in England was still in the balance. He took the liberty of envisioning educational, social, and even constitutional change and, like Zwingli, also placed an emphasis on military training.⁴¹

To begin with, the argument is strictly traditional theologian, as in the case of Zwingli. “The end . . . of Learning”, Milton says, is “to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright. . . . to love him, to imitate him, to be like him.”⁴² Yet, “learning” is, epistemologically, not biblical exegesis but empirical in the sense of Francis Bacon.⁴³ Accordingly, Milton says, “our understanding cannot in this body found it selfe but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to

37 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651).

38 Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 43.

39 Hobbes, *Behemoth*, 59–60.

40 John Milton, *Of Education. To Master Samuel Hartlib* (London: Thomas Underhill, 1644), 1.

41 See Nicholas von Maltzahn, “John Milton: The Later Life (1641–1674),” in *The Oxford Handbook on Milton*, eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26–47.

42 Milton, *Of Education*, 2.

43 For the role of the senses in the English Reformation see Matthew Millner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* (London: Routledge, 2011).

the knowledge of God and things invisible, as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be follow'd in all discreet teaching."⁴⁴ Epistemologically, God is not first, not even second (as in that time with Descartes), but third. This empiricism was the basis of a "vertuous and noble Education," laborious, smooth, and melodious like the "Harp of Orpheus," an education that "fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices both private and publike of Peace and War." Specifically, Milton suggests an academy for about 150 children between the ages of 12 and 21, a "School and University" for spreading "Learning and Civility every where."⁴⁵ They would read Cebes, Plutarch, and Quintillian to make them learn "the admiration of Vertue; stirr'd up with high hopes of living to be brave men, and worthy Patriots, dear to God."⁴⁶

Arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and geography follow, then physics, trigonometry, and from thence on to "Fortification, Architecture, Enginry, or navigation."⁴⁷ Later, these young people will be able to argue ethically and thus "judge what is morally good and bad." Authors such as Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, and Plutarch would provide a suitable ethical basis for the study of economics.⁴⁸ The political ideal of this educational conception is classical republicanism, not theological Christianity. It was intended to transform England into a Commonwealth, which is why children were to be educated in England and not in France, the epitome of an absolute monarchy. "Nor shall we then need the Monsieurs of Paris to take our hopefull Youth into their slight and prodigall custodies and send them over back again transform'd into mimicks, Apes and Kicshoes."⁴⁹

Obviously, there is a clear national motif in Milton's political philosophy, which has perhaps been somewhat hastily equated with "nationalism" in research – especially in connection with Milton's classical republicanism.⁵⁰ Although, from today's perspective, one might be inclined to apply the term to Milton, it is premature for the middle and end of the seventeenth century. The concept around which the "salvation" of the English nation revolved was that of patriotism, familiar to Milton and other Protestant representatives of classical republicanism from their intensive study of classical antiquity. Their particular

44 Milton, *Of Education*, 2.

45 Milton, *Of Education*, 3.

46 Milton, *Of Education*, 4.

47 Milton, *Of Education*, 4.

48 Milton, *Of Education*, 5; see John G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

49 Milton, *Of Education*, 5.

50 Paul Stevens, "Milton and National Identity," in *Oxford Handbook of Milton*, 342–363.

problem was that the (English) concept of patriotism did not (yet) exist.⁵¹ Accordingly, in 1666, John Milton described his “patriotism” only in Latin, “*Pietatem in Patriam*” (‘piety towards one’s country’),⁵² and still some 45 years later, Shaftesbury lamented that, compared to classical antiquity, the concept of patriotism only existed in Latin. This was regrettable because, undoubtedly, “of all human affections, the noblest and most becoming human nature, is that of LOVE to one’s Country.”⁵³ The specific challenge was that the concept of patriotism was linked to (small) free republican city-states, limited to people “enjoying the Happiness of a real Constitution and Polity, by which they are *Free and Independent*,”⁵⁴ which obviously did not fully apply to England.

Notwithstanding these problems with “travelling concepts,” the concept of patriotism enjoyed increasing popularity as a counter-concept to what was considered unethical or, in the terminology of classical republicanism, “corruption.”⁵⁵ This patriotic notion of securing the nation’s destiny was popularized not least by the so-called moral weeklies *The Tatler* (1708–1711), *The Spectator* (1711–1712, 1714), *The Guardian* (1712–1713), or *Cato’s Letters* (1720–1723) but also by works such as Johnathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). Over the next decades, these ideas were translated, imitated, and developed further, as for example very powerfully in Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), in which he related the (democratic) republic and the “virtue” of “love of the homeland” (*amour de la Patrie*), which creates “goodness in mores” among the citizens (for the latter development, see e.g. Wright, this volume).⁵⁶ These circulating patriotic ideologies, which began to blend love of country with a politicized idea of the nation, especially in Reformed Protestant contexts, were taken up and educationalized by the grand master of classical republicanism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

51 In the book *Protestantism and patriotism*, which examines English ideologies after 1650, the term “patriotism” appears only once as a summative term. See Steven C. A. Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism. Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650–1668* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 440.

52 John Milton, *Epistolarum Familiarium Liber unus* (London: Brabazoni Aylmeri, 1674), 65; the English translation from 1829 was that of “patriotism” (John Milton, *Familiar Letters* (Philadelphia: Littell, 1829), 113).

53 Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Time*, vol. III (London: Darby, 1711), 143. Emphasis in original.

54 Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 143.

55 Joseph H. Shennon, “The Rise of Patriotism in 18th Century Europe,” *History of European Ideas* 13(6) (1991): 689–710; Paul Hazard, *The European Mind: The Critical Years, 1680–1715* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

56 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, eds. Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 42.

5 Learn to Align the Heart to the Republican Fatherland: Rousseau

Rousseau is a milestone in the development of formal-organizational secularization, which, however, does not mean a renunciation of religiosity but rather its connection to the fatherland as well as the nation-state (in a modern interpretation). After he had published both *Emile* and the *Social contract* in 1762, there were great protests. The stumbling block was the last chapter on civil religion in the *Social contract*⁵⁷ and the passage titled *Profession of faith of the Savoyard Vicar* in *Emile*.⁵⁸ The two books were condemned both in Paris and Geneva, and Rousseau was prosecuted under threat of punishment. He defended himself against the accusations in various publications, including his *Letters written from the mountains* (1764), which were directed against the Attorney General of Geneva.⁵⁹

In this self-defense script – his last work published during his lifetime – Rousseau argues against accusations that he is anti-religious and mocks the gospel. He was far from claiming, he argues, that the *pure gospel* [italics in original] was harmful to society precisely because it entailed more humanity than patriotism and was aimed at educating people rather than citizens. Yet, this was too encompassing for a city-state like Geneva, “too much for a Legislation that has to be exclusive.”⁶⁰ In a footnote, Rousseau states that one can talk a lot about virtues and twist words about them, but the “human heart” cannot move away from them: “Patriotism & humanity . . . are two virtues incompatible in their energy, especially among an entire people.”⁶¹ Measured against the Christian message of salvation, this is radicalized *formal* secularization because it binds the quintessence of Christianity, the human heart, to the republic. Accordingly, Rousseau empha-

57 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Social Contract and the First and the Second Discourses*, ed. Susan Dunn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 245–253.

58 Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Emile, or On education*, ed. Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 266–294.

59 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Letters written from the mountain,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Letter to Beaumont, Letters Written from the Mountain, and Related Writings*, eds. Christopher Kelly and Judith R. Bush (Dartmouth: Dartmouth College Press), 131–306.

60 Rousseau, “Letters,” 149.

61 Rousseau, “Letters,” 149. In *The social contract*, Rousseau had emphasized that Christianity detached the hearts of citizens from the state; Rousseau, “Social Contract,” 250. In a similar way, in 1748, Montesquieu had written in his foreword to the *Spirit of law*: “In order to understand . . . this work, one must note that what I call virtue in a republic is love of the homeland [*l’amour de la patrie*, DT] . . . It is not a moral virtue or a Christian virtue; it is *political* virtue, and this is the spring that makes republican government move” (Montesquieu, *Spirit*, xii).

sizes to the authorities of the Republic of Geneva that “[i]n the Principles of the Protestants, there is no Church other than the State and no ecclesiastical Legislator other than the Sovereign.”⁶² It is about the legal implementation of the idea of justice, the principles of which are “graven in the human heart,”⁶³ which, however, presupposes an authority that does not abuse its power but has, like Rousseau, a “patriot heart”⁶⁴ and is thus oriented towards the common good.

With the compound “patriotic heart,” Rousseau shaped the politicization of the core Christian concept of love. At the latest, since Harvey’s discovery of the heart as the center of blood circulation (1628), “the heart” had undergone an illustrious history of interpretation,⁶⁵ ranging from the denial of the center of noble feelings to Blaise Pascal’s assertion that the heart has a reason of its own that reason does not know,⁶⁶ and it was only the heart that felt God, never reason.⁶⁷ Yet, what even the apologists of the heart as the core of human existence lacked, as with Pascal, was the political dimension: “We cannot be both capable of being loved and happy in formal society.”⁶⁸ According to Pascal, the political community does not depend on love and respect for the law, as in classical republicanism, but on love of God and neighbor.⁶⁹ It was up to Rousseau to see this as a “mistake” and to set his heart on the state, first on the republican city-state and then, at least latently, on the republican nation-state.

In his “first discourse” of 1750, Rousseau had already made it clear that the heart – with its fundamental faculty, love – were the central starting points for judging people and culture because the heart is good in its basic features, while knowledge is all too often an expression of human laziness and vanity.⁷⁰ Accordingly, Rousseau emphasized the “true sublime science of simple souls” whose

62 Rousseau, “Letters,” 202.

63 Rousseau, “Letters,” 302.

64 Rousseau, “Letters,” 305.

65 Robert E. Erickson, *The Language of the Heart, 1600–1750* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000).

66 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 158.

67 Pascal, *Pensées*, 157.

68 Pascal, *Pensées*, 157.

69 This sentence, freely translated from the French original, is halved in the printed English translation to the extent that the meaning does not emerge (Pascal, *Pensées*, 92). The English translation uses “charity” instead of “love of neighbor,” and here the a-political meaning becomes visible (88).

70 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Sciences and Arts,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Social Contract and the First and the Second Discourses*, ed. Susan Dunn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 55.

“principles are engraved in all our hearts.”⁷¹ For him, the heart, along with reason, is part of the autonomous soul, which in turn is attuned to both the order in nature and that in the republic (but not both at the same time). This can be seen very well in the *Profession of faith of the Savoyard Vicar*, the decisive section in the fourth book of *Emile*. In conversation with Emile, the mentor refers to the “inner feeling” that the vicar had emphasized and that only comes to life when reason joins in, but which should itself be guided by this “inner feeling.” This is the place of moral judgement: “There is in the depths of souls, then, an innate principle of justice and virtue according to which, in spite of our own maxims, we judge our actions and those of others as good or bad. It is to this principle that I give the name *conscience*.”⁷² This conscience is religious: “Conscience, conscience! Divine instinct, immortal and celestial voice, . . . infallible judge of good and bad.”⁷³

In the *Profession of faith of the Savoyard Vicar* the premise is the absolute beauty of nature, the oneness of divinity, confession, and moral goodness. It is here that the mentor can talk “to his [Emile’s, DT] heart,” and here in this heart lies the true motivation for him being good, “even at the expense of his life.”⁷⁴ However, *Emile* is written on the assumption that there are no more republics and no more citizens, even though the republic is the ethical equivalent of the absolute beauty of nature. How Rousseau thought of this in concrete terms can be seen in a text he wrote in 1771/72 for the future of Poland, which he described as free, that is, as a kind of republic, at least in its principles. The defining characteristic of a good republic, Rousseau argues, is that its constitution is in harmony with the hearts of the people. “There will never be any good and solid constitution except the one in which the law rules over the hearts of the citizens. As long as the legislative force does not reach that point, the laws will always be evaded.” However, Rousseau asks, “how to reach hearts?”⁷⁵ The answer is related to what research now labels as “educationalization,” which has significantly shaped the era that is described as “modernization” or modernity:⁷⁶ “How then to move hearts, and make the fatherland and laws loved? Shall I dare to say? With children’s games; with institutions

71 Rousseau, “Discourse,” 67.

72 Rousseau, *Emile*, 289.

73 Rousseau, *Emile*, 290.

74 Rousseau, *Emile*, 314.

75 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Considerations on the Government of Poland,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Plan for Perpetual Peace, On the Government of Poland, and other Writings on History and Politics*, eds. Christopher Kelly and Judith R. Bush (Dartmouth: Dartmouth College Press, 2005), 171.

76 Daniel Tröhler, “Educationalization of Social Problems and the Educationalization of the Modern World,” in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. Michael A. Peters (Cham: Springer, 2016), 698–703.

that are idle in the eyes of superficial men, but which form cherished habits and invincible attachments.”⁷⁷ In other words: With education.

It is therefore a conception of education that no longer binds the human heart primarily to God alone or, if necessary, to the religious (world) community. Building on the ancient idea of the patriotic political self-government of the community of citizens, the heart – and ultimately the entire personal identity of the future citizen – is now educationally and pedagogically oriented towards the Polish nation institutionalized in the republican state. “Every true republican imbibes the love of the fatherland that is to say, of the laws and of freedom along with his mother’s milk. This love makes up his whole existence.”⁷⁸ Love for the fatherland, patriotism, is the most important virtue of a true citizen, reducing moral decadence and corruption and guaranteeing political freedom as the basis of the common good. The remedy for Poland’s crisis is therefore “to infuse, so to speak, the soul of the confederates into the whole nation; that is to establish the Republic so much in the hearts of the Poles that it continues to exist there in spite of all its oppressors’ efforts.”⁷⁹

Here, Rousseau constructs the connection between a territorial state, which he classifies as a republic of the Polish nation, and the practice of thoughtful education, the principles of which were taken from republican discourse, which had tended to refer to (small) free city-states: republican patriotism and nationalism become thus latently interwoven. Accordingly, the chapter *Education* is labeled as “the important article,”⁸⁰ as the central task of a free republic was to educationally attune the soul of the children to the political entity, here, the nation, and, in the process, to implant patriotism in them: “It is education that must give souls the national form to souls, and direct their opinions and their tastes so that they will be patriotic by inclination, by passion, by necessity.”⁸¹

6 Educating the National Heart and Soul

What Rousseau was suggesting in his educationalized advice for Poland’s future in 1771/72 is actually nothing less than modern education: In order to align the souls to the fatherland, he proposes a binding state curriculum that provides for

⁷⁷ Rousseau, “Poland,” 180.

⁷⁸ Rousseau, “Poland,” 179.

⁷⁹ Rousseau, “Poland,” 174.

⁸⁰ Rousseau, “Poland,” 179.

⁸¹ Rousseau, “Poland,” 179.

the learning of national history, geography, and agricultural and artistic products in order to fill the “memory and heart” of the future citizen.⁸² Knowledge related to and love of the fatherland go hand in hand and are transmitted through the soul and the heart. The curriculum ought to be written by respected national citizens and not ministers or foreigners, and the art of teaching requires the transformation from practical pedagogy into a trained profession.⁸³ A proper common education aims to accustom the students “early to regulation, to equality, to fraternity, to competition, to living under the eyes of their fellow citizens and to desiring public approval.”⁸⁴ The true republic, as the best order of free men, is based on a national curriculum developed by meritorious citizens, taught by professional teachers, and overseen by the virtuous public.

Even if this undoubtedly anticipates the concept of the modern elementary school as it was developed in the long nineteenth century, Rousseau – and Milton, Shaftesbury, and Montesquieu before him – was wrong in one crucial respect. Their educationalized patriotic state imaginary was based on the assumption that patriotism, love of the fatherland, was limited to free republics only: “National education belongs only to free men; they are the only ones who have a common existence and are truly tied together by Law.”⁸⁵ They did not expect its basic principle to be applicable to larger territorial states and to political entities whose ideological foundation was not the self-government of citizens and the laws they enacted, but the “nation,” which could also be institutionalized by the state in the absolute monarchy. Probably no other writing can illustrate this fact so clearly as that of the German “national philosopher” Johann Gottlieb Fichte and his *Addresses to the German nation*.⁸⁶ In it, Fichte invokes the common nationality of all German-speaking Europeans and proposes a thorough renewal of the German nation, which ultimately amounts to a German-national implementation of the famous educational principles of the Swiss republican and patriot Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi.⁸⁷ However, while Pestalozzi,⁸⁸ like Rousseau,⁸⁹ explicitly advocated small republics and Milton had even called for the division of England into small

82 Rousseau, “Poland,” 180.

83 Rousseau, “Poland,” 180.

84 Rousseau, “Poland,” 181.

85 Rousseau, “Poland,” 179.

86 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

87 Daniel Tröhler, *Pestalozzi and the Educationalization of the World* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 100–103.

88 Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *An die Unschuld, den Ernst und den Edelmuth meines Zeitalters und meines Vaterlandes* (Zürich: Orell Füssli, 1977), 10.

89 Rousseau, “Social Contract,” 200–202.

republican city-states in order to educate virtue and civility as a counterweight to greed for power and money,⁹⁰ Fichte and most other nationalists with and after him longed for greatness, expansion, and, ultimately, (global) dominance. With this latent imperialism, this territorial nationalism, which was indifferent to the political form of the state, was clearly different from the more local patriotism from which it had derived its emotional attachment and identity.

With the nationalization of modern political thought in the course of the eighteenth century, which amounted to a sacralization of the state-institutionalized nation,⁹¹ the door was opened to placing public education at the service of the state-organized reproduction of nationalism, the foundation of the nation-state, and to creating loyal citizens by developing “national literacies” at schools.⁹² While the elementary school integrated the children nationally and reproduced a common identity, the secondary school ensured that the future citizens were distributed across different social strata, which was necessary for the prosperity of the national society. Then, at the tertiary level of the education system, the humanities and social sciences emerged, which produced academically blessed knowledge relevant to the nation-state and its (not only educational) institutions.

Accordingly, the universities trained fewer and fewer theologians who were to be concerned with the people in the service of the (weakening) Church and more and more humanities scholars and social scientists who were, perhaps, less concerned about the spiritual welfare of their flocks but all the more concerned with the moral and social citizen. This is secular in terms of the Church, but religious in terms of the sacred idea of the nation, which wants to be loved and with which one should identify. These university-trained professionals formed the apex of the increasingly differentiated apparatus concerned that dealt with the integration of future citizens into the legal and normative order of the respective nation-state. Between them and the school, the teachers, the curriculum designers, and the school politicians, there was an interaction that was, if not free of conflict, at least thriving in the service of the nation, institutionalized in the state, and professed its uniqueness and progress.⁹³

⁹⁰ Milton, *Ready and Easy Way*, 37–38.

⁹¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Ernest Renan, “What is a nation?” in *Ernest Renan. What is a Nation? And Other Political Writings*, ed. M. F. N. Giglioli (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 247–263.

⁹² Daniel Tröhler, “National Literacies, or Modern Education and the Art of Fabricating National Minds,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(5) (2020): 620–635; Stephanie Fox and Lukas Boser, eds., *Historical Reflections on the Nexus of Nations, National Identity, and Education* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).

⁹³ Daniel Tröhler, ed., *Education, Curriculum and Nation-Building: Contributions of Comparative Education to the Understanding of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2023).

This led to the development of almost hermetic systems of national self-reproduction, whose exponents did indeed look comparatively across borders, not so much to adapt themselves to others, but rather to look for social technologies to strengthen their own vision of national greatness and uniqueness.⁹⁴ As a result, the nation eventually became something “natural,” the “second nature” of the people⁹⁵ who identified with it. With this naturalization of the nation, two of its most central aspects “disappeared” from general perception, its quasi-sacred and its cultural characteristics, and both religion and the nation became the great taboos of modern research, not least of education.⁹⁶ With this in mind, it is not surprising that somewhat distorted assumptions about secularization could arise.

7 Outlook

When the long nineteenth century is described as the age of nation-state formation,⁹⁷ then this obviously applies not only to the national institutionalization of former kingdoms or the dissolution of former empires into nation-states, but also to the alliances of the former, rather loose, more or less patriotic political subentities such as in the case of the Netherlands (see also Dekker, this volume), the United States, or Switzerland. In all these very different cases, the nation formed the sacred meta-level of political inclusion and organization, under which the quasi-absolutist concentration of power, a sophisticated republican checks-and-balance system, or an almost grassroots-democratic patriotic republic continued to perform.

What Reformed Protestantism had created in Switzerland, England, the Netherlands, and the United States, namely the defining of a (free) people whose main characteristic was patriotic love of country and thus an orientation towards the common good, had now been transferred to the sacralized nation, whose people

⁹⁴ Daniel Tröhler, “From national exceptionalism to national imperialism. Changing motives of comparative education,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 43(3) (2022): 441–459; Daniel Tröhler, “Comparative education or epistemological power games for world domination,” *Comparative Education* 59 (3) (2023): 458–474.

⁹⁵ Daniel Tröhler, “Nation-States, Education and the Fabrication of National-Minded Citizens,” *Croatian Journal of Education* 22(Special Issue 2) (2020): 11–26.

⁹⁶ Daniel Tröhler, “Giving Language to Taboos: Nation and Religion in Modern Educational Reasoning,” *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 10(2) (2023): 21–36.

⁹⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

had to learn to be loyal, regardless of whether they were part of a monarchy, aristocracy, or republic. This shift can be seen in the fact that the heart, as the place where love of country is learned, slowly disappeared in favor of the soul and its exploration, in particular in Protestant contexts. Following this, in the course of the nineteenth century, a largely decontextualized, laboratory-based “empirical” psychology began to dominate in order to generate knowledge that became nationally useable, not least in the development of the education system as a whole.⁹⁸ This type of empirical research thus became part of a research tradition that was developed in seventeenth-century England in the environment of Reformed Protestants such as Francis Bacon, William Harvey, Joseph Glanvill, John Webster, Isaac Newton, and John Locke and that, on the basis of relevant research (methods), decisively determined what was henceforth to be understood by “progress.”⁹⁹ The exponents of the time did not doubt for a second that they were researching divine phenomena (the heart, the soul, nature) and thus generating knowledge that they wanted to harness in their religious commitments for the benefit of the people, that is, for free citizens. Around 1900, this research paradigm no longer wanted to know anything about its religious basis – they even proclaimed a psychology without a soul,¹⁰⁰ and it was considered useful, especially in Protestant nation-states, for explaining or even changing life and education (see also Stieger, this volume).

This decontextualized and de-historicized empiricism, which has characterized psychology in particular, but not only, believes in methods, models, and numbers; in statistics and diagrams; and hardly questions its own epistemological foundations. Accordingly, modern scientists believe that they belong to an enlightened type of person who is rational, fact-oriented, and unprejudiced, at least in their professional activities. They see themselves as heirs to a development in which the Church gave up much of its power and transferred it to the state, but they do not see that the state simply institutionalized the cultural power principle of nationalism, which has a sacred character and wants to bind people’s hearts to itself and give them identity in return. The fact that religiosity (in contrast to the Church) has not simply not suffered under this formal secularization is hardly

⁹⁸ For Germany see Sophie P. Stieger and Daniel Tröhler, “The discovery of the soul as a place of pilgrimage within: German Protestantism, psychology, and salvation through education,” *Religions* 14(7) (2023), accessed November 10, 2023, doi:10.3390/rel14070921.

⁹⁹ Daniel Tröhler, “Progressivism,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Education*, ed. George W. Noblit. Oxford Research Encyclopedias, 2017, accessed November 10, 2023, doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.111/.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Kugelmann, *The Soul in Soulless Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

noticed. Not only this, but this formal secular shift ultimately represents a Reformed Protestant program itself, the foundations of which are now forgotten in the self-congratulation of modern rational science.

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Simonetta Polenghi

The Tension Between Religious and Secular Ethics in School Textbooks of the Italian Habsburg Dominions from Joseph II to Political Unification

Abstract: Schoolbooks are a key source for cultural history as well as for the history of teaching. This chapter focuses on the ethics taught to elementary school pupils in Lombardy under Habsburg dominion; how much this was influenced by Enlightenment models; and how the reading books used became more secularized between Joseph II's era and Italian unification (1861). Even in Catholic Austria, the adoption of the Normal method and the state control of schools were entangled with the German Enlightened pedagogical models. During Joseph II's reign, the textbooks by Francesco Soave (1786), a cultivated and enlightened Piarist, were approved for Lombardy. These were inspired by pedagogue and school reformer Johann Ignaz von Felbiger, and therefore of his sources of inspiration such as Rochow, Hähn, Basedow and Christian Felix Weiße, and enjoyed enormous success.

A completely secularized model was offered by *Little John (Giannetto, 1837)*, a school reading book by the Lombard school director Luigi Alessandro Parravicini, which emphasized self-help and scientific notions. This book, too, was also a best-seller after Italian unification. Analyzing these schoolbooks highlights that the Austrian re-catholicization in the post-Napoleonic era was less deep-rooted than often claimed.

1 Introduction

For a long time, the history of schooling in the Italian territories which were under Habsburg dominion was politically conditioned: there was a bias against Austria, particularly with regard to the post-Napoleonic age (1814–60), both because Austria was the historical enemy of Italian unity and because it was a Catholic state, that used censorship and restrained the process of secularization. The post-Napoleonic age was dismissed as confessional and reactionary, with a school policy that was not updated. In the last thirty years, more objective research has demonstrated the benefits of Habsburg policy not only during the age of Enlightenment, but also in the post-Napoleonic era, when after 1818 many elementary

schools for boys and girls were opened and the introduction of the *Politische Schulverfassung* [School system regulation] in the Kingdom of Lombardy and Venetia (issued in Austria in 1805) prompted major improvements in teacher training. The adoption of Vinzenz Milde (1777–1853)’s pedagogy, in Joseph Peitl (1762–1830)’s textbooks for teachers meant a step forward towards scientific and advanced teaching and educating.¹

School reform was closely linked to religious policy, not only under Maria Theresa (1740–80) and Joseph II (1780–90), but also in Francis II/I ‘s reign (1792–1835). The control that the state gradually imposed on schools meant initially the cooperation of religious congregations or priests as teachers, with pedagogy being taught to future priests. However, school policy became entangled with secularization under Joseph II. With Francis II, Catholicism was seen as a barrier against revolutionary ideas, but the state maintained control over schools. Joseph II’s reformism, although limited and contained after his death, left a long legacy, including in pedagogy. Milde’s theory of education, imposed in all chairs of pedagogy in the Habsburg territories up to 1848, bore a Kantian imprint, was tolerant, and linked education to ethics, without anchoring it in dogmas or metaphysics. In the decades between 1770 and 1820 the teaching of religion to children underwent a deep process of reform, resulting in new catechisms, that, after the cultural fracture of Josephinism and its adoption of Protestant and Enlightenment models, restored orthodoxy but accepted new pedagogical ideas that were more respectful of the child’s mind.²

The chapter seeks to detect the shifts in teaching ethics in the elementary schools in these periods, to see how the process of teaching reading and writing was connected with educating the people to a State controlled morality, that gradually lost a confessional stamp, even if retaining religious forms. To do that, the chapter focuses on the innovative school textbooks published in Lombardy under the Habsburg dominion from the time of Joseph II onwards, which were used in many regions for a long time, including after Italian unification (1861) and which were influenced by German and Austrian models – the modern school reading

1 Simonetta Polenghi, “Die Österreichische Schulreform in der habsburgischen Lombardei”, *History of Education & Children’s Literature*, 1 (2011): 77–91, Simonetta Polenghi, “Elementary school teachers in Milan during the Restoration (1814–59): innovations and improvements in teacher training”, *History of Education & Children’s Literature*, 1 (2013) 147–166.

2 Simonetta Polenghi, “Catholic Enlightenment for Children. Teaching religion to children in the Habsburg Empire from Joseph II to the Restoration”, *Historia y Memoria de la Educación*, 4, (2016): 49–84.

book was born in Germany in the 1770s, in keeping with the birth of the popular elementary school and the spread of the Enlightenment.³

The disciplinary field of this study is thus situated between transnational history of pedagogical ideas and history of schooling. Methodologically, I draw on the history of schoolbooks as a key source for cultural history as well as for the history of teaching.⁴ In the period considered, schoolbooks had to be approved by the state, hence they reflected the government's educational and moral policies. The research question I address concerns the way ethics was taught to pupils in Lombardy and Venetia under Habsburg dominion; how much this was influenced by Enlightenment models; and how reading books became more secularized. I will therefore first address Maria Theresa's educational reform and the relationship between the new teaching method and the new textbooks, and the link between Protestant and Enlightenment models and that of Johann Ignaz von Felbiger (1724–1788). I will then concentrate on the most successful reading books, by Soave in Joseph II's Lombardy, and by Parravicini in the Kingdom of Lombardy and Venetia.

2 Normal Method, Educational Enlightenment and the New Schoolbooks

The adoption in Austria of a new way of teaching children, whereby the old individual method was replaced with the *Normalmethode* [Normal method], was due to Johann Ignaz von Felbiger and the support of Maria Theresa, whose school policy aimed to provide all subjects with basic reading and writing skills while also enforcing their political loyalty and their behavior as good Christians. The *Normalmethode* used the new frontal teaching approach, which replaced the individual method and enabled teachers to teach many children simultaneously, using teaching tools such as the blackboard and wallcharts, while maintaining discipline and speeding up the learning process. All children had to read the same

³ See at least: Heinz Rommel, *Das Schulbuch im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden-Dotzheim: Deutscher Fachschriften Verlag, 1968); Renate Schäfer, *Die gesellschaftliche Bedingtheit des Fibelinhalts. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Erstlesebuchs* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1969) Bd. 9; Rudolf Schenda, *Volk ohne Buch. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der populären Lesestoffe 1770–1910* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1977-1^o edition, Frankfurt am Main 1970).

⁴ E.g. Juri Meda, Ana M. Badanelli, ed., *La historia de la cultura escolar en Italia y en España: balance y perspectivas* (Macerata: EUM, 2013); Dorena Caroli, Alla Salnikova, ed., "Primers, culture(s) of childhood and educational models in Europe (XVI–XXth centuries)", *History of Education & Children's Literature*, IX, 2 (2014): 11–231.

textbooks, which were written by Felbiger. Felbiger was convinced of the superiority of the method invented in Berlin by Johann Friedrich Hähn, who worked together with the Pietist pastor Johann Julius Hecker (a pupil of Francke) in the *Realschule*. The method was made compulsory by the *Allgemeine Schulordnung* [General School regulation] written by Felbiger and issued in Austria by Maria Theresa in 1774. This law imposed compulsory schooling for boys and girls aged 6–12 and prescribed training courses for teachers to learn the new method, which was gradually extended to all the territories under Habsburg control.

Felbiger prescribed the use of national languages in elementary schools, to spread literacy among the people, whereas in Catholic areas it was normal to learn in Latin. Felbiger has been defined as a typical member of the *katholische Aufklärung* due to his wide and eclectic culture and his reformist ideas, which he implemented in cooperation with the state authorities, both Prussian and Austrian, first in Silesia and later in Vienna. He was critical of Jesuit education, and regarded highly Claude Fleury and particularly L. A. Muratori, whose ideas were central to the Austrian as well as the Italian *katholische Aufklärung*.⁵ He was in correspondence with the main centers of the *katholische Aufklärung* in Germany and Bohemia and with representatives of German Enlightenment and Protestantism.⁶ The *katholische Aufklärung*, which derived from Muratori's idea of a «regulated devotion», and from Febronian and Jansenist theology, led to the acceptance of philosophical and pedagogical ideas that bore a clear Enlightenment and Protestant stamp, that became apparent during Joseph II's reign.⁷

5 On this historiographical concept see Jeffrey D. Burson, introduction to *Enlightenment and Catholicism in Europe. A Transnational History*, ed. Jeffrey D. Burson, Ulrich L. Lehner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014) 1–37; Ulrich L. Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment. The Forgotten History of a Global Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

6 A complete bibliography on Felbiger in Jil Winandy, *National and religious ideologies in the construction of educational historiography: the case of Felbiger and the normal method in nineteenth century teacher education* (New York: Routledge, 2022). On Felbiger and Maria Theresa's school policy see at least James Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and the eighteenth-century origins of compulsory schooling in Prussia and Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). On Habsburg school policy Helmut Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesen, Erziehung und Unterricht auf dem Boden Österreichs* (Wien: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1988) Bd. 3; Ludwig Boyer, *Schulordnungen, Instruktionen und Bestallungen. Quellen zur österreichischen Schulgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Wien: Jugend & Volk, 2008) Bd. 5–6.

7 According to Febronius (pseudonym of J.N.von Hontheim (1701–1790), auxiliary bishop of Trier) the Church government had to be collegial, since bishops were not vicars of the Pope, but divinely appointed ministers, as successors of the Apostles. The same idea of the supremacy of the council over the Pope was shared by the followers of the bishop Cornelius Jansen (1585–1683), whose theological position was close to the pessimistic Calvinists' one: the original sin had irreparably corrupted human nature; the human being was either predestinated for salvation or not; living a

In 1762 Felbiger had no hesitation in travelling to Berlin when he was abbot of Sagan in Silesia, to learn the new method from Hecker and Hähn. As the Seven Years' War was still underway, and this visit to the enemy and Protestant country might give rise to criticism among Silesian Catholics, he travelled *incognito*.

Through Hecker, he obtained permission to adopt, modify and print the ABC reading book written by Hähn. Ludwig Boyer compared Hähn's primer of 1758 with Felbiger's of 1763 and observed how the latter was substantially influenced by the former.⁸

In 1774, in order to complete the school reform of the *Allgemeine Schulordnung*, Felbiger wrote a new primer, that was used in Austria, Hungary and Bohemia up until the 1790s and was printed in Russia, Germany, Poland, and Switzerland. It was printed in German in Brixen in 1783 and in Italian and German in Rovereto in 1795.⁹ Although the 1774 edition has been lost, the reprint of 1776 is available to consult.¹⁰ If Felbiger's first primer derived from Hähn, this one was influenced by other German primers, such as the *Kleines Buch für Kinder* by Basedow (1771), the *Neues ABC-Buch* by Christian Felix Weiße (1772), and the *Versuch eines Schulbuches für Kinder der Landleute oder zum Gebrauch in Dorfschulen* by Friedrich Eberhard von Rochow (1772). Rochow introduced a gallery of characters who were immediately morally recognizable (the good soldier, the nasty boy, the bad mother and so on), following a

strictly virtuous life was a sign of salvation; individual pity and Bible reading were much encouraged; Church had to be reformed. Muratori (1672–1750) believed in historical and critical methods of reading the Bible, distinguishing between immutable and human (and thus reformable) elements of faith. He advocated a simpler liturgical and devotional life, centered on the Mass, without superstitious forms of devotion. While he remained orthodox, Febronianism and Jansenism were condemned by the Church. These ideas became influential in late eighteenth-century Italy and Austria, but whereas in Maria Theresa's era Muratori's views were most influential, during Joseph II's reign Febronianism and Jansenism became prominent, shifting the *katholische Aufklärung* towards Protestantism. See Elisabeth Kovács (ed.), *Katholische Aufklärung und Josephinismus* (Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1979); Harm Kluefing, "The Catholic Enlightenment in Austria or the Habsburg Lands", in *A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe*, ed. Ulrich L. Lehner and Michael Printy (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), 127–164.

⁸ Ludwig Boyer, *Johann Ignaz Felbigers Fibeln und ihr Beitrag zur Alphabetisierung in Österreich*, in *Geschichte der Fibel Beiträge zur Geschichte des Deutschunterrichts*, ed. Arnold Grömminger, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2002), 257–259. Johann Friedrich Hähn, *Berlinisches neu eingerichtetes ABC-Buchstabier- und Lesebüchlein*, umgearb. von Ch. Zimmermann (Berlin: Verl. des Buchladers der Real-Schule, 1809); Johann Ignaz Felbiger, *Neu eingerichtetes ABC-Buchstabier- und Lese-Büchlein: zum Gebrauche der Schulen des Fürstlichen Stifts bey unsrer lieben Frauen zu Sagan, Friedland im Königreich Böhmeim und Jung-Bunzlauer Creyß*, 1764, Nachdr. der 1. Aufl. von 1763.

⁹ Boyer, *Johann Ignaz Felbigers Fibeln*, 262–264.

¹⁰ Johann Ignaz Felbiger, *ABC oder Namenbüchlein zum Gebrauche der Schulen in der kaiserlich-königlichen Staaten* (Temeswar: Verl. der dt. Normalschulanstalt, gedr. bey Matthäus Josephus Heimerl, 1776).

narrative scheme that recalls children's traditional fairy tales, where the characters do not experience any interior moral evolution, but occupy fixed roles and are easily understood by children. In his famous *Kinderfreund* (1776–79) Rochow would develop this narrative system, but already in the *Versuch* he used moral tales.¹¹

In November 1772 Felbiger wrote to Rochow, telling him that he was fascinated (*entzückt*) by his *Versuch*,¹² and asking his permission to use his book without quoting him, as otherwise Catholics would refuse to read it.

Felbiger's *ABC oder Namenbüchlein* opened with letters and syllables, then moved on to prayers and a very short and basic catechism. As a reading exercise, there were then some moral tales, clearly inspired by the Enlightenment and Philanthropism. Religion is almost absent in this part, with a civic ethic prevailing: spend money wisely, use your reason, follow social rules, behave well and with good manners, respect social hierarchies. Other typical topics of Enlightenment education were included, such as the absurdity of fearing imaginary figures, that were traditionally used to scare children and make them obey. Felbiger also used short stories which depicted the horrific consequences of children's carelessness and disobedience, in accordance with Rochow and Basedow. There are five pages of moral poems, some from Christian Felix Weiße's "*Kleine Lyrische Gedichte*." The poem "*Zufriedenheit mit seinem Zustande*" [satisfaction with one's social condition] was taken from Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, an author of very successful moral tales.¹³ Man can find happiness within the social status into which he was born. The ABC ended with a long appendix, in which Felbiger summarized his anthropology and ethics and explained the necessity of schooling, here again using religious arguments: real happiness is to be found in the afterlife. Therefore, the most important subject in schooling is religion: "religion is what is more noble and useful to learn in school". School "is the place, where children learn things through which they will be able to be happy adults, not only in this life, but in future eternity".¹⁴

11 Manfred Heinemann, *Schule im Vorfeld der Verwaltung: die Entwicklung der preussischen Unterrichtsverwaltung von 1770–1800* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1974) 111–151; Achim Leschinsky, *Das Konzept einer rationalen Elementarbildung. Die Pädagogik Rochows*, in *Das pädagogische Jahrhundert. Volksaufklärung und Erziehung zur Armut im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland* ed. Ulrich Herrmann (Weinheim-Basel: Beltz Verlag, 1981) 169–193; Achim Leschinsky, Peter Martin Roeder, *Schule im historischen Prozeß: zum Wechselverhältnis von institutioneller Erziehung und gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1976) 344–405; Hanno Schmitt, *Vernunft und Menschlichkeit. Studien zur philanthropischen Erziehungsbewegung* (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2007) 27–50; Hanno Schmitt, *Neue Ergebnisse der Rochow-Forschung* (Berlin: Weidler, 2009).

12 Winfried Romberg, *Johann Ignaz von Felbiger und Kardinal Johann Heinrich von Franckenberg. Wege der religiösen Reform im 18. Jahrhundert* (Sigmarinen: Jan Thorbecke, 1999) 58.

13 Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, *Werke*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel Verlag, 1979) Bd 1, 269–270.

14 Felbiger, *ABC oder Namenbüchlein*, 60, 53.

The topic of school's utility was present in all the first primers and reading books and remained so for decades:¹⁵ in a rural society where child labor was widespread, compulsory schooling had to be explained as useful, but the texts of the Enlightenment educationalists and Philanthropists emphasized utilitarian reasons (being able to read a medical prescription, avoiding being defrauded), whereas Felbiger anchored school in being able to comprehend religious precepts.

In a peasant world, which was still dominated by orality, his approach was closer to the mentality of poor people. Indeed, in the last few decades of the century, many teachers and above all parents refused the new Enlightened schoolbooks, as being too far removed from the traditional religious model.¹⁶ The famous *Kinderfreund* by Rochow was rejected by peasants since it did not mention Jesus.¹⁷ By contrast, Felbiger's ABC introduced secular topics within a still fundamentally religious text.¹⁸ These themes, however, were brought closer without being really fused: Felbiger combined Catholic pages with texts taken from Protestant authors or Enlightenment educationalists, choosing pages that could be accepted by a *Reformkatholizismus*. He did not embrace the *Aufklärung's* eudaemonism, with contentment in earthly life as a necessary consequence of good behavior, and insisted on otherworldly happiness.

By contrast, Rochow's *Kinderfreund*, published in two volumes in 1776 and 1779, was characterized by the *Aufklärung's* eudaemonism. The first volume in particular enjoyed extraordinary success, becoming a model in Germany (with 200 editions) as well as in other countries, being translated into Polish, French, Danish, Dutch, and Slovenian.¹⁹ Indeed, the *Kinderfreund* has been called the "forefather" [*Urbuch*] of all school reading books.²⁰

The first volume contained 72 moral tales, five prayers and two religious songs. Nearly all the tales quoted biblical verses about ethical rules at the end,

15 Schenda, *Volk ohne Buch*, 43.

16 Rommel, *Das Schulbuch im 18. Jahrhundert*, 186.

17 Heinemann, *Schule im Vorfeld der Verwaltung*, 132–140; Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Absolutistischer Staat und Schulwirklichkeit in Brandenburg-Preussen* (Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 1985) 449–451.

18 Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesen*, 111.

19 Klaus Füller, *Erfolgreiche Kinderbuchautoren des Biedermeier: Christoph von Schmid, Leopold Chimani, Gustav Nieritz, Christian Gottlob Bart. Von der Erbauung zur Unterhaltung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2006) 19; Rolf Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens im Deutschland zwischen feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler 1973) 59; Hubert Göbels, „Der Kinderfreund. Nachauflagen, Nachfolger und Nachahmer. Eine illustrierte Bibliographie,“ in Friedrich Eberhard von Rochow, *Der Kinderfreund: ein Lesebuch*, ed. Hubert Göbels (Dortmund: Harenberg-Kommunikation, 1979) 116–207.

20 Albert Reble, *Geschichte der Pädagogik* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1995, 18° edition) 170.

from Solomon's sayings to Ecclesiastes, which would already be known by the people. The moral tales were reminiscent of Aesop, La Fontaine, and Lessing, but the characters were human beings. The narrative logic was quite simple: virtue will be rewarded; bad behavior will be punished, even in this world. The dimension of amusement was absent, the aim being to educate morally and teach useful things, not to entertain. Morality had to be explained logically, not through faith. Rochow insisted on the concepts of cause and effect, both in nature and in ethics. Understanding that the world is rational, the child will see that God the creator is rational and good. This optimistic picture of a harmonious and rational world, which bore a Leibnizian stamp, pretended to prove that happiness could already be reached in this life by living a just life. His *Kinderfreund* was a product of the *Bauernaufklärung* and opened the era of reading books with moral tales, but it was criticized by Pestalozzi, who wrote to Iselin in 1780 that the book's structure was too fragmented.²¹

Moral tales became the tool of the *Volksaufklärung* as a narrative *Aufklärung*.²² they carried out their pedagogical function through *exemplum*.²³ It was typical of German schoolbooks to use sayings, tales and fables, which were clear, short and easy to memorize, so much so that they were also used in the first decades of the XIX century.²⁴

In short, the *Volksaufklärung* produced a profound change in primers and reading books. Religious texts were replaced with secularized and rationalist texts, where the teaching of morality replaced religious content. Felbiger's primer was a compromise, still being a religious (Catholic) book, while presenting topics typical of the Enlightenment.

3 From Vienna to Milan: Soave and Parravicini

School reform was introduced in Austrian Lombardy by Joseph II. The key figure was the Somascan Father Francesco Soave (1743–1806), a learned man who knew Latin, Greek, English, French and German. A translator of Virgil, Horace, Locke,

21 Hanno Schmitt, „Der pädagogische Diskurs um Pestalozzi und Rochow in Preussen 1797–1806“, in *Pädagogische Volksaufklärung im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Hanno Schmitt, Rebekka Horlacher, Daniel Tröhler (Bern, etc: Haupt Verlag, 2007) 142–143.

22 Wolfgang Brückner, „Moralische Geschichten als Gattung volkstümlicher Aufklärung. zugleich ein Plädoyer für begriffliche Klarheiten“, *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* (1987): 115.

23 Heidrun Alzheimer-Haller, *Handbuch zur narrativen Volksaufklärung. Moralische Geschichten 1780–1848* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2004).

24 Ingrid Tomkowiak, *Lesebuchgeschichten, Erzählstoffe in Schullesebüchern 1770–1920* (Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 1993) 13–16.

Blair, Young, and Gessner, he had been a professor in Parma, under Du Tillot's enlightened ministry. In 1769 he entered a competition on the origin of language set by the Academy of Berlin, his essay being awarded second place after Johann Gottfried Herder's. He left Parma in 1772 for Milan, where he was tutor to the governor Firmian's nephew and taught Philosophy in the *Ginnasio*. Since his years in Parma, he had been a follower of empiricism, Condillac, Locke, and the *Idéologues*: Soave was one of the priests who accepted a sensualist way of thinking (see also Stieger, this volume).

In 1786 Soave was appointed to the board for elementary schools [*Delegazione per le scuole normali*] with the task of introducing school reform and the *Normalmethode* in Lombardy. In the same year, he translated Felbiger's *Kern des Methodenbuches* which was to become the mandatory text for future elementary school teachers. Soave was commissioned by the government to translate or write the new books. In two years, he wrote 17 school textbooks for elementary and secondary schools (*Ginnasio*). Appointed as the director and supervisor of the new schools, Soave cooperated with the government without reservation.²⁵ To him, Joseph II was the model of an enlightened sovereign. In contrast to the revolutionary excesses of the Jacobins, he remained loyal to the Habsburg dynasty and shifted from the *katholische Aufklärung* to a conservative Catholicism. When Bonaparte entered Lombardy in 1796, Soave fled to Lugano, before moving on to Naples. In 1802 Francesco Melzi d'Eril, vice president of the Italian Republic, recalled him and appointed him director of the National College of Modena. In 1803 Soave was appointed to teach philosophy at the University of Pavia.²⁶

His schoolbooks enjoyed remarkable success, not only because they were prescribed by the government but also as a result of being very popular with teachers. His books on grammar and rhetoric, for instance, are still held in high regard.²⁷ Here I will focus on his two undoubtedly most successful textbooks: his primer and his reading book.

While in Rovereto, Soave had access to the Italian version of Felbiger's *ABC oder Namenbüchlein*, the *ABC ovvero Libretto de' nomi*, a bilingual version of Felbiger's primer, with the prayers, the moral tales, and the basic catechism. Soave

25 Costanza Rossi Ichino, "Francesco Soave e le prime scuole elementari tra il '700 e l'800", in *Problemi scolastici ed educativi della Lombardia del primo ottocento* (Milano: SugarCo, 1977), vol.1: 93–185; Mario Gecchele, *Fedeli sudditi e buoni cristiani. La "rivoluzione" scolastica di fine Settecento tra la Lombardia austriaca e la Serenissima* (Verona: Mazziana, 2000) 207–233.

26 Gabriele Carletti, *Francesco Soave. Un illuminista controrivoluzionario* (Scandicci: Centro Editoriale Toscano, 2015).

27 Daniela Corzuol, *Scuole normali e studio della retorica nella Lombardia austriaca del Settecento. Francesco Soave figura di mediatore tra area italiana e area tedesca* (Pisa: Giardini, 2007).

produced a new version of the primer.²⁸ His *Abbecedario* maintained the gradual progression of the teaching (from the alphabet and syllables to sayings divided into syllables, to short stories) and the sequence of Felbiger's primer, but made some important changes, that marked his *Abbecedario* with a secular stamp. He removed all the prayers and printed the basic catechism separately. Moreover, he replaced the moral tales with fables, mostly from Aesop, preceding them with a series of moral maxims and proverbs divided into syllables.²⁹ Soave kept from Felbiger the tale about the non-existence of ghosts, a text that Felbiger had taken from Rochow and that clearly bore the mark of the Enlightenment.

The ethical rules coincided with the ethics prescribed by Catholicism, but significantly, their religious explanation was omitted. Moreover, with the exception of the first one, the moral maxims were not taken directly from the Bible, and the proverbs belonged to popular tradition, providing the double advantage of making the reading process easier, since the children were sure to already know most of the proverbs, and of strengthening the school message, which coincided with the familiar sayings. The very first moral maxim came from the Gospels – “Do not do to others what you would not want done to you” – while the others preached about being just, helping others, being honest, being satisfied with one's lot, avoiding laziness, lies and bragging, being moderate and so on.

By linking the moral maxim to a popular proverb, or adding an explanation to Aesop's fables, Soave sometimes entered into a contradiction between the religious message and people's traditional ethics. For instance: do no evil was linked with the saying “what goes around comes around”, which implies punishment being meted out in this world. Similarly, the Aesop fable “The fox and the stork” ended with the same proverb, which does not convey a very Christian message. Aesop's fable “The fox and the eagle”, which teaches revenge and not mercy, was reinforced with the message: do not harm the person who is weaker, for they will have their revenge (which is not a Christian explanation). The fable about the raven who pretended to be a peacock and was mocked and cast out by both the peacocks and the ravens, however, had an explanation that tried to make the message more Christian: do not pretend to be what you are not, and do not mock others.

²⁸ Francesco Soave, *Abbecedario con una raccolta di massime, proverbj, favolette morali ad uso delle scuole della Lombardia austriaca* (Milano: Marelli e Motta, 1786).

²⁹ Del Negro stresses the secular character of Soave's primer: Piero Del Negro, “Alfabetizzazione, apparato educativo e questione linguistica in Lombardia e nel Veneto”, in *Teorie e pratiche linguistiche nell'Italia del Settecento*, ed. Lia Formigari (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984) 264; Piero Del Negro, “La retorica degli abbecedari”, in *Retorica e classi sociali*, ed. M. A. Cortellazzo (Padova: Centro stampa Palazzo Maldura, 1981) 142. See also Corzuol, *Scuole normali*, 128–130.

Although these secular ethics sometimes oscillated between traditional popular ethics and the Christian message, they managed in most cases to convey a very strong message which was easily understood by children. As previously mentioned, fables had a long tradition and the primer was certainly an easy and graduated tool for learning to read, that was probably more entertaining than the religious texts used at the time. Soave succeeded in using the Felbiger, Rochow and German primers as models, producing a very effective ABC. Being closely connected with the enforcement of the Normal method, his *Abbecedario* was first enforced in Habsburg Lombardy, then in the territories of the Cisalpine Republic, the Italian Republic and, above all, the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy (1805–1814).

Even if Austria was a political enemy, the Napoleonic regimes appreciated the Normal method, for its capacity for teaching classes with large numbers of children in an efficient way, encouraging order and discipline. It also allowed the state to control teachers and elementary schools, and to convey basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as ideological messages to a mass of pupils. From 1809–10, the Normal method was imposed through forcing teachers to use the Normal books by Soave and forcing private teachers to be examined. This took place by means of a control carried out by prefects and was ordered by Giovanni Scopoli, the schools director in chief [*Direttore della Pubblica Istruzione*] (forerunner of the minister of education), from 1809.³⁰ In one report of 1811 about schools, prepared for the viceroy Eugenio Beauharnais, Scopoli said that Soave's revised *Abbecedario* was in use in the Kingdom,³¹ and in the official instructions to teachers that he issued in 1812, he prescribed the use of the "approved *Abbecedario*",³² which had slight differences – some proverbs and fables were removed and some tales added, one specifying "God's prescription to children", insisting on discipline.³³

During the Restoration, Soave's books continued to be used. The official reports of the Central Censorship Office show the title of Soave's primer as printed up until at least the 1830s, even if it is likely that it was altered in some parts, because there are various editions with different numbers of pages, which use the full title or part of it.³⁴ It certainly became a model for many primers in Italy, since its use of prov-

30 Luigi Pepe, "Giovanni Scopoli e la pubblica istruzione nel Regno d'Italia", in *Annali dell'istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, 21 (1995): 411–433.

31 Milan State Archives, *Fondo Studi*, p.m. 598, "Rapporto del direttore generale della pubblica istruzione sullo stato attuale delle scuole del Regno, inviato al vicerè Eugenio", signed by Scopoli [1811].

32 Milan State Archives, *Fondo Studi*, p.m. 882, "Istruzioni per le scuole elementari", 15.02.1812, signed by Scopoli.

33 Del Negro, "La retorica degli abbecedari", 155.

34 I.R.Ufficio centrale di censura e revisione. Elenco delle opere stampate e pubblicate in Milano e sue province (Milano: Imperial Regia Stamperia, 1821–41). The Primer was printed in other re-

erbs and fable was popular with teachers and broke the tradition of the religious booklets, almost entirely in Latin, which had been used in Italy since the XVI century.³⁵

However, Soave's undoubtedly most successful schoolbook was *Novelle morali* [Moral tales], in which he conveyed the same ethical rules of the *Abbecedario* in a different narrative style. In 1776, Soave took part in a competition promoted by Count Carlo Bettoni for the best short novels for children aged 8–12. The jury did not award the prize, but Bettoni liked Soave's book and financed 16 short novels in 1782 and another 18 in 1784. In 1786 Soave published the definitive edition containing all 34 novels. Meanwhile the book had come out in Genoa and Naples. In the following years it achieved extraordinary success, becoming the model reading book for advanced elementary school classes. It had 83 editions up to 1883 and more than 100 by 1909. Considered the book that began children's literature in Italy, it was translated or printed in France, Germany, England, and Greece.³⁶

Soave believed that it took more than rationality to conquer passions: experience was necessary, but contrary to Rousseau, he believed that using only one's own experience was too long a process. Art and literature could replace experience and stimulate imagination, showing how bad actions are always punished and good actions are necessarily awarded. The moral scheme was very similar to Rochow's: a secular ethic based on compassion and the sense of duty, which coincided *de facto* with Christian ethics, but was presented with secular *exempla* instead of a roundup of saints.

The critical point is that in this life good deeds are not necessarily rewarded and evil ones punished. Soave's tales are rationalist like Rochow's, but there are differences. Soave's short novels are addressed to older children who can already read, therefore at *Hauptschulen*, not *Trivialschulen*: children from towns, rather than coarse peasants. The language was more refined, the plots much more complicated, and the texts much longer. The novel genre had a prestigious tradition in Italy, going back to Boccaccio, but there were few novels for children in Italy, apart from those by Giuseppe Manzoni (*Favole per fanciulli*, 1761) and Pier Domenico Soresi (*Novelle piacevoli ed istruttive*, 1762). However, the former were unrealistic, and the latter addressed to aristocratic children.

gions, e.g. (Ravenna: Roveri 1827). A copy of 1877, printed in Florence, was still the same as in 1786, but with engravings and prayers URL: <https://archive.org/details/SoaveAbecedario/mode/2up> (last access: 19.09.2023).

³⁵ Pietro Lucchi, "La Santacroce, il Salterio e il Babuino: libri per imparare a leggere nel primo secolo della stampa, *Quaderni storici*, 38 (1978): 593–630.

³⁶ Emilio Motta, "Saggio di una bibliografia di Soave", in *Bollettino storico della Svizzera italiana*, VI (1884) 32–36, 89–94; VII (1885): 29–31, 99–100.

Soave, instead, combined the *exemplum* of religious literature with French novels and the *Kinderfreund*. He believed that rhetoric had a pedagogical function, being able to move the heart (not just the reason) to compassion. All characters bar one in Soave's tales are adults. Most characters are historical or not Italian: An Irishman in Algeria; Dionysius of Syracuse; King Æthelred of England; an Arab shepherd; two Englishmen; the medieval King Gottfried of Denmark's son; the Swiss William Tell; Montesquieu; a Chinese intellectual; the French Monseigneur d'Apchon; a Portuguese nobleman; Marshall Turenne; Joseph II. Some stories are set during the Italian Renaissance, others in medieval times; some are contemporary and others atemporal. Some characters are real, others imaginary. There are kings, noblemen, members of the middle class and poor people. Christian and Enlightened ethics are presented as coinciding, with a touch of Stoicism.

The society is harmonious: every evil is punished, nearly all kings are good-hearted. Joseph II is the model of a just and merciful sovereign, wise as a "new Solomon". Happiness is achieved by acceptance of one's condition and the capacity to enjoy what one has. Sorrows are inevitable in human life and have to be endured with serenity. Working is right and brings happiness. Passions lead to evil and bad luck. Virtues, generosity, innocence, mercifulness, and honesty are always rewarded in this life. The few women featured are either victims or virtuous wives and mothers.³⁷ One novel shows the absurdity of believing in ghosts. Another one sharply criticizes slavery: "eternal shame of Europe, which does a disgraceful traffic of unlucky men, as sheep or oxen".³⁸ One novel is a short anti-Émile manifesto, praising both family and the *collegium* education.

Soave's *Novelle morali* managed to captivate young readers, with adventures, exotic landscapes, heroic deeds and language that could rouse the emotions.³⁹ His influence on the reading books that followed was deep and long-lasting.⁴⁰

The reading book that had the greatest success, after Soave's *Novelle morali*, was called *Giannetto* [Little John], after the common boy's name. This book won the second edition of the competition launched in 1835 by the Florentine society for the spread of the monitorial system, for a reading book that promoted moral

37 Ernesto Travi, "Le 'Novelle' del Padre Soave", in *Studi sulla cultura lombarda in memoria di Mario Apollonio* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1972) 221–223.

38 Francesco Soave, *Novelle morali ad uso de' fanciulli* (Milano: Tip. Scorza 1806) 181.

39 A very good analysis of the language of the *Novelle morali* by Francesca Tancini, *Novellieri settentrionali tra sensismo e Romanticismo. Soave, Carrer, Carcano* (Modena: Mucchi, 1993) 35–117. See also Anna Maria Bernardinis, "La letteratura didascalica di padre Soave fra retorica e pedagogia", in *Pedagogia fra tradizione e innovazione. Studi in onore di Aldo Agazzi* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1979) 339–360; Rossi Ichino, "Francesco Soave e le prime scuole", 177–185.

40 Marcella Bacigalupi, Pietro Fossati, *Da plebe a popolo. L'educazione popolare nei libri di scuola dall'Unità d'Italia alla repubblica* (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1986) 9–11.

education and reading practice for children aged 6–12. The commission was led by Gino Capponi, a Catholic educationalist and politician, who was moderate and reformist. *Giannetto* was written by Luigi Alessandro Parravicini (1799–1880). Born in Milan, he was educated in the sciences as well as the arts. At the time of winning the prize, he was director of the *Normalhauptschule* in Como (1820–36). From 1837 to 1840 he directed the teacher training course in the Swiss canton of Ticino, and in 1840 was appointed director of the *Realschule* in Venice. In 1842 he published his pedagogy textbook, obviously influenced by Vinzenz Milde. Parravicini also knew the works of Pestalozzi, Father Grégoire Girard and August Hermann Niemeyer, director of the Francke Foundation.

By 1838 *Giannetto* was already a recommended book to give as a reward to the best pupils in the Kingdom of Lombardy and Venetia, but it soon became chosen as a reading book in the Kingdom's elementary schools as well as in other states of the peninsula. After Italian unification, Parravicini revised it and it continued to enjoy great success, being used by teachers, reaching its 47th edition in 1861 and its 60th in 1879. After his death it was revised and continued to be printed until 1910, with more than 70 editions.⁴¹ *Giannetto* was originally divided into three volumes, the first dedicated to men's physical bodies and morality, the second to elements of geography, physics, minerals, plants and animals, and the third to life in the family and society and to the history of Italy. Parravicini presented descriptions of scientific or historical topics as well as short stories whose protagonists were *Giannetto*, his friends and members of his family.

The scientific pages were written in very simple language that poor children could easily understand (e.g.: “the stomach is a sack of soft skin. It communicates with the mouth through the food channel that is in the neck”⁴²). The names of the parts of the body, of plants, of animals etc. were in italics: so that children who talked in dialect would learn proper Italian words. *Giannetto* was presented as a good child, who might misbehave but would always repent. The son of a trader, he became rich through marriage, but in 1859 Parravicini changed this plot, so that *Giannetto* gradually achieved success through work rather than acquired sudden riches. The boy became a worthy industrialist, who helped poor and just people.

The book mirrored the pre-industrial society of Lombardy and anticipated Smiles' self-help. *Giannetto*'s stories were, yet again, examples of virtues being rewarded, and vices punished. Christian morality and civic ethics were bound together with traditional common sense. In this respect, it was close to Soave's

41 Luciano Pazzaglia, I libri di testo: il caso del *Giannetto* del Parravicini, in *Scuola e nazione in Italia e in Francia nell'Ottocento*, ed. Pier Luigi Ballini, Gilles Pécout (Venezia: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 2007) 141–188.

42 Luigi Alessandro Parravicini, *Giannetto*, vol. 1 (Como: Ostinelli, 1837) 11.

content. The difference was the popular tale, with a common child and a lower middle-class family as protagonists. Parravicini followed Pestalozzi's narrative rather than Soave's historical, exotic or adventurous plots.

The part devoted to the history of Italy criticized the French Revolution but expressed respect for Napoleon's military genius. The Congress of Vienna was depicted as bringing peace, but Parravicini dedicated pages to patriotism and love for Italy, clearly indicating the country as the whole peninsula. After unification and particularly from the edition of 1870, Parravicini preached the Savoy monarchy and Cavour as the makers of the Kingdom of Italy (1861), which was eventually also united with Venice (1866) and Rome (1870).⁴³

Parravicini was a moderate and a liberal Catholic, who backed Italian unification. Although it was praised and had wide popular appeal, his *Giannetto* was also criticized by both Catholics and Liberals as being either too patriotic or reactionary.⁴⁴ He was certainly a moderate and a man of institutions. The long-lasting success of *Giannetto*, which was also widely imitated for decades, proves that it expressed a traditional moral sense, shared by generations. Its scientific notions made it a more innovative book that, while still carrying the Christian stamp of Comenius, managed to modernize reading books in a proto-industrial society that demanded useful notions and a traditional ethic that bore the clear hallmark of Christianity.

4 Conclusions

The connection between the most successful primers and reading books and the birth of the *Normalmethode* in Prussia, Austria and Lombardy shows on the one hand how the standardization of curricula and methods imposed and facilitated the use of similar books, which was also encouraged by the same cultural environment of the Enlightenment, and on the other hand how the transfer of pedagogical and narrative models was altered by local conditions and culture. The milieu of the *katbolische Aufklärung*⁴⁵ is the common ground between Felbiger and Soave, that favored the acceptance of a similar pedagogical model.

⁴³ Pazzaglia, *I libri di testo*, 167–186.

⁴⁴ Nicola Del Corno, "Alle origini del long-seller: il *Giannetto* del Parravicini", in *Editori e piccoli lettori tra Otto e Novecento*, ed. Luisa Finocchi, Ada Gigli Marchetti, (Milano: Angeli, 2004) 47–60.

⁴⁵ See at least Klueping, "The Catholic Enlightenment in Austria or the Habsburg lands"; Mette Buchardt, "Church, Religion, and Morality", in *A Cultural History of Education in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Daniel Tröhler (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020) 25–46.

The detachment of the *Kinderfreund* from the completely religious primers was a revolution. Felbiger compromised, using Rochow's narrative style as well as Protestant texts, but maintaining prayers and insisting on otherworldly happiness. Soave used proverbs and fables for younger pupils who belonged to the lower classes and needed easy short texts, and improved the moral tales, making them more interesting reading for older pupils, who belonged to higher social classes. In *Giannetto* one finds not only moral *exempla*, but also science and history, in keeping with a new Lombard generation of intellectuals, who believed in Italian unity and economic innovations, thus shifting from the *katholische Aufklärung* to a Liberal Catholicism that adhered to the nation-building process.

To explain the extraordinary success of Soave and Parravicini's books, it is not enough to remember that they were supported by the Habsburg and Napoleonic regimes, since they were printed for decades and became literary models. Indeed, their books presented a Christian moral that was shared by the common people, by peasants, and coincided with the German *Volksaufklärung*, which sought to provide poor people with literacy and some limited instruction, and the Liberalism of the ruling classes of united Italy, which aimed also to replace the Church's power over people by teaching new concepts such as that of the new nation and its institutions as well as traditional moral values (see also Tröhler, this volume).

However, the *Aufklärung's* eudaemonism and the Leibnizian optimism of these, as well as Rochow's books, presented a false and idealised reality, but in a rural world still imbued with a religious sense (see also Dekker, this volume), as it was in the first half of the XIX century, and with generations of teachers who themselves belonged to the popular classes, this contradiction went unnoticed: the adherence of secular ethics to fundamentally Christian moral values enabled the success of the books.

Soave and Parravicini's books testify to the persistence of the *katholische Aufklärung* in the Kingdom of Lombardy and Venetia's elementary schooling, which was already detected in Milde's pedagogy and in the persons of inspectors or school directors. Catechism still took place in schools, but with other books and a priest as teacher, whereas teachers, particularly in Lombardy, were nearly all lay. Catholicism certainly pervaded elementary schools, but the picture is much more blurred than the one formerly presented by scholars: a subtle "cultural secularization" can be detected in these schoolbooks, in a period defined as an age of Restoration of the Catholic power.

Moreover, Soave understood the importance of emotions and the fact that a child, *Giannetto*, was the main character of a reading book indicates the acceptance of Rousseau and Pestalozzi's ideas about the centrality of the child in the educational

process by Parravicini. The *exemplum* was given by a common child young readers could identify with, transferring their experience.

By examining the evolution of the main reading books from Germany to Lombardy via Vienna, we have seen how Catholic Enlightenment and liberal Catholicism contributed to advancing the secular through education. At the same time that this secularization was more a transformation of the religious, retaining the main points of Christian ethics (see also Hellström and Wright, this volume), while stripping it of its dogma and transcendence.

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Deirdre Raftery and Catriona Delaney

Patronage, Politics and Pragmatics: The Changing Fate of the Convent School in Ireland

Abstract: The chapter discusses the arrival of French teaching orders of women religious into Ireland, and the founding of Irish orders. It also notes forms of provision by religious orders, including “poor schools,” day schools, and elite boarding schools. The rapid expansion of convent schooling is analysed, and the chapter probes the question of how convents managed to recruit ever-increasing numbers of nuns and pupils during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Finally, the chapter surveys what is often termed the “quiet revolution” in Ireland that had begun by the 1970s; a series of changes in Irish social life prompted the gradual demise of convent schooling, as the country witnessed the start of a slow move towards secularization in education. We are influenced in our analysis by the work of Bruno-Jofré and Martínez Valle, who have observed that the influences on education change can involve “myriad and sometimes local and/or national specific determinants.”¹ As will be seen, the determinants of a gradual move towards secularization in Irish education – which at this moment is far from complete – included some of the variables discussed by Bruno-Jofré and Martínez Valle. We show that changing demographic patterns (including patterns in religious congregations), urbanization, and policy changes, have all had an impact in Ireland. In particular, we throw light on how such changes impacted on convent schools and brought about their demise.

1 Introduction

In Ireland, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Catholic religious – that is nuns, priests and brothers – had the monopoly on education provision at secondary-school level. They were also involved in the provision of primary

¹ Rose Bruno-Jofré and Carlos Martínez Valle, “Church, Religious Institutions, the State, and Schooling,” in *Handbook of Historical Studies in Education: Debates, Tensions, and Directions*, ed. Tanya Fitzgerald (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd., 2019), 14.

Deirdre Raftery, Catriona Delaney, University College Dublin

and university teaching, thereby occupying a central place in educational provision. This involvement assured the status of denominational schooling and reflected the strong influence of the church in state education policy. Thus, much as Buchardt noted with reference to the work of scholars including Tröhler, Baker, and Popkewitz, religion was “part of the salvation project of modern schooling.”² Far from religion being “pushed back . . . to the margins of society,” in Ireland it remained very much central to social, political, and educational thought and activity.³ Indeed, even though it is outside the period and remit of this chapter, it could be argued that while Ireland in the late twentieth century began a slow move towards secularization, this move was not because secularization was one of the “winners in the fight against religion.”⁴ If there was a “fight,” then in the case of Ireland it could be said that secularization limped into the theatre of war. Diminishing numbers of priests, nuns and brothers, meant that Catholic schools had to rely on lay (secular) teachers by the closing decades of the twentieth century, and a kind of “drift” occurred whereby the expression of faith in Catholic schools gradually became less marked (see also Tröhler, this volume). However, during the period examined in this chapter, we find evidence for how denominational schooling was both empowered and energized by the work of women religious (nuns/teaching sisters) in the nineteenth century and well into the second half of the twentieth century.

The chapter discusses the arrival of French teaching orders of women religious into Ireland, and the founding of Irish orders. It also notes forms of provision by religious orders, including “poor schools,” day schools, and elite boarding schools. The rapid expansion of convent schooling is analysed, and the chapter

2 Mette Buchardt, “The Political Project of Secularization and Modern Education Reform in ‘Provincialized Europe.’” *Historical Research in Religion and Education Beyond Secularization, R.I.P.*, *International Journal for the Historiography of Education 2* (2021): 165. Buchardt here references the work of Meike Sophia Baader, *Erziehung als Erlösung. Transformation des Religiösen in der Reformpädagogik* (Weinheim/ München: Juventa Verlag 2005); Bernadette M Baker, “Western World-Forming? Animal Magnetism, Curriculum History, and the Social Projects of Modernity” in *New Curriculum History* (Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers, 2009), Bernadette M. Baker, ed., 25–68; and Thomas S Popkewitz, “From Virtue as Pursuit of Happiness to Pursuing the Unvirtuous: Republicanism, Cosmopolitanism, and Reform Protestantism in American Progressive Education” in *Schooling and the Making of Citizens in the Long Nineteenth Century: Comparative Visions*, Daniel Tröhler/Thomas S. Popkewitz/David F. Labaree, eds. (New York, NY/ London, UK: Routledge, 2011), 219–239.

3 Jeroen J.H. Dekker, “In Search of Multiple Compatibility: Modernization, Secularization, Religion, and Education in History,” *International Journal for the Historiography of Education 2* (2021): 171.

4 Dekker, “In search of multiple compatibility,” 171.

probes the question of how convents managed to recruit ever-increasing numbers of nuns and pupils during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Finally, the chapter surveys what is often termed the “quiet revolution” in Ireland that had begun by the 1970s; a series of changes in Irish social life prompted the gradual demise of convent schooling, as the country witnessed the start of a slow move towards secularization in education. We are influenced in our analysis by the work of Bruno-Jofré and Martínez Valle, who have observed that the influences on education change can involve “myriad and sometimes local and/or national specific determinants.”⁵ As will be seen, the determinants of a gradual move towards secularization in Irish education – which at this moment is far from complete – included precisely those variables signalled by Bruno-Jofré and Martínez Valle, such as urbanization and state laws.⁶

In the chapter, we engage with recent scholarship. However, it is important to note that convent schools were run by nuns,⁷ and that nuns – like women generally – have “the fate of suffered historical marginalization.”⁸ Unsurprisingly, their schools are also poorly researched. There is a surprisingly small corpus of scholarship on convent education, and almost nothing has been written on its demise in the face of social change.⁹ Though the start secularization process was recognized from the 1970s onwards, in education discourse and in official Church publications and addresses, the dominant voices were those of bishops, priests, male academics and male educators. This chapter attempts to write some of the female experience

5 Bruno-Jofré and Martínez Valle, “Church, Religious Institutions, the State, and Schooling,” 14.

6 Bruno-Jofré and Martínez Valle, “Church, Religious Institutions, the State, and Schooling,” 14.

7 The term “nun” was, canonically speaking, confined to enclosed women religious, but scholars agree that in research the distinction has been blurred between the terms “nun” and “sister”. In this chapter, the term “nun” will be used to refer to sisters/Catholic women religious.

8 Caitriona Clear, *Nuns in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), xvii.

9 In a global context, the historiographical work of Hellinckx et al. notes the kind of research that has been done, and the gaps in the literature; see Bart Hellinckx, Frank Simon, and Marc Depape, *The Forgotten Contribution of the Teaching Sisters* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009). Research on the Irish context, while limited, is beginning to grow and includes Marie Kealy, *Dominican Education in Ireland, 1820–1930* (Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2007); Deirdre Raftery and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck, “Convent Schools and National Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Negotiating a Place within a Non-denominational System,” *History of Education* 36 (2007): 353–362; Deirdre Raftery “*‘Je Suis D’aucune Nation’*: The Recruitment and Identity of Irish Women Religious in the International Mission Field, c. 1840–1940,” *Paedagogica Historica* 49 (2013): 513–530, and Deirdre Raftery, “Rebels with a Cause: Obedience, Resistance and Convent Life, 1800–1940,” *History of Education* 42 (2013): 729–744; Deirdre Raftery, Catriona Delaney and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck, *Nano Nagle: the Life and the Legacy* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2019); Deirdre Raftery, *Teresa Ball and Loreto Education: Convents and the Colonial World, 1794–1875* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2022).

into the history of secularization in Irish education, with specific reference to the role and experience of women religious and convent schools. In this regard, it aims to address a *lacuna* in the history of female education in Ireland: convent schooling.

In part, the lack of research on Irish convent schooling reflects a long-standing indifference to the history of the women that ran them. This gradually began to change, following the publication in 1987 of Caitríona Clear's *Nuns in Nineteenth Century Ireland*. The volume provoked historians to recognise the scale of the expansion of female religious orders in Ireland. Over a decade later, Mary Peckham Magray published a ground-breaking study of the history of Catholic nuns in Ireland, that made new claims for their agency and social impact. Magray argued that ". . . historians have scarcely begun to explore the significance and complexity of the female orders' relationship to the institutions of Irish Catholicism."¹⁰ As this chapter shows, the "complexity" of that relationship included that nuns had to find a way to promote academic education for girls, at a time when the church hierarchy was resistant to females pursuing the same kind of learning as boys.

Another aspect of that complex relationship explored here, is the expansion of French orders of nuns in Ireland. This presence of these orders was sometimes viewed as a challenge to the promotion of a distinctly Irish national identity. This was especially so from the 1920s onwards, when Ireland had secured its independence from Britain and was forging its own identity. As will be seen below, the arrival of groups of French nuns, following the French secularization laws of 1905, meant that Irish convent schools could advertise a cosmopolitan "continental" education. On the one hand, this benefitted the rising middle classes; on the other hand, it implied that schooling given by the so-called "native" Irish orders was less sophisticated, and even inferior. Additionally, the presence in Irish convents of French nuns who had left their own country, served as an uncomfortable reminder of the dangers of secularization. The Irish had experienced centuries of conquest and colonization by Britain: holding on to an identity that was both Catholic *and* Irish was imperative, and the church wanted Irish-born nuns to play a role in identity formation, via their convent schools.

The history of the rise and demise of convent schooling is just one part of the history of denominationalism in Irish education, and it therefore contributes to our understanding of the gradual move towards secular forms of schooling in contemporary Ireland.

¹⁰ Mary Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power of the Nuns: Women, Religion and Cultural Change in Ireland, 1750–1900* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

2 The Growth of Convent Schooling in Nineteenth-Century Ireland

In 1800, there were only 12 convents and 4 orders of female religious in Ireland. One hundred years later, there were 368 convents and 35 different orders. This growth had a significant impact on education for Catholic girls, as most of these convents had at least one school, and some had several schools. There were several reasons for this dramatic expansion. Firstly, the growth in the number of Catholic schools and convents happened following the repeal of relevant penal laws concerning education, that had been passed during the reign of several British monarchs. These laws had prevented Catholics from owning or running schools; additionally, during the penal period Catholics could not employ Catholic teachers or send their children out of the country for schooling.¹¹ With the repeal of penal laws, Catholics could practice their religion, pursue education, and aspire to professional careers. The climate was ripe for providing academic education for Catholics, and religious orders of teaching sisters, priests and brothers quickly stepped in to meet this demand.¹²

Initially, religious orders mainly focussed their energies on the education of the poor. This was the mission of the Presentation Sisters (1775), the Christian Brothers (1802), the Presentation Brothers (1802), and the Sisters of Charity (1815), and the Sisters of Mercy (1831). Provision for the sons of middle- and upper-class Catholics was made by the Jesuits, the Vincentians and the Holy Ghost fathers. The Dominicans and Ursulines had a small presence in Ireland, educating daughters of elite families. Across the nineteenth century which were run by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters, 1821), the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (1842), the Faithful Companions of Jesus (1844), the Sisters of St Louis (1859), and the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny (1860).¹³

In the early nineteenth century, nuns provided primary schooling (for children under the age of 12) comprising reading, writing, arithmetic and religious instruc-

¹¹ *Act of Uniformity*, 1665, 17 and 18 Car. II. c. 6; *Act to Restrain Foreign Education*, 1695, 7 Wm. III. c. 4; 1703. 2 Anne, c. 6; 1709. 8 Anne, c. 3. The impact of the repeal of penal laws relating to education is discussed in Deirdre Raftery and Martina Relihan, 'Faith and nationhood: church, state and the provision of schooling in Ireland, 1870–1930' in Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon (eds), *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building, 1870–1930* (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2012).

¹² This is discussed in greater detail in Deirdre Raftery, "The Mission of Nuns in Female Education in Ireland, c. 1850–1950," *Paedagogica Historica* 48:2 (2012): 299–313.

¹³ See Deirdre Raftery in *A History of British and Irish Catholicism*, Vol.5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

tion. Much emphasis was placed on teaching children their prayers, and preparing them for the sacraments of communion and confirmation. Indeed this was the routine in the very first schools that were established by Nano Nagle in the late eighteenth century. Nagle, a Cork woman who brought the Ursuline order to Ireland from France to open a convent in 1771, and who founded the Presentation order to educate poor girls, wrote that the children in her day schools attended “Mass every day . . . [said] their morning and night prayers . . . [and went] to Confession every month and to Communion when their confessors think proper.”¹⁴ They also learned to “say the Catechism in each school by question and answer all together.”¹⁵ In 1850, the methods adopted in Presentation convent schools were laid down in the *Directory of the Religious of the Presentation Order*, copies of which were thereafter sent to every new Presentation foundation, worldwide. The schools were to be well organized, and nuns had to compile a register of pupils. Lessons were conducted between 9:00 am and 3:15 pm. A clock was hung in each school, partly to regulate the timing of different lessons, and also to signal the times for regular prayer. When the hour struck, the pupils had to “discontinue their activities, bless themselves” and “. . . devoutly recommend themselves to the protection of the Holy Mother of God, saying a Hail Mary.”¹⁶ Needlework was an essential subject, as it gave girls a skill by which they could earn a living; they were also taught to knit, and to plait straw. The pupils also learned to write, firstly learning to form letters on a slate, and then progressing to using a pen and paper. They were also taught to read, and had lessons in spelling, grammar and arithmetic. A similar education was provided by the Sisters of Mercy, who began the school day with “twenty minutes of Christian doctrine,” which was followed by “regular school work” and “occasional breaks for reflection or prayer.”¹⁷ In addition to establishing free schools for the poor, the Sisters of Mercy also opened convent day schools and boarding schools that charged a “pension” or fee to educate the daughters of the middle ranks. These schools offered a wider curriculum, including “genteel” subjects such as French, music and drawing. From the outset, the Sisters of Mercy favoured the use of the “monitorial system,” that had been developed in England by

14 Nano Nagle to Miss Fitzsimons, 17 July 1769, IE PBVM NN/1/1/1, Presentation Sisters Congregational Archives, Cork (hereafter PSCA).

15 Nano Nagle to Miss Fitzsimons, July 17, 1769, IE PBVM NN/1/1/1, PSCA.

16 *Directory of the Religious of the Presentation Order* (Published by the Presentation Sisters, 1850), 14.

17 M. Xavierius O’ Donoghue, *Mother Vincent Whitty, a Woman Educator in a Masculine Society* (Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1972), 13.

Joseph Lancaster.¹⁸ Older pupils became classroom monitors, and supported the teaching by doing drills and repetitive exercises in spelling and arithmetic, for example. The Sisters of Mercy continued to promote the training and use of monitors in their classrooms, when they went to America and Australia in the mid-nineteenth century to establish schools.

In 1831, the British treasury provided funding towards a new non-denominational system of a National Schools in Ireland. These primary schools could be established if local funding, and land, was available to match the support provided via a Board of Commissioners. Additionally, existing primary schools could become affiliated to this system and avail of supports, such as books and materials. Many of the convent schools run by nuns, became ‘convent national schools’. By 1857, there were 111 convent national schools and this number rose to 145 in 1870.¹⁹ All of these schools had to follow the secular curriculum that was laid down by the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland (CNEI).²⁰ To some degree, this had an impact on the denominational nature of the schools. For example, the CNEI did not permit religious iconography to be displayed in national schools, and neither religious instruction nor praying could take place during the school day. However, the degree to which these regulations were observed in convent national schools varied considerably. Nuns found ways to get around the restrictions: for example, pupils were taught to pray silently when a bell struck, and religious statues were displayed within cupboards with the doors open, so that they could be quickly concealed if an inspector arrived.²¹ By the second half of the century, evidence gathered by the CNEI indicated that convent schools were, by and large, providing an “excellent” education to Irish girls.²² French orders that had also come into the country to expand their international presence in Catholic education. As will be seen below, the presence of French nuns would eventually contribute to some tensions within the Catholic Church in Ireland. However, the initial arrival and expansion of the

18 See Deirdre Raftery, *Irish Nuns and Education in the Anglophone World: A Transnational History* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 110–11.

19 *Appendix to Twentieth Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland for the year 1853*, (1834), H.C. 1854, XXX, pt. i, pp. 319; *Appendix to Twenty-fourth Report . . . , for the year 1857*, (2456–1), H.C. 1859, VII, 252–255; *Appendix to Thirty-first Report . . . , for the year 1864*, (3496), H.C. 1865, XIX, 262–265; *Appendix to Thirty-seventh Report . . . , for the year 1870*, (C.360), H.C. 1871, XXIII, 656–659.

20 This is discussed in detail in Raftery *et al.*, *Nano Nagle*, 77–83.

21 For a discussion of how convent national schools operated see Deirdre Raftery and Catherine Nowlan-Roebuck, “Convent Schools and National Education in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Negotiating a Place within a Non-denominational System,” *History of Education* 36:3 (2007): 353–365.

22 *Special Report made to the Commissioners of National Education on Convent Schools in Connection with the Board*, H.C. 1864 (405) XLVI.63, 77–78.

French orders, was generally welcomed, and had a significant and lasting impact on convent schooling in Ireland.

3 Patronage and Pragmatics: The Expansion of Elite Convent Boarding Schools

The congregations that provided elite education for Irish girls included French orders such as the Society of the Sacred Heart (1842), the Faithful Companions of Jesus (1844), the Sisters of St Louis (1859), the Sisters of St Josephs of Cluny (1860) and the Marists (1873). The impact of the French Revolution, and of secularization in France, meant that some French orders had actively sought opportunities to make foundations and expand in Ireland, which was viewed as a strongly Catholic country which would be welcoming to French nuns. The arrival of French orders had a two-fold impact on education in Ireland: their “continental” status made them seem somehow superior to the Irish teaching orders, and their convent schools became instantly desirable for families that wished to indicate their rising social position. Acceptance into an elite fee-charging convent school became a measure of success, not just for pupils but for their parents.

With the arrival of the Ursuline order in Cork in 1771, wealthy Catholic families no longer had to send their daughters out of the country for an elite education. The Ursulines were well established in France by the time Nano Nagle sent some Irish women to be prepared by the them in Paris, and to return to Cork and make a new foundation.²³ The Ursuline convent in Cork was soon held “in very high public estimation.”²⁴ It attracted the daughters of old Catholic families, not only as pupils but also as postulants and nuns, and was described as “the first and best seminary for young ladies in this Kingdom.”²⁵ Indeed, the popularity of the foundation was a clear indication that there was a need for more convent schools. A Dublin girl, Cecilia Ball, was amongst the first pupils. She later entered the order, taking the name Mary Regis, and became Mother Superior of the convent in 1820. Two years earlier, her sister, Teresa Ball, had founded Loreto Abbey in Dublin. The two sisters were Superiors at the two most prominent convent boarding schools in the country and were keenly aware that the success of these

²³ The preparation of the first Irish Ursulines is discussed Raftery et al, *Nano Nagle*, 27–29.

²⁴ James Charles Bacon to M. Regis Ball, 6 July 1825, UCB/02626, Ursuline Congregational Archives, Cork (hereafter UCAC). Bacon, who became Governor of the Hibernian Bank in 1834, managed financial affairs for the Ursulines.

²⁵ James Charles Bacon to M. Regis Ball, 4 Jan. 1826, UCB/02625.

schools depended on the patronage of the church and of the Catholic elite. Church support was guaranteed: both women were close friends of Dr Daniel Murray, who became Archbishop of Dublin in 1825. They also had the unequivocal support of many bishops and priests and could count on the patronage of prominent Catholic families who gave generous gifts and legacies to the convents.²⁶ Additionally, they welcomed social visits from prominent figures including Lady Bellew, Lady Wellesley and Lady Spencer-Churchill, as such visits conferred status on the school.²⁷

Other orders that established elite boarding schools in Ireland also had to manage the reputations of their schools with great care, and they emphasized their “continental” traditions and customs. When the Society of the Sacred Heart arrived from France in mid-nineteenth century, they ran their boarding schools as though they were in France. Indeed, pupils and nuns regularly spoke French during the school day, and the convent records were written in French. The Ursulines similarly used French during the school day. Mary Cullen, a boarder at the Ursuline Convent in Waterford, wrote to her uncle, the Rev. Dr Paul Cullen, that she was delighted to find that the pupils “were allowed to speak nothing else [but French] during the day.” The curriculum that she followed was common to elite convent schools, and included “. . . botany and architecture . . . music, singing, drawing, French and the general course of English education.”²⁸ At the convent schools run by the Sisters of St Louis, the Dominicans, and the Loreto nuns, French was also spoken daily. Nuns from Loreto Abbey were sent to France to improve their spoken French, and Teresa Ball was delighted to be able to say that Loreto pupils could demonstrate “the same facility in speaking French as English.”²⁹ However, if the

²⁶ Many Catholic families of distinction supported the Ursuline and Loreto convents, and indeed other convent communities in Ireland. Family names, dotted through archival records, include: Arthur, Corballis, Therry, Sweetman, Scully, Sherlock, and O’Brien. Their patronage of convents is discussed in Deirdre Raftery, *Teresa Ball and Loreto Education: Convents and the Colonial World, 1794–1875* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2022), Chapter Two, *passim*.

²⁷ Archbishop Murray encouraged such guests to visit Loreto Abbey. See Dr Daniel Murray to M. Teresa Ball, 20 Nov. 1849, TB/COR/9/131; 23 Apr. 1847, TB/COR/9/108; Dr Murray to M. Teresa Ball, 29 Sept. 1834, TB/COR/9/19; Loreto Congregation Institute and Provincial Archives, Dublin (hereafter LCIPA).

²⁸ Mary Cullen to Dr Paul Cullen, January 4, 1849, CUL/1697, Archives of the Pontifical Irish College Rome Archives (hereafter APICR). Dr Cullen was Rector at the Irish College in 1849, when this letter was received. He became Archbishop of Armagh later that year and was transferred to the See of Dublin in 1852.

²⁹ See M. Teresa Ball, July 14, 1842, TB/COR/8, LCIPA; M. Teresa Ball to M. Teresa Dease, 29 Nov. 1851, 1/3/13/4, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary Canadian Province Archives; cited in Raftery, *Teresa Ball*, 102–103.

emphasis on “Frenchness” was popular with parents, it would soon be viewed with suspicion by Irish clergy, especially those who wanted Irish convent schools to cater to all social classes, and to foster a spirit of “Irishness.”

4 A Period of Rapid Expansion: Catering to All Classes in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

As Peckham Magray has argued, the expansion of convents in nineteenth century Ireland was crucial to “the transformation of the Irish church and Irish society.”³⁰ Indeed, Archbishop Cullen had declared in 1851 that nuns were “the best support to religion.”³¹ This support included encouraging loyalty to the Church. If the Catholic Church was to grow in strength after a lengthy period of suppression, it required that the faith should be fostered in young people: schools were best placed to carry out this work, and convent schools were therefore an invaluable part of the project of expansion and consolidation. Religious orders knew this; for example the *Rules and Constitutions* which governed the Loreto order stated that while “children entrusted to our care should be instructed in every branch of secular education . . . all this instruction should be founded on religious enlightenment and animated by religious spirit.”³² Secular instruction was important, but religious instruction was viewed as having far greater value: though religious instruction convent schools contributed to “the perfection of others and the salvation of souls.”³³ To attain this “perfection,” convent schools were emphatically denominational: daily routines included regular prayer, devotions, attendance at Mass, and observations of religious feast days. Sodalities, such as the Children of Mary, became widespread in convent schools, as they fostered a religious spirit, and even encouraged girls to consider entering religious orders. The impact of this was that the number of nuns in Ireland continued to grow, and by 1951 it had reached 13,360.³⁴

30 Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power*, 11.

31 Peckham Magray, *The Transforming Power*, 11.

32 *Rules and Constitutions of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Sons, 1877), 74.

33 Raftery, “The ‘Mission’ of Nuns,” 311.

34 Raftery, “The ‘Mission’ of Nuns,” 306.

Research has shown that Irish nuns “recruited from within,” both by cultivating a religious spirit in their schools, and by “questing” for vocations. The process of questing involved visiting schools, giving talks to pupils, and promoting the value of aspects of religious life including overseas missionary work, teaching, and nursing.³⁵ Though questing was common during the nineteenth century, bishops and priests became wary of it by the early twentieth century. In part, they were concerned that young Irishwomen were leaving the country with very little preparation for overseas missionary life, and they were vulnerable if they decided to leave the convent. And in part it was because some bishops did not want French orders making foundations in Ireland and recruiting Irishwomen, when there were several indigenous orders that needed vocations.

Increasing numbers of French nuns arrived in Ireland after 1905, following the legal separation of church and state in France. This caused conflict with some Irish prelates, who were wary about the motives of some of the French orders that came to Ireland. For example, when the Dames de St Maur (Infant Jesus Sisters) requested to open a convent in County Cork in 1908, the bishop was hostile to the proposal made by this French congregation. Though the request to make this foundation had been made by the Superior, Mother St Henri, she relied on strategic advice from Père Charles Nain, who was a member of the Missions Etrangères, in Paris. The Dames de St Maur were a missionary congregation, with foundations in South-East Asia. They needed English-speaking sisters, and Père Nain advised Mother St Henri to look to Ireland for recruits. Nain knew that Irish bishops were becoming opposed to Irishwomen leaving for “foreign” missions. Accordingly, he advised Mother St Henri to present her request for an Irish convent as “a partial substitute for the one that was closed in Paris by the secularizing French government.” This approach, he argued, would elicit the sympathy of the Irish clergy. He also added that Mother St Henri should indicate that she would invest the congregational funds in Ireland and thereby avoid giving them to the French government. As a strategy, it worked. The congregation were allowed to open a convent on the Cork-Kerry border on the clear instruction that they could not establish a novitiate and recruit Irishwomen for their convents and schools in South-East Asia. The Bishop of Kerry, Dr John Mangan, stated very clearly that they were welcome only insofar as they would teach local girls, and develop small industries to support local people. He was deeply suspicious of their motives, which he suspected was “to secure Irish subjects for foreign missions.”³⁶ He believed that the Sisters were “forc-

³⁵ For a detailed analysis of the impact of ‘questing’ on the growth of religious vocations for women in Ireland, see Raftery, *Irish Nuns and Education*, 16–21.

³⁶ Rev. J. O’Connor to Mother General St Henri, 4 Sept. 1908, Infant Jesus Archives, Dublin (hereafter IJAD).

ing themselves into this diocese where there is no want to be supplied by them.”³⁷ However, having communicated his reservations via his secretary, Fr O’Connor, the bishop conceded that the French nuns could purchase Drishane Castle, and open a convent and boarding school. “The Bishop looks on his receiving this community into his diocese as a distinct concession,” Fr O’Connor warned. “And he is anxious that the Nuns should have a clear understanding on this point.”³⁸ The nuns opened their convent at Drishane in 1909, and the first Superior was a French woman, Mother St Clair Bringeon. The convent was furnished with gifts from the Dames de St Maur communities in Toulouse, Montpellier, and Nîmes, and the nuns – including the Irishwomen who joined – spoke French and kept their records in French. If the bishop had worried that this French congregation would start to send Irish nuns to their international mission field, his concern was not misplaced: within a year they had opened a novitiate and started to prepare Irish nuns for their convents in Singapore and Penang.

Fears that French orders would recruit Irishwomen for overseas convents was not the only reason that some Irish clergy were hostile to French nuns. In France, the 1905 French Constitution included that the Republic “. . . neither recognizes, nor pays salaries to nor subsidizes any religious denomination.”³⁹ However in Ireland, following the concession of independence by Britain and the formation of the Irish State in 1922, denominational secondary education was warmly supported by the state, and indeed continues to be subsidized to this day. To what degree had the spectre of secularization worried the newly formed state, when it saw developments in France? Did the arrival of French nuns serve as a reminder of the consequences of secularization? While there is insufficient evidence in convent archives to draw firm conclusions on these points, there is certainly evidence that the presence of French nuns, and the status attached to *la politesse* in their convent schools, irritated some members of the hierarchy. This is captured most effectively in *The Land of Spices*, a novel which features the struggles between the Superior of a French foundation in Ireland, and a local curate who despises “Frenchness” in convent schools.⁴⁰ The fictitious convent is a foundation of the *Compagnie de la Sainte Famille*, and the Reverend Mother had

37 Bishop Mangan to Canon Casey, undated [Jan 1909], IJAD.

38 Canon Casey to Mr Duggan, 3 Dec. 1908, IJAD.

39 David Tuohy, *Denominational Education and Politics: Ireland in a European Context* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2013), 134.

40 Written by Kate O’Brien, the novel was published in 1942. O’Brien had attended Laurel Hill Convent, which had been established by the Faithful Companions of Jesus, a French order. Her knowledge of religious life came from both her own experience of a convent schools, and from her two aunts who were Presentation nuns.

undertaken her novitiate many years earlier, at the Motherhouse which had transferred from Chartres to Bruges, “during the uncertain months of 1871, when the Commune rages in France.”⁴¹ The Irish foundation became a home to over forty exiled French and Belgian nuns in 1879, but by 1904 – as the novel commences – the number of French-speaking nuns “is thinning out.”⁴² Reverend Mother is, nonetheless, continuing the practice of sending Irish postulants to Bruges, to commence their novitiate, though the convent chaplain, Fr Conroy, sees no point in this. “It seems a shame,” he argues “that our own Irish girls have to go off to do their religious training in a barbarous place like that.”⁴³ While Reverend Mother defends the Bruges novitiate, the priest dismisses it, saying “. . . it isn’t Irish . . .” The Bruges convent is also defended by a past-pupil who reflects aloud that “the Order’s French tradition conferred a *cachet*, a *je ne sais quoi* . . .”⁴⁴ But the clergyman is adamant. “Of course they’ll learn to *parley-voo*, Reverend Mother! But is that so very important nowadays?” he argues.⁴⁵ Fr Conroy is emphatic that the time has come in Ireland for teaching orders of nuns and priests to promote Irish nationhood, and to turn their backs on continental traditions. “Irish national life is bound up with its religion, and it may well be that educational work will become difficult here soon for those Orders which adhere too closely to a foreign tradition,” he concludes.⁴⁶

The priest’s predictions were not borne out in reality: convent schools that had been founded by French orders flourished in the first half of the twentieth century. So too did convent schools run by Irish orders. Despite the gloomy predictions of clergy like Fr Conroy, these women adapted to the changing needs of the country in the 1920s by learning Irish so that they could teach it in their schools.⁴⁷ Adhering to “foreign traditions” did not “make things difficult” for teaching sisters: rather a series of changes in both the institutional church and in Irish educational policy would herald the gradual demise of convent schooling.

41 Kate O’Brien, *The Land of Spices* (1945; this edn. London: Virago Press, 1988), 11.

42 O’ Brien, *The Land of Spices*, 58.

43 O’ Brien, *The Land of Spices*, 9.

44 O’ Brien, *The Land of Spices*, 9.

45 O’ Brien, *The Land of Spices*, 12.

46 O’ Brien, *The Land of Spices*, 15.

47 This is discussed in some detail in Raftery et al, *Nano Nagle*, 150–151.

5 The Demise of Convent Schooling: The Impact of the Second Vatican Council and Educational Reform in the Long 1960s

From the twelfth century Ireland had been colonised by Britain. Growing discontent with Ireland's dominion status at the end of the nineteenth century led to a period of open hostility to British imperial rule, culminating in the Irish War of Independence, 1919–1921. In 1922, Ireland gained independence from Britain and established itself as the Irish Free State. From the creation of the Irish Free State, the government of Ireland was content to leave the general organization and day-to-day management of education to private interests and only concerned itself with minor curricular reforms and overseeing the school recognition process.⁴⁸ Consequently, until the 1960s, religious orders held a monopoly over the provision of education. They operated the greatest number of second-level institutions through their fee-charging boarding and day secondary schools. These schools, for the most part, were private, voluntary institutions which were under the control of individual trustees, patrons and managers – and these positions were generally held by local priests, bishops and prominent members of congregations.⁴⁹ Catholic religious enjoyed considerable autonomy when running schools. Because they successfully recruited new vocations to religious life, they were able to staff their schools from within their own communities, and thereby controlled every aspect of school life from management to teaching and administration. However, by the mid-twentieth century religious orders were entering a period of uncertainty regarding their future in education in Ireland. By 1960, religious vocations reached their peak.⁵⁰ Until 1972, the number of new vocations remained stable, but from that point onwards there was a steady decline.⁵¹ This change was not confined to Ireland as Christianity, more generally, entered a period of rapid decline from the 1960s (see also Wright, this volume). This coincided with major changes in the Catholic Church, and in the Irish education system. And, as will be

⁴⁸ Department of Education, *Annual Report, 1924–1925* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1926), 7. Hereafter, DE, *Annual Report*. See also John Coolahan, *Irish education: its history and structure* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 2009), 53.

⁴⁹ DE, *Report of the Council of Education as Presented to the Minister for Education, the Curriculum of the Secondary School* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1962), 80.

⁵⁰ Margaret MacCurtain “Late in the Field: Catholic Sisters in Twentieth Century Ireland and the New Religious History” in *Ariadne's Thread: Writing Women into Irish History*, Margaret MacCurtain (Galway: Arlen House, 2008), 286.

⁵¹ MacCurtain, “Late in the Field,” 286.

seen, a consequence of all this change was the demise of convent schooling, which – we would argue – began to create a space for secular education.

The Second Vatican Council, 1962–1965 (Vatican II), was a watershed moment in the history of the modern Catholic Church, leading to unprecedented change. One outcome which was particularly significant to women religious was the directives contained in *Perfectae Caritatis*, or “up-to-date renewal of religious life.” *Perfectae Caritatis* encouraged religious to reorganize the governing structures of their institutes, and to revise constitutions, directories and customs. Nuns could oversee and implement changes for themselves. They were to revisit the original “spirit” of their institutes, and to respond to the changed conditions of modern society.⁵² For many women religious in Ireland, the changes brought about by Vatican II were swift and radical.

Changes that followed Vatican II included that nuns made moderate adaptations, such as adopting a simpler habit (religious dress), and modifying the constitution and rules of obedience.⁵³ Many nuns reverted to their baptismal name. Some opted to “live and work outside their congregations” and build friendships with the laity.⁵⁴ *Perfectae Caritatis* advised that “nuns . . . who are engaged in the external apostolate by virtue of their own rule are to be exempted from papal cloister” and consequently, the rule which had previously denied religious congregations the freedom to leave their respective communities, was abolished.⁵⁵ Unsurprisingly, nuns began to have a far greater awareness of secular life.

As we have noted elsewhere, Vatican II coincided with unprecedented reform in the Irish post-primary education system.⁵⁶ A major report carried out by the Irish government, in conjunction with the Organisation for Economic Development (OECD), highlighted the limitations of the Irish post-primary education system, such as low pupil participation rates, high fees, and the existence of a large

52 Decree on the Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life, Vatican II, “*Perfectae Caritatis*,” in *Vatican Council II, the Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery O.P. (Dublin: Liturgical Press, 1998), 615–616.

53 See Yvonne McKenna, *Made Holy: Irish Women Religious at Home and Abroad* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006); O’Reilly, *The impact of Vatican II*; Deirdre Raftery and Catriona Delaney, “Teaching Vocation or Religious Vocation: Examining the Changing Identity of Irish Teaching Sisters, c. 1940–70, an Oral History approach,” *Irish Educational Studies* (2022).

54 McKenna, *Made Holy*, 131.

55 “*Perfectae Caritatis*,” *Vatican Council II*, 620–621.

56 Catriona Delaney and Deirdre Raftery, “‘Becoming Everything Rolled into One’: Understanding How Sister-teachers Experienced the Immediate Impact of the Free Education Scheme, c. 1958–1968, an Oral History” *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 53:1 (December 2020): 35–39.

number of small schools.⁵⁷ The report, known as *Investment in Education*, precipitated an overhaul of the sector.⁵⁸ Though it had not been anticipated, the changes that followed would contribute to the emergence of increasingly secular forms of schooling, and the gradual diminishment of the role of the Catholic Church in the control of schooling. The changing position of the Catholic Church was part of a broader trend across Europe whereby education and education reforms contributed to secularization (see also e.g. Hellström, this volume).

One of the earliest reforms introduced by the department was the creation of a new type of post-primary school: the comprehensive school.⁵⁹ Until the 1960s, post-primary education had operated on a bi-partite system with secondary schools offering an academic type education while vocational schools focused more on practical and technical instruction.⁶⁰ In the early 1960s, the Minister for Education, Patrick Hillery, began to formulate a ‘comprehensive’ school scheme for Ireland. This scheme was influenced by similar movements in Britain and continental Europe where the focus was shifting from a traditional academic type education to a more rounded curriculum, combining practical and manual instruction with common core subjects like “Irish, English [and] mathematics.”⁶¹ Hillery’s comprehensive scheme marked the first major challenge to the Catholic Church’s monopoly in education, leading to a period of sustained negotiations between church and state.⁶² The Catholic hierarchy were strongly opposed to the comprehensive scheme which entailed the establishment of schools that were state run, non-denominational, and co-educational (mixed sex).⁶³ Agreement over the composition and management of the schools was not easily reached.⁶⁴ The Catholic hierarchy only consented to the comprehensive scheme after securing a

57 See DE, *Report of the Survey Team Appointed by the Minister for Education, Investment in Education, Ireland* (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1965).

58 For a detailed discussion of the changes which transformed the Irish educational landscape during the 1960s see Eileen Randles, *Post-primary Education in Ireland, 1957–70* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1975); John Walsh, *The Politics of Expansion: The Transformation of Educational Policy in the Republic of Ireland, 1957–72* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

59 For a detailed discussion of the comprehensive school scheme see Marie Clarke, “Educational Reform in the 1960s: The Introduction of Comprehensive Schools in the Republic of Ireland,” *History of Education* 39:3 (2010): 383–399.

60 Coolahan, *Irish education*, 134.

61 Statement by Dr. P. J. Hillery, T.D., Minister for Education, in regard to post-primary education (N.A.I., TAOIS, S17405/63); see also, Coolahan, *Irish education*, 134.

62 Clarke, “Educational Reform in the 1960s,” 383–399.

63 Walsh, *The Politics of Expansion*, 91.

64 For a case study of the kind of challenge to Church hegemony that the new system presented see Catriona Delaney, “‘There Seems to be Some Misunderstanding’: Church-state Relations and the Establishment of Carraroe Comprehensive, 1963–1967,” *Irish Educational Studies* (2021): 1–19.

number of concessions including assurances about the teaching of religion and agreements regarding the Deeds of Trust which would ultimately safeguard denominational education in comprehensive schools.⁶⁵ Although the government had received approval in principle from the Catholic hierarchy, progress in the scheme was often slow due to tense negotiations with individual bishops in whose jurisdictions the new state schools were established.⁶⁶ However, with the introduction of subsequent reforming measures, most notably the Free Education Scheme in 1967 and the development of community schools from the early 1970s, an increasing numbers of Catholic bishops, and indeed secondary school authorities, came under pressure to concede to the government's agenda which further sealed the demise of convent schooling.

On September 10, 1966, the Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley announced that from September 1967, post-primary education would be free to intermediate level.⁶⁷ According to the Minister's proposal:

This free education will be available in the comprehensive and vocational schools and in the general run of secondary schools. There will be schools charging higher fees who may not opt to take the scheme, and the parent who wanted to send his child to one of these schools, and pay the fees, would be free to do so.⁶⁸

Whether or not Catholic secondary schools would accept the scheme remained ambiguous until Very Reverend John Huges, S.J., chairman of the Catholic Headmasters Association, recommended that "all the schools in our associations" accept the scheme.⁶⁹ Following this announcement, the vast majority of Catholic secondary schools opted into the scheme.⁷⁰ However, the involvement of nuns in decision-making in the free education scheme was limited. As convent annals indicate, convent schools were swept along in the winds of change, and there was no real attention to the potential impact of the system on the gradual secularization of schooling.⁷¹ Catholic secondary schools were to continue under the patronage of the church, but without a doubt the presence in schools of nuns, priests and brothers declined, and their role in education leadership similarly declined.

The immediate rise in pupil numbers as a result of Free Education had a direct impact on convent schools, not least because school authorities had to grap-

65 Walsh, *The Politics of Expansion*, 94.

66 Walsh, *The Politics of Expansion*, 94–95.

67 *Sunday Independent*, 11 September 1966.

68 Randles, *Post-primary Education*, 218–219.

69 Randles, *Post-primary Education*, 266.

70 DE, *Annual Report, 1967–1968*.

71 See Delaney and Raftery, "Becoming 'Everything Rolled into One.'"

ple with issues around accommodation, but also because of staff shortages. The increased pupil numbers meant that more teachers were needed. Because convents could not meet the demand internally, they were increasingly pressed to fill teaching positions with lay teachers. The rise in secular staff marked a turning point in the ratio of religious to lay teacher employment in the post-primary sector: between 1965 and 1970, the number of religious teaching in the post-primary school sector fell from 50% to less than 35%, further challenging the monopoly enjoyed by religious congregations in post-primary education.⁷² Yet again, political reform had the effect of weakening the status of religious in education. While there was no official “intent” to herald a secularising of schooling via the Free Education scheme, it certainly contributed to the kind of gradual change in school ethos and management that created an environment for a far more secular form of provision.

The gradual drift towards a more secularized education system continued when, in November 1970, the Department of Education indicated its intention to establish ‘community schools’, through a process of amalgamation of existing secondary and vocational schools.⁷³ Community schools were mixed sex schools – in marked contrast on convent schools which were single-sex. They were governed by a board of management, to be composed of “representatives of the secondary school managers and the local vocational committee.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, it was stipulated that “in the case of amalgamations, existing permanent staff in the schools being amalgamated would be offered assimilation on to the staff of the community school if they applied for it.”⁷⁵ The former two recommendations were an attempt to win support from the Catholic hierarchy and religious congregations with a vested interest in education who undeniably would have felt threatened by the prospect of community schools. Despite some initial hesitation by the Catholic Church, community schools became increasingly accepted as a favourable, modern approach to education provision.

The growth in both the number and type of post-primary institution during the mid-twentieth century, illustrates a considerable shift in the traditional composition of second-level education in Ireland. Furthermore, the establishment of comprehensive and community schools highlights the changing position of respective Irish governments in relation to the provision and delivery of post-primary education. Religious congregations continued to provide and govern the greatest number of second-level institutions: in 1964, there were a total of thirty-four female reli-

⁷² *Education Times, an Irish Times Publication*, 13 September 1973.

⁷³ *Irish Press*, 13 November 1970.

⁷⁴ *Irish Press*, 13 November 1970.

⁷⁵ *Irish Press*, 13 November 1970.

gious congregations in Ireland operating 266 Catholic secondary schools.⁷⁶ However, by the early 1970s, it became apparent that the post-primary reforms of the 1960s necessitated a departure from traditional modes of governance.

Until the 1970s lay teachers employed in denominational secondary schools had few rights or responsibilities.⁷⁷ By the 1960s, the limited role accorded to the laity led to increasing tensions between Catholic school authorities and lay teacher organizations such as the ASTI. The Department of Education sought to address this and appointed a committee to recommend a common basic scale of salary for teachers in Ireland.⁷⁸ The report, which became known as the *Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries*, was completed on April 23, 1968, and recommended that:

In schools in which there are both clerical and lay teachers, either the principal or the vice-principal should be a lay teacher, and posts of special responsibility should be apportioned between clerical and lay teachers in accordance with the proportions which they constitute of the total teaching staff of the school.⁷⁹

Following the publication of the *Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries*, the issue of posts of responsibility was debated among the Department of Education, the ASTI and the Joint Managerial Body (JMB). In 1972, the department made a number of changes to the draft agreement on the posts of responsibility including that “in schools under clerical or religious management at least either the post of principal or vice-principal shall normally be filled by the promotion of a lay teacher.”⁸⁰ The Department of Education proposals were subsequently accepted by all invested parties.⁸¹

While the development of posts of responsibility within the post-primary school sector had created, for the first time in the history of the state, a platform for progression of the lay teacher, by and large, the laity remained outside the management and governance structures of the denominational secondary school. This failure, as one *Irish Press* reporter noted, could be largely attributed to the reluctance of religious congregations to relinquish their positions of authority within the secondary school to their lay colleagues:

⁷⁶ The total number of secondary schools in operation during the school year 1963–1964 was 569. See Patrick Duffy, *The Lay Teacher* (Dublin: Fallons, 1967), 64.

⁷⁷ Seán O' Connor, *Post-primary Education Now and in the Future* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1968), 25.

⁷⁸ DE, *Tribunal on Teachers' Salaries, Report Presented to the Minister for Education* (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1968), 5.

⁷⁹ DE, *Tribunal*, 14.

⁸⁰ *Irish Independent*, 17 March 1972.

⁸¹ *Irish Independent*, 21 March 1972.

It cannot have been easy for the clerical and religious authorities to agree to share the administrative power, so long held, with their lay colleagues. It was inevitable in the long run, for decrease in vocations and other reasons, that they would do so.⁸²

By the mid-1990s a major shift in the traditional governing structure of the voluntary secondary school had taken place. From this time onwards, there was a steady and notable decline in the number of religious holding positions of authority in Irish schools.

The role which religious congregations would play in the delivery of post-primary education in the future had been a matter of concern for the Catholic Church hierarchy since the 1970s. Declining religious vocations coupled with the “rapid expansion in the numbers of children seeking post-primary education” were among the main problems facing religious congregations involved in the provision of post-primary education.⁸³ In order to address these issues, the Education Commission of the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (CMRS) in collaboration with the Catholic hierarchy, established a committee in the early 1970s. The findings of the committee were published in 1973 in what became known as the *Future Involvement of Religious in Education* (FIRE) report. Some of the key areas of post-primary education assessed in the FIRE report included the relationship between denominational schools and lay staff, the dilemma of religious in schools, the future of the apostolate, and the withdrawal of religious into a smaller number of schools.⁸⁴ However, the part of the FIRE report which was to receive most attention was the proposal by the Catholic hierarchy to establish boards of management in secondary schools.

In late 1975, the ASTI sub-committee, CMRS and the Episcopal Education Commission met to discuss the question of boards of management.⁸⁵ Like other developments in the education system at this time, progress was slow and it was not until July 1984 that the ASTI and the Catholic managerial bodies finally reached an agreement.⁸⁶ The results of the agreement were published in *Articles for the Management of Catholic secondary schools* which proposed the establishment of eight-member boards comprising of four nominees of the trustees, two elected parents and two elected teachers.⁸⁷ The traditional governing and administrative structure of the denominational secondary school was by now transformed out of all recognition.

⁸² *Irish Press*, 10 December 1971.

⁸³ *Education Times*, 31 May 1973.

⁸⁴ *Education Times*, 31 May 1973.

⁸⁵ John Coolahan, *The ASTI and Post-primary Education in Ireland, 1909–1984* (Dublin: Cumann na Meanmhuinteoírí, Éire, 1984), 365.

⁸⁶ Coolahan, *The ASTI*, 366.

⁸⁷ Coolahan, *The ASTI*, 366.

6 Concluding Remarks

As noted by Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Carlos Martínez Valle:

The expansion of schooling as a feature of modernity is central to the analysis of the relations between churches, religious institutions, religious movements, education, and the state. In the interplay between these, the diffusion does not appear as specifically linked to a particular generalizable cause, such as the industrial revolution, urbanization, or state laws of compulsory schooling, but to myriad and sometimes local and/or national specific determinants.⁸⁸

In an Irish schools context, this assessment of the transition to modernity, or indeed, secularization, is fitting. As evidenced in this chapter, the move from private, denominational, voluntary school to a more secularized system of education cannot be traced to one single event or period in time. The transition was slow and marked by numerous factors including social and religious change and political and educational reform. Other determinants, about which almost nothing has been written, included the low-level hostility towards French teaching orders, that was displayed by some clergy who neither welcomed the influx of French nuns, nor wanted Irish girls to be won over by continental influences.

Ultimately, the demise of the convent school was hastened by the revolutionary reforms of the Department of Education during the long 1960s, which considerably altered the traditional secondary school system. The governance and administrative developments that occurred during and after the 1970s illustrated a remarkable shift in public interest in education. Although the Second Vatican Council and the FIRE report sought to safeguard the position of religious in post-primary education, the continuing decline in vocations meant that their onetime monopoly had ended.⁸⁹ The increasing secularization of Irish schooling requires more consideration than is possible in this chapter, but our initial findings suggest that secularization was never the primary agenda of the government or society. Rather, broader religious, political and social developments brought about a gradual drift away from traditional forms of Catholic schooling, including the convent school.

⁸⁸ Bruno-Jofré and Martínez Valle, “Church, Religious Institutions, the State, and Schooling,” 14.

⁸⁹ Although the Catholic Church still maintains a strong presence in the Irish educational sector, the reforms initiated during the 1960s have led to increasing secularization within the school system. For example, of the 735 post-primary schools in operation today, 346 identify as having a Catholic ethos, 214 are multi-denominational and 149 are inter-denominational. See Department of Education and Skills, “Schools.” Accessed January 12, 2024, https://www.gov.ie/en/directory/category/495b8a-schools/?school_roll_number=.

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Susannah Wright

A Secularizing Mission? Moral Instruction in English Schools, 1890s to 1918

Abstract: In this chapter, I consider what secularization meant for non-religious minorities (secularists) from the 1890s to the end of the First World War. Such minorities have to date received only limited attention in historical discussions of secularization. Yet as much as Christians they sought influence in a range of societal institutions, including schools. Through the Moral Instruction League, they promoted moral instruction as a replacement for or an addition to (Christian) religious instruction. In so doing they aimed to form future citizens. However, it does not follow that those involved pursued a unified secularizing mission. Secularists held different views of the way that their ‘secular’ morality connected with or challenged religion. They responded in varied ways to critiques from Christian lobbies. Some welcomed alliances with Christians who wished to challenge what they deemed unwarranted and destructive intervention of churches and church personnel in schools. Others rejected such alliances. I examine in detail two elements of the Moral Instruction League’s activities which bring to the fore secularists’ intentions in relation to secularization: its interventions in connection with the Bible and religious instruction lessons in schools, and its demonstration lessons which involved encounters with people and spaces of religious belief. Rather than presenting a clear, single mission, this analysis reveals tensions between secularists and ambiguities within secularists’ positions.

1 Introduction

A “civilizing mission” has been identified as a goal of reformers in varied contexts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whether colonial ones, or those of urban poverty in England.¹ Education emerges as an important tool in such a mission.² Benefits, it was argued, could be imparted in terms of knowledge

¹ For example, Peter J. Cain, “Character, ‘Ordered Liberty’, and the Mission to Civilize: British Moral Justification of Empire, 1870–1914,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 40:4 (2012):557–78; Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor. London 1870–1914* (London: River Oram Press, 1996).

² For example, Kevin Brehony, “A ‘Socially Civilizing Influence’? Play and the Urban Degenerate,” *Paedagogica Historica* 39:1/2 (2003): 87–106; Rebecca Rogers, “Teaching Morality and Reli-

and skills, attitudes, and behaviors, for the individuals who accessed education, and by extension for the families and communities that these individuals belonged to. Building on these ideas, this chapter considers whether education could have a secularizing mission too. In the hands of secularists – those associated with organizations established as organizational alternatives to Christianity – it could. Indeed, for secularists, a secularizing mission could have civilizing aims too.³ Language of mission and missionaries featured across a range of secularist writings, including those emerging from attempts to influence education in English state schools through the Moral Instruction League (MIL).⁴

This notion of mission forms the starting point for considering two important issues relevant to an examination of secularization within a country's state education system, from the standpoint of secularist actors who expressed minority views about religion. The first is the intention and determination associated with mission. This leads to a consideration of the extent to which secularists attempted to achieve secularization through their pressure group activities in connection with state schools. Secularization, for these actors, ultimately aimed at cultural and ideological change at a societal level. The intention to achieve such change underpinned their proposals about schools, whether these were to change educational policy and legislation, and or curriculum content and teaching approaches, or whether they were to attach new meanings to existing activities and spaces. The second is the embeddedness of the language of mission in religious beliefs and practices; in the English context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century predominantly those of Christianity. When secularists spoke or wrote of missions and missionaries, they might have been exposing their roots in concepts and language of Christianity (see also Dekker, this volume), perhaps because they lacked alternative concepts and language of their own. Secularists' use of the language of mission and missionaries might, alternatively, have been subversive, an attempt to claim this language for their own purposes. Multiple interpretations are possible, and if Christian missionary endeavors have been subject to influen-

gion in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Algeria: Gender and the Civilizing Mission," *History of Education* 40:6 (2011): 741–59; Susannah Wright, "Teachers, Family and Community in the Urban Elementary School: Evidence from English School Log Books c.1880–1918," *History of Education* 41:2 (2012): 155–73. See also Buchardt, this volume.

³ For example, Susannah Wright, "Moral Instruction, Urban Poverty and English Elementary Schools in the Late Nineteenth Century". In N. Goose, K. Honeyman (eds.), *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England. Diversity and Agency, 1750–1914* (London: Ashgate, 2013).

⁴ For example, *Moral Education League Quarterly*, January 1, 1913, 4–5 and January 1, 1914, 7; *Ethical World*, December 15, 1912, 189.

ces of secularization over time (see also Sabra, this volume), we could conceive of secular interests being subject to Christianized notions of mission.

In this chapter, I consider the ideological basis of secularization and the sites, symbols, and actions it involved for non-religious minorities (secularists) in what was widely assumed to be a “Christian nation” from the 1890s to the end of the First World War. Such minorities have to date received only limited attention in discussions of secularization within historical research, although this is starting to change.⁵ As much as Christians, secularists sought influence in and through a range of societal institutions, including schools. I focus particularly on secularist activity within the Moral Instruction League (MIL), a pressure group formed in 1897 to promote non-theological moral instruction in English state schools. The League lobbied central and local government, created teaching aids, and offered demonstration lessons, to promote secular moral instruction as a replacement for or an addition to (Christian) religious instruction as an important ingredient of elementary schooling. Through the League, secularists attempted to shape the ideals and behavior of children, and through this influence on individuals to create a society in which good citizenship could incorporate a range of religious, and non-religious positions. In so doing they aimed to form future citizens in their own image. Secularists criticized Christians for neglecting the interests of non-believers in educational provision and extending to all their own assumptions about an elision of good citizenship with Christian beliefs. Yet there were generalizing tendencies in secularists’ own aims. Despite this, it does not follow that those active in or supportive of the League pursued a unified secularizing mission. For some, secular morality connected with and supplemented religion, for others it challenged it, for others still it did both. Secularists connected with the League responded in varied ways to critiques from Christian lobbies. Some welcomed overtures from Christians who saw in their programme a means to challenge what they deemed unwarranted and destructive intervention of churches and church personnel in schools. Others rejected such alliances.

This chapter focuses on secularists’ intentions; this task alone is a complex matter, as the discussion that follows will indicate, and it would not be possible to do justice to a consideration of outcomes too. In terms of scope, I take England rather than Britain. England was the League’s primary locus of activity, which itself was linked to the legal and administrative boundaries of educational systems within Britain. Secularists’ intentions do not emerge as a clear, single secularizing

⁵ Susannah Wright, *Morality and Citizenship in English Schools: Secular Approaches 1897–1944* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Callum Brown, *Becoming Atheist. Humanism and the Secular West* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

mission. There are tensions between those who shaped its activities and created its resources, and ambiguities within these individuals' positions. The MIL had sometimes divergent, sometimes parallel, sometimes interlinked, aims. This was partly a matter of different members and sympathisers, who might be rooted in different secularist organizations and reflect the different ideas, and different approaches to religion, within these. Different aims might also come to the fore in different situations or contexts. On some occasions, it was deemed opportune to emphasize a secularizing mission. At other times, secularists played down any such mission in order to facilitate cooperation with anyone who would assist them, including those of religious belief, in their educational goals. A close analysis of two moments, however, in the League's pressure group activities during which positions and assumptions relevant to secularization are prominent also suggests both connections with, and separation from, religion, at the same time, with secularists connecting in complex ways with the rituals, texts, and spaces of religion. The first moment involves debates within the League, prominent between 1897 and about 1902, about what its policy should be regarding the Bible and religious instruction lessons in schools. The second moment relates to demonstration lessons which by 1910 were offered to teachers and other interested spectators in varied settings; these involved encounters with spaces and people of belief. Before examining these moments, this chapter offers background on the MIL, contextualized through broader debates about secularization and the positioning of secularist actors within these debates.

2 Secularization and Secularism

Contemporaries and later historians have characterized England, or Britain, depending on the particular study, in the period covered in this chapter as a "Christian nation". A Christian nation, according to Keith Robbins, comprises an "interrelationship between political attitudes, ecclesiastical allegiances, and cultural traditions".⁶ Taking into account a combination of institutional power and legal structures, church membership and attendance, wider cultural texts, and individual recounted experiences of home, school and community contexts, a sizeable proportion of the English population were socialized into Christian ideas in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries. Focusing specifically on the school, its potential as an agent of nation- or state-building was recognized by this time in many parts of the world, through structures, rituals, curriculum, and pedagogy, even if there were challenges in realizing this po-

⁶ Keith Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain* (London: Hambledon, 1993), 85.

tential in practice. In England as in other countries, this involved compromises around and negotiations between ‘secular’ state power and religion.⁷ In the English context, religion – typically meaning Christianity – was embedded within schools in multiple ways. Churches of different denominations built and owned schools, and religious lessons and observances were scheduled at the start of the school day from 1870. These were arrangements that Christian denominations argued about, but which ensured a baseline of religious input for most children at the time. At the same time, contemporary commentators, both Christian and Secularist, argued that religion, and particularly Christianity, was showing signs of decline both in terms of its institutional position and in terms of church attendance from the late nineteenth century onwards. These commentators were not disinterested but claimed these trends to be negative and dangerous, or positive and worthy of celebration.⁸

Later historians have similarly debated what to make of these puzzling and seemingly contradictory indications. Secularization in English and British contexts has been examined extensively. Earlier accounts suggested a uni-directional process, linked to other processes of modernization and urbanization, which was well underway by the third quarter of the nineteenth century.⁹ More recent studies emphasize the institutional and cultural strength of Christianity until the mid-twentieth century, with the 1960s identified as the starting point for rapid decline, even if the details of what happened in this decade and after are subject to debate.¹⁰ Overall, there has been a discernible shift away from secularization as a “grand narrative” with universal attributes giving it explanatory power,¹¹ towards “multiple secularities”, with secularization found in isolated pockets and

7 Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon, “Introduction”. In L. Brockliss, N. Sheldon (eds.), *Mass Education and the Limits of State Building, c.1870–1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1–12. Out of many examples of relevant recent research see Yuval Dror, “Textbook Images as a Means of ‘Nation/State Building: Zionist Geographical Textbooks 1918 to 1948, *History of Education Review* 33:2 (2004): 59–72 and Filiz Meşeci Giorgetti, “Nation-Building in Turkey through Ritual Pedagogy: the late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican Era,” *History of Education* 49:1 (2020): 77–103.

8 Wright, *Morality and Citizenship*, 18–19.

9 Among numerous studies see Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990); AD Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain* (London: Longman 1980); Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1974); Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

10 Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2009); Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

11 J. C. D. Clark, “Secularization and Modernization: The Failure of a ‘Grand Narrative’,” *The Historical Journal* 55:1 (2012): 161–94.

varied forms.¹² Some note a resilience of Christian narratives in particular contexts beyond these dates.¹³ Education, internationally, has been used by states as a tool for modernization, and secularization, the two viewed often as going hand in hand. Yet local studies and those focused on practices on the ground highlight nuances and compromises. They show the limits of how far teachers and schools could influence pupils' beliefs and practices, even under Communism in Czechoslovakia, and the extent to which religious actors, even ones as powerful as the Catholic Church in Italy, could adapt their educational practices to partly secular ends.¹⁴

Indeed, arguments are offered not just for the co-existence of the religious and secular, but also for a lack of a clear divide between the religious and the secular in beliefs, institutions, and practices. Callum Brown for example notes a tendency to see “modern secularity . . . veined through with concealed religiosity”. He critiques this tendency about atheist individuals who, he suggests, made a point of rejecting any religiosity.¹⁵ For secularists involved with the Moral Instruction League, however, the suggestion of an outright rejection of religiosity on the part of all of them cannot be sustained. A lack of clear divide between the religious and the secular might potentially have impacted secularists in different ways. Focusing on cultural narratives, both secularization and religious belief can be conceived as “stories” which do not represent objective truths but can have resonance in particular contexts and provide ways of understanding the world. In this scenario individuals can move fluidly between the secular and the religious, and within both of these move between different organizations or denominations, and different ideals and beliefs.¹⁶ In terms of organizational, social and ideological structures, Todd Weir argues for the “confessionality of secularism”.

12 Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones, “Introduction: Multiple Secularities.” In *Religion and the Political Imagination* edited by Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–22.

13 David Nash, *Christian Ideals in British Culture: Stories of Belief in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

14 Mette Buchardt, “The Political Project of Secularization and Modern Education Reform in “Provincialized Europe”. Historical Research in Religion and Education Beyond *Secularization, R.I.P.*,” *International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 11:2 (2021): 164–70; Fabio Pruneri, “The Catechism will Save Society, Without the Catechism There is no Salvation”: Secularization and Catholic Educational Practice in an Italian Diocese, 1905–14,” *Studies in Church History* 55 (2019): 511–29; Jiří Zounek, Michal Šimáněand, Dana Knotová, “Primary School Teachers as a Tool of Secularization of Society in Communist Czechoslovakia,” *History of Education* 46:4 (2017):480–97.

15 Callum Brown “The Necessity of Atheism: Making Sense of Secularization,” *Journal of Religious History* 41:4 (2017): 439.

16 David Nash, *Christian Ideals in British Culture: Stories of Belief in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); David Nash, “Believing in Secularization – Stories of Decline, Potential, and Resurgence,” *Journal of Religious History* 41:4 (2017): 505–31.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts, he suggests that secularists challenged the essential structures of the confessional field, whilst contributing to its reshaping. Because secularism originated in and continued to influence the confessional field, it retained some of its structural elements.¹⁷ Maintaining the confessional field involves rituals of belief with associated symbols, texts, and spaces or sites. These rituals could function as top-down invented traditions that keep the powerful in power and the less powerful in their subordinate place, potentially supporting the maintenance of the elites, ideological, and institutional structures of the "Christian nation". They also had the potential to carry different meanings, and to allow space for minor, unobtrusive forms of adaptation and resistance, even with traditional ritual spaces, symbols and acts.¹⁸

Religious and secular beliefs and practices can be seen to be in continual dialogue, shaping one another. Individuals made use of ideals, ideas, and symbolic and ritual resources, and acted on them in dynamic ways. In this discussion I have drawn on insights from a range of geographical, disciplinary and theoretical contexts that, brought together, might complement one another, or might create dissonance. Both a converging or diverging of insights are useful for exploring the dynamics at play for secularists in late nineteenth and early twentieth century England attempting to gain influence in and through schools.

3 Secularists and Moral Instruction

On 7 December 1897, representatives from socialist parties, trade unions, the National Secular Society, the Union of Ethical Societies, and other "progressive bodies", met in London. This meeting led to the formation of the Moral Instruction League.¹⁹ In its early years, the League attracted a relatively small cadre of active workers and supporters that was mainly London-based, and mainly secularist, dominated particularly by the Ethical Movement. Over time, as its geographical reach and range of activities extended, members and supporters came to include a wider group of teachers, public intellectuals, and liberal Christians (and people of other

17 Todd Weir, *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Rise of the Fourth Confession*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

18 Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction." in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1–14; Nicholas B. Dirks 'Ritual and Resistance: Subversion as a Social Fact.' In *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, ed. Geoff Eley et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 483–503.

19 Frederick James Gould, *Moral Instruction. A Chapter from the Story of Schools in England and Wales* (London: Watts & Co, 1929), 2; *The Freethinker*, December 12, 1897, 793.

religions). The actions of a handful of individual school boards in England, the work of the Ethical Movement internationally, and the *morale laïque* developed by the Republican administration in France provided precedents for the League's underpinning educational ideas and its pedagogical suggestions. The League however was the first organization to promote secular moral instruction in elementary schools throughout England. It lobbied central and local governments and training colleges, produced syllabuses and teaching manuals, and offered demonstration lessons for teachers in schools.²⁰

The dominance of a particular version of secularism in the MIL, that of the Ethical Movement, shaped its pedagogical and curriculum suggestions, and the approach that it took to promoting its cause, as will be seen in the discussion of the two 'moments' below. The Ethical Movement emerged in England in the 1880s. Membership was relatively small compared with Christian denominations, peaking at about 2000 in 1912; these figures are not entirely reliable. If membership figures alone are taken as an indicator of significance, we might assume an unimportant minority.²¹ Yet these secularists, like their counterparts in other groups, lobbied and campaigned on a range of wider social issues, sometimes through the formation of secularist pressure groups like the MIL, sometimes through secularists' presence in a range of different campaigning bodies and print media. The League was therefore one means by which secularists sought wider societal influence.²² The Ethical Movement was willing to work with Christians on these wider aims. It was open to ritual in its meetings, and to acknowledging ideals above the individual, embracing what might later be termed spirituality. Some Ethical Movement members defined what they did as religious, because religion did not necessarily involve belief in a super-

²⁰ For more detail on the Moral Instruction League see: R.N. Bérard, "The Movement for Moral Instruction in Great Britain: The Moral Instruction League and its Successors," *Fides et Historia* 16:2 (1984): 55–73; Wright, *Morality and Citizenship*, 83–114. For a combination of commentary with extensive excerpts from League texts see Gustav Spiller, *The Ethical Movement in Great Britain* (London: Farleigh Press, c. 1934) 124–55. Elementary schools in England at this time educated pupils aged 5–14.

²¹ Classic studies include Susan Budd, *Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society, 1850–1960* (London: Heinemann, 1977); Ian D. MacKillop, *The British Ethical Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Membership figures from Spiller, *The Ethical Movement*.

²² T. R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity: The Impact of Comtean Positivism on Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Recent studies looking at broader influences include Suzanne Hobson, *Unbelief in Interwar Literary Cultures: Doubting Moderns* (Oxford University Press, 2022); Elizabeth Lutgendorff, "Slaughtering sacred cows: rebutting the narrative of decline in the British secular movement from the 1890s to 1930s" (PhD diss., Oxford Brookes University, 2018); Michael Rectenwald, *Nineteenth Century British Secularism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016); Laura Schwartz, *Infidel feminism: Secularism, Religion and Women's Emancipation, England 1830–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), Wright, *Morality and Citizenship*.

natural deity. These ideas and ways of working could clash with the approach of MIL supporters who were members of the National Secular Society (NSS) who challenged Christian religion on rational and intellectual grounds, sought to expose the exclusion of non-Christians from social or legal rights, and overall wished to distance themselves from Christians and Christianity. An anti-religious stance could preclude compromise or collaboration with Christians; some individual NSS members and local secular societies though did seek compromise and collaboration.²³ These differences are generalizations to an extent, and individuals could shift in their positions and even their attachment to different versions of secularism and different secularist bodies, but they had important implications for the MIL.

The MIL from its inception argued that secular moral instruction provided for the needs of the modern state, which had developed a “highly complex demand upon the citizen’s devotion”, requiring it to use its schools to form the habits and ideals of citizenship.²⁴ The best moral code for this purpose, it argued, involved “strictly human (i.e. not religious) reasons for good conduct” and “moral principles common to humanity . . . appropriate for people of all theologies or none”.²⁵ The League constructed a graduated syllabus for use for children aged four to fourteen in elementary schools, covering an extensive range of moral qualities. It moved from personal traits such as kindness, truthfulness, and self-control for the youngest children, through broader social themes including justice, humanity, and patriotism for children in the middle age group, to complex and potentially controversial topics such as cooperation, ideals, peace and war for the oldest pupils. The Bible and other religious texts, alongside biography, myth, and legend, could all be used to illustrate lessons, supplemented by modern political and social texts for the topics for older children.²⁶

The League operated against the backdrop of what contemporaries termed the ‘religious difficulty’ in schools. Given the context of a lack of separation between Church and State in England, different Christian denominations fought over the funding and administration of schools, and over the appropriate form of religious instruction lessons (confessionally-oriented for Anglicans, non-denominational for Nonconformists). Secularists felt alienated by the main positions taken in these de-

23 Budd, *Varieties of Unbelief*; David S. Nash, *Secularism, Art, and Freedom* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992); Edward Royle, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans: Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866–1915* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980).

24 Frederick James Gould, *A National Need: The Civic Spirit in Education* (London: Moral Instruction League (MIL), 1913), 3–4, 8–10.

25 MIL, *Our Future Citizens* (London: MIL, 1900), 8–9; MIL, *The Moral Instruction League* (London: MIL, c.1903), 1.

26 Wright, *Morality and Citizenship*, 58–59, 87–88.

bates, which, however antagonistic, assumed a place for churches and Christianity within schools. At the same time, through the League they utilized this ongoing debate as a promotional opportunity, a chance to offer “a secular solution to the religious difficulty”.²⁷ Moral instruction was presented as the way out of these ongoing battles for everyone, whether they were secularist or not. Indeed, this was an attractive proposition for some Christians who felt that unseemly infighting diminished the quality of educational provision, and indeed the status and reputation of Christianity itself.²⁸ If secularization was intended, it was to be attained through collaboration with and consent from some Christians.

Even if key personnel were Ethical Movement members, the League aimed at the breadth of membership and sympathizers, noting in its 1911 annual report support from “Catholics, Anglicans, Nonconformists, Jews, Unitarians, Ethicists, Rationalists, Positivists, Hindus, Mahommedam, Parsees, Buddhists.”²⁹ The League cooperated with believers for purposes of lobbying and policy influence too, working with the cross-party Nonconformist group in parliament while trying to persuade the government to change its educational legislation to make it compulsory that schools offer moral instruction. These efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, but having prominent Nonconformist allies ensured that the League was at least heard. In the broader context of the British Empire, educators of different faiths assisted with in developing, publicizing and disseminating texts and syllabuses for multi-faith imperial territories (notably India).³⁰

In order to examine the intentions of secularists within the MIL, I draw primarily on the publications of the League and secularist bodies from which its workers, members and supporters came such as the Ethical Movement and National Secular Society. Also important are autobiographical accounts by F J Gould, one of the League’s paid workers. In the absence of a full organizational archive for the MIL or personal papers for individual actors, I explore the intentions that secularists chose to reveal to the reading public. MIL and secularist periodicals especially and to a lesser extent Gould’s autobiographical accounts typically envisaged a readership primarily of secularists and/or League supporters; some of the League’s pamphlets targeted a broader public. This imagined readership is an important consideration when examining intentions and internal debates. Many of the texts seem to assume a base level of background knowledge and understanding of the issues at stake. They assumed sympathy with the overall enter-

27 MIL from c.1903 quoted in Spiller, *Ethical Movement*, 132.

28 Wright, *Morality and Citizenship*, 93–95.

29 Cited in Spiller, *Ethical Movement*, 151.

30 Wright, *Morality and Citizenship*, 94–98, 130–34.

prise of secularism, and with promoting secular morality in schools, though they did not assume agreement about how this was to be achieved.

4 A Secularizing Mission?

I am alert to the possibilities of seeing in the MIL both the power of invented traditions of the Christian nation and the possibility of resistance, sometimes overt, often subtle. I see possibilities in acknowledging multiple intersecting narratives, and the significance of a religious field from which secularists emerged, which they influenced and changed, and which continued to influence and change them. The League discussed and utilized symbols and spaces of religion, namely the Bible and Christian buildings, for varied purposes. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain whether the intent was to secularize, to change the meaning of these symbols and spaces, or to draw from them for legitimacy. Perhaps it was all of these at once.

Secularizing goals are present in commentary on the Moral Instruction League's aims by its workers and supports, for example in references to the "secular solution" to the religious difficulty, and "the partial secularization of even the existing system."³¹ In these examples, secularization and secular seem to operate as much as statements of intent as descriptors of reality. Not all involved thought that this intent was to be achieved simply by eliminating religion in the school context. How the League positioned itself in relation to the Bible and religious instruction was a thorny issue throughout the League's years of campaigning, but debates were particularly concentrated and heated in the first few years of the League's existence. To take religious instruction lessons first, the League's initial Object, agreed upon at its first business meeting in January 1898, was "to substitute systematic non-theological moral instruction for the present religious teaching in all State schools, and to make character the chief aim of school life". By 1902 the Object was revised to focus on introducing moral instruction, with the reference to religious teaching removed.³²

Multiple reasons were offered for this change, which was advocated particularly by the League's Ethical Movement-affiliated officers and committee members in these early years. It was advocated on strategic grounds, as facilitating achievement of the League's goals. Removing the demand to end religious instruction could, it was argued, enable the League to avoid alienating potential supporters and encourage take up of moral instruction: "We may move more rapidly if

³¹ MIL from c.1903 quoted in Spiller, *Ethical Movement*, 132; *The Freethinker*, August 14, 1898, 516.

³² Spiller, *Ethical Movement*, 152–53.

we travel on the lines of evolution rather than revolution . . . Why would we raise unnecessary opposition?"³³ The take up of moral instruction lessons by approximately one-third of local education authorities over the first decade of the twentieth century suggests prescience in this assessment. Some of the reasoning offered, however, was less goal-oriented, and pertained to the meanings and relationships that could attach to the sites and spaces of religion in school. Always scheduled at the start of the school day, as dictated by educational legislation and codes, League supporters and workers claimed that the religious instruction lesson was a unique and important moment. Attention turned not to mundane or earthly curricula, but to a communal experience, tied to a higher purpose, and potentially meaningful for those involved. This was a time of potential in the school day and the League claimed that moral instruction would make the most of this potential. Secular moral instruction, systematically organized and offering relevant and engaging illustrations, could inspire awe and reverence and utilize the opportunities of this unique period of the school day.³⁴

Teachers and ex-teachers attached to the League, moreover, also argued that religious instruction cemented relationships within the school, providing a further rationale for why it should be supplemented, even modified, but retained. Frederick James Gould was connected with the League from its inception, and from 1910 was employed as its demonstrator. As a secularist elementary school teacher in London in the late 1880s and 1890s, he was ordered by his school to stop giving religious instruction lessons to his pupils. Looking back on this later, he recalls feeling "an alien": "I kept on fraternal terms with my half-dozen fellow teachers, but I was *in* the school, not *of* it. I was a foreign body." Gould appealed, unsuccessfully, to his school and to the London School Board to reverse the decision.³⁵ His situation, which received attention at the time in the secularist and local press, might potentially have fed into the League's focus on religious instruction lessons a few years later. There were, however, many teachers within the Ethical Movement, so a wider set of experiences that has not survived in the written record in the way that Gould's have might potentially have been influential too. Others, mainly early National Secular Society members, advocated retaining the demand that religious instruction lessons should be removed. One correspondent in the NSS's periodical *The Freethinker*, reflecting on debates within the League on this matter, argued that all instruction should be "secular". Moral instruction should not try to "bridge over the chasm between the knowledge which deals with the demonstrable facts of life and

³³ *The Freethinker*, August 14, 1898, 525.

³⁴ MIL 'manifesto' of 1898 cited in *Ethical World*, March 15, 1905, 93.

³⁵ Frederick James Gould, *The Life Story of a Humanist* (London: Watts & Co 1923), 63–71. Quote at 67.

that faith which has nothing whatever to do therewith". Not demanding the removal of religious instruction would dilute the League's message and lead to a lack of clarity.³⁶

The Bible was, if anything, even more controversial. Through these early years, League members and sympathizers debated whether the Bible was an appropriate source of illustration for moral instruction. The League's official position arrived at in 1898 was that the Bible and any other religious texts could be used for this purpose. This would be possible as long as, firstly, "theological" elements were left out, and, secondly, the Bible or other religious text would not be placed directly in children's hands so that teachers would retain control over the ways in which it was used.³⁷ The Bible was a potent, multivalent, symbol and the League's position on it a source of friction among members and supporters, with divisions roughly but not entirely on NSS and Ethical Movement lines. References to the Bible represented not only the book and the words within, but broader assumptions about the place of religion in schools and wider society. Christians in this period claimed a close association between the Bible and English national character, and secularists were very alert to the gravity of what was at stake.³⁸

The League's official stance on the Bible, defined over 1898/1899, was framed chiefly by its leaders and officers, most of whom were tied to the Ethical Movement. They drew on traditions from the Ethical Culture Movement in the USA and in particular the philosophies and educational suggestions of its founder, Felix Adler. Adler's *The Moral Instruction of Children in Classes*, published in 1892 and soon issued for distribution in England, outlined the moral instruction lessons given in Adler's ethical culture school in New York. Teachers used the Bible in these lessons to illustrate a human moral code, avoiding theological implications.³⁹ A few years later the League's early officers and paid workers noted the potential benefits of using the Bible. Zola Vallance, the League's first Secretary, described the Bible as "one of the richest and most poetic of the world's collections of moral and social experience". Frederick James Gould offered similar arguments for the value of the Bible, but advocated its use as one of many texts. Teachers, he argued, should bor-

³⁶ *The Freethinker*, November 28, 1897, 765.

³⁷ Resolutions from 1898 cited in Spiller, *Ethical Movement*, 125.

³⁸ C.f. Matthew Grimley, "The Religion of Englishness: Puritanism, Providentialism, and 'National Character', 1918–1945," *Journal of British Studies* 46:4 (2007): 895.

³⁹ Felix Adler, *The Moral Instruction of Children* (London: Edward Arnold, 1892). On Adler's influence on Ethical Movement educators in England more broadly see Susannah Wright, "There is Something Universal in our Movement Which Appeals Not Only to one Country, But to All: International Communication and Moral Education 1892–1914," *History of Education* 37:6 (2008): 812–13 and Wright, *Morality and Citizenship*, 117–19.

row from the best parts of the sacred texts of Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, and other faiths, and from secular ideals such as the principles of the French revolution. This way, it was possible to combine and systematically order high-quality content in a moral instruction scheme.⁴⁰ This sort of use of the Bible, it should be noted, was not far from that advocated by some Christians in England, especially Nonconformists influenced by modernist criticism, and elsewhere (See also Hellstrom, this volume).⁴¹

For others, though, the Bible was too loaded, had too many negative connotations, and blurred the distinction between secular morality and theological belief. By including the Bible, argued National Secular Society members, the League failed to send out a clear message to supporters, and also to those who were content to ignore its proposals.⁴² In the end, the National Secular Society withdrew its institutional membership of the League in 1899, primarily because of the League's position on the Bible as a source for moral instruction, though some NSS members retained individual affiliation. The NSS's president, George W Foote, outlined the reasoning behind this move. "The Bible", he wrote, "was placed in schools for religious reasons and its retention in public schools is opposed to the principles of secular education." He elaborated on the rationale behind NSS's position in the context of schools at least partly funded and administered by the State: "They [secularists] know that the Bible is a religious book, and they say that the State should have nothing at all to do with religion." The churches, he noted, were strong enough to control education "and they keep the Bible in the schools for the sake of manufacturing customers".⁴³ By using the Bible at all within the school setting, he implied, the League would help churches to both retain control of state education and to socialize children into Christian beliefs.

The League's demonstration lessons offered a different form of encounter with belief. From the start the League sought to help teachers and other potential supporters understand what it was trying to achieve, through seeing its approach of secular moral instruction lessons in action. It offered occasional model lessons and a moral instruction circle for those who wished to develop their practice in its early years. Frederick James Gould was employed as the League's demonstrator from 1910. His demonstration lessons involved secularists encountering a wide range of people and settings first hand; these lessons effectively tested the portability of its ostensibly inclusive, human, morality. Demonstration lessons thus offer close-up glimpses of encounters with spaces and people of belief.

40 *The Freethinker*, July 9, 1899, 445 and December 19, 1897, 812–13.

41 Wright, *Morality and Citizenship*, 100.

42 *The Freethinker*, July 31, 1898, 494–95.

43 *The Freethinker*, May 28, 1899, 347 and July 9, 1899, 445.

Gould's lessons took place in schools, but also in venues beyond: drawing rooms in the houses of wealthy supporters, labor halls, playgrounds, Sunday school rooms, churches, and chapels.⁴⁴

Reverend Hugh Chapman, Chaplain of the Savoy Chapel in London 1909–33, invited Gould to give three demonstration lessons there between 1909 and 1911. Chapman was a broad-church Anglican, known for his advocacy work on a range of progressive social issues, including marriage law, and was described in his obituary as “one of the most unconventional figures among the London clergy”.⁴⁵ He became a long-term supporter of the League. Gould describes one of these lessons in his autobiography: “In the choir I had a class of boys and girls, and, aided by a blackboard, I told them my stories in the presence of an audience that sat in the pews; the Rev. Hugh Chapman looking on in benediction.”⁴⁶ This passage raises important questions about the meaning and use of the chapel space for these purposes. The description of the spaces of the chapel, the choir and the pews, juxtaposed with the imported blackboard, is striking, as is the word “benediction”, suggesting support but also seeming to reference Chapman's profession and faith. This might be a case of non-Christians adopting Christian concepts and spaces because of the lack of distinctly secularist alternatives. Alternatively, it might illustrate the ways in which religious and secular fields shaped and reshaped one another.⁴⁷ Gould's own biography might also be influential. He was a chorister at St George's Chapel in Windsor as a schoolboy, so a space like this might have been especially potent for him. The League in annual report mode however noted pragmatic benefits of such a setting in furthering its aims. It could attract a high-powered audience, with Gould's 1909 lesson in the Savoy Chapel attended by representatives of staffs of training colleges county education authorities. While the League intended demonstration lessons to be useful for ordinary classroom teachers, it also valued their ability to reach those who might be able to effect policy and curriculum change.⁴⁸

Reverend Chapman's commentary on Gould's demonstration lessons hints at where the League's agenda might align with that of some Christian supporters. For Chapman, such lessons could counteract the “clerical rut into which the training of the young is all too prone to slip”. He taps into common arguments at the time, offered by Christians as well as secularists, about the impact of the religious difficulty in schools: it was a distraction, it was damaging, and it created a negative im-

⁴⁴ Gould, *Life Story*, 117–18.

⁴⁵ “The Rev. H. B. Chapman,” *The Times*, April 3, 1933, 16.

⁴⁶ Gould, *Life Story*, 112.

⁴⁷ Weir, *Secularism and Religion*; Brown, *Becoming Atheist*.

⁴⁸ Gould, *Life Story*, 5–14; MIL Annual Report for 1909 cited in Spiller, *Ethical Movement*, 134.

pression of religion. Chapman also noted the potential for moral instruction to have “poetry” and “spirit”.⁴⁹ His take here seems to align with the “spiritual” and “religious” (but not theological) qualities of moral instruction that some League activists emphasized. Christians like Chapman, and some of the secularists in the League, shared common ground.⁵⁰

The lessons at the Savoy and Reverend Chapman’s comments are a particularly striking example of encounters with spaces and people of belief but they are part of a wider pattern. Gould, when reporting on his demonstration lessons, noted occasions when he taught in venues like churches or taught children of different religious groups. He wrote in his autobiography:

What mattered it if the Children were Jews, Secularists, Anglicans, Congregationalists, Wesleyans or Unitarians? Or if a bishop presided (as has twice happened), or a Positivist like Mr Frederick Harrison, or the venerable Baptist Dr Clifford? I have spoken to youth from a Leicester Unitarian pulpit and from the pulpit of Rhondda Williams’ chapel at Brighton.⁵¹

In this example, Gould implies a basis of common humanity whatever someone’s religion. The varied settings and audiences for his demonstration lessons operate as evidence for this claim, showing that moral teaching based on a common human basis really could work in practice.

Gould presents himself as not seeking controversy on religion and respecting all in his approach to demonstration lessons.⁵² It is debatable whether we should take this comment entirely at face value. Whether intentionally or not, he might conceivably have been contributing to a secularization of a Christian space by using it for a non-theological moral instruction demonstration lesson. This sort of use could potentially disrupt the association of Christian people, beliefs, and spaces, with theological meaning. Secularists might have seen the stamp of approval of believers, and the endorsement perceived in the provision of spaces like churches and chapels, as evidence of the wide applicability of the League’s proposals, or as advancing a secularizing cause. Alternatively, the intention of might have been to enable moral instruction to take on some of the sanctity, the atmosphere, awe, and wonder associated with these spaces. All of these are possible. In the absence of explicit discussion of the possible currents of intention beneath the surface, the historian is left to speculate on possibilities.

⁴⁹ *Moral Education League Quarterly*, April 1, 1912, 1–3.

⁵⁰ Wright, *Morality and Citizenship*, 98–103.

⁵¹ Gould, *Life Story*, 118.

⁵² Gould, *Life Story*, 119–20.

5 Concluding Remarks

The Moral Instruction League claimed to draw on a universal human moral code and to offer educational schemes and texts that could be applicable to all, whatever faith they adhered to, if they adhered to a religious faith at all. Nonetheless, its proposals potentially created an avenue for influence and legitimacy for secularist interests. Its program constituted a mission; not only Christians wanted to extend their moral ideals to all. The League presented its proposals as more appropriate than the tenets of Christianity for all citizens of a modern state, and as having civilizing potential, the ability, because of their relevance to all, to impart benefits and cure the social and moral ills of the modern state. The coherence of the League's vision and intentions, however, was fragile. The League positioned itself in an ambiguous way in relation to the existing state of affairs regarding religion in schools, and in relation to religious individuals and settings, with elements of challenge, but also cooperation and collaboration with non-secularists to achieve reform. The League utilized and reimagined Christian texts, symbols, and spaces. This could be viewed as an attempt to find common ground with Christians, or as a subversive act, an attempt to co-opt these texts, symbols, and spaces for secularist ends. Perhaps it was both at the same time. Despite these ambiguities, secularists and moderate Nonconformists and even progressive Anglicans worked together in connection with the League, potentially because they all had something to gain in the context of a "Christian nation" in which a particular version of Anglicanism was powerful, politically, culturally, and ecclesiastically.⁵³ Both secularists connected with the League and Christian allies utilized this particular attempt at educational reform for purposes of educational and societal change. They also used it to assert their sectional, and indeed individual, interests and ideals within the overarching framework of a Christian nation.

For secularists connected with the League, at least for the two moments analyzed here, a secularizing mission was intended to the extent that they wanted moral instruction based on human sanctions to be the norm in state schools and available to all. It was intended to the extent that, for these secularists, churches, or considerations of Christian belief, should not dictate schooling for all citizens of the state. The League presented its program as providing a neutral ground for all varieties of religious belief (and non-belief), though secularists within the League framed the terms of that neutrality. Thus far there is some consistency in the League's mission, and arguably some affinities with notions of Christian versions of mission, an affinity also found in the belief that the mission would extend civilizing benefits. Beyond this, much was open to different interpretations of the religious and the

⁵³ Robbins, *History, Religion and Identity*, 85.

secular, and to different ideas about how the complex dialogue and relationship between them could play out both in the context of the particular moments considered here, and of schooling more generally. A secularizing mission emerges as a combination of the intentional and the unintentional, of the explicit and of un-stated undercurrents and assumptions. In their debates and decisions about religious instruction and the Bible, and their encounters with people and spaces of belief through demonstration lessons, were the League attempting to reach out to others, to be as inclusive as possible? Or were they attempting a subtle form of resistance, an appropriation of some of the symbols and ritual trappings of Christianity for secularist, and secularizing, purposes? It is not possible to answer these questions with any certainty.

My analysis here contributes to iterations of secularization offered in recent years which move away from assumptions of a grand narrative and an inevitable product of modernity, and instead see it as a project, something imagined, multi-layered, and partial. It emphasizes the complex and enduring connections between the religious and secular, whether in institutions, wider culture, or individual beliefs. It brings to these discussions the intentions of secularists attempting educational reform – a group of actors hitherto with limited presence either in educational histories or in histories of religion and secularization. The perspectives of a minority such as this contribute to a rounded understanding of contemporary debates around both religious belief and educational reform. Intentions are important when considering secularization in the educational sphere, as conceived as project, an imagined goal, a mission. A close analysis of secularists' intentions through a focus on 'moments' such as that attempted here shows them to be mixed and multi-valent. The complexity and ambivalence seen here make it difficult to define a clear mission but are in keeping with the nuances found in close-up or localized studies of histories of religion and non-religion in schools in different national contexts. I might not have offered clear answers but offer a richness that we should embrace if we are to advance our understanding of secularization, and of educational institutions and the ideas and people that operate in, around, and through them.

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Kevser Muratović

Taming Religion by Nation: Educational Nation-Building and the Shifting Role of Islam in the Light of Turkish Language Policies

Abstract: Discussions on secularization processes often mention the Republic of Turkey as a striking example of radical, top-down social and political secularization. In doing so, Turkish national historiography and the Eurocentric modernist notion of secularism as a marker of societal progress mutually reinforced a specific interpretation of Turkish secularism.

Central to this narrative is the legal abandonment of the Arabic alphabet, utilized for centuries in Ottoman Turkish, in favor of the Latin alphabet in 1928. The departure from the Arabic alphabet used in the Qur'an to the Latin one was interpreted as a deliberate rejection of Islam and the imperial Ottoman past and as a profound step in the transition from a perceived religious, pre-modern entity towards a secular nation-state and a modern society.

This chapter challenges these assumptions by understanding the transformation of the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic not as a vanishing but as a shift of religion's role within the state realm. Following Talal Asad's (2003) theoretical lens, which conceptualizes secularization not as the disappearance of religion but rather as an intersection with it, I will fold out a source-based historicizing of the Turkish Alphabet Act alongside a Foucaudian discursive analytical reading of the early Republican time (1923–1929). Accordingly, my research contends that rather than eliminating religion from the Turkish Republican project, it was intricately incorporated into the nation-building process.

1 Introduction

In discussions about secularization processes, the Republic of Turkey is an oft-mentioned case for a radical, top-down, and successful social and political secularization of an entity that had previously been perceived as religious, traditional, and hence pre-modern. In doing so, Turkish national historiography as well as the Eurocentric modernist notion of secularism as a marker of societal progress and development mutually reinforced a specific interpretation of Turkish secularism. As a rule, these interpretations entail three connected assumptions: First, the

Turkish Republic is understood as a modern, enlightened, and secular antithesis to the religious Ottoman Empire. Therefore, second, the republican demarcation line is drawn along the legal and public push-back of Islam. Hence, as a third point, Turkish secularism is seen as one of the strictest separations between religion and a state that has completely broken with its Ottoman religious tradition by following the French *laïcité* model (see also Buchardt, this volume).¹

But is this really the whole story: empire versus nation-state, sultanate versus republic, religious versus secular? Or are these dichotomies produced by national historiography and a modernist historical approach that fit all too well with our self-understanding and worldview? The initial point of this chapter can be expressed by a question raised by Mette Buchardt: “How can we [. . .] return to doing historical research on secularization as a broad and complex political project with many contradicting voices and – sometimes surprising – alliances?”²

Encouraged by this question, I want to dispute earlier mentioned assumptions by historically investigating a “milestone of Turkish secularization”, namely, the 1928 legal abandonment of the Arabic alphabet. This alphabet had been used for the Ottoman Turkish language for centuries and was then replaced in favor of the Latin alphabet – a change that has been described as one of the most dazzling and profound steps towards a modern secular state and society. The departure from the Arabic alphabet – the alphabet of the Qur’an – to the Latin one seemed to be nothing more than a clear rejection of Islam and the imperial past.

However, I want to challenge this interpretation by stating that rather than religion being eliminated from the Turkish republican project, it was heavily incorporated into the nation-building process. Thereby, the transformation of the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic is not understood as the disappearance of religion but as a shift in its role, position, and enactment. To trace how this shift occurred and what it entailed, I will historically contextualize the 1928 Turkish Alphabet Act beyond the modernist research paradigm. Theoretically, my understanding of nationalism refers to Umut Özkırmlı’s conceptualization of nationalism as a discourse with specific spatial, historical, and identity claims.³ These claims are neither static nor absolute, so hegemony and dominance must be constantly reproduced, which also means that other available narratives must be suppressed.

1 Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1999). Kenan Sevinc, Ralph W. Hood Jr. and Thomas J. Coleman III, “Secularism in Turkey,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*, ed. By Phil Zuckerman et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

2 Mette Buchardt, “The political project of secularization and modern education reform in “provincialised Europe.” Historical research in religion and education beyond Secularization, R.I.P.,” *IJHE* 11 (2021): 164.

3 Umut Özkırmlı, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Palgrave, 2017).

To grasp the secularization project, I regard the methodological lens provided by Talal Asad⁴ as fruitful since, to Asad, secularization is not the absence or rejection of religion but a new discursive space to reassemble law – be it divine or human, ethics, and religious authority anew.⁵ Thus, he historically questions the secular self-narrative of reason, progress, science, and neutrality as opposed to the realm of religion. Rather, he understands the secularization project as a reconfiguration of certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities⁶ “imbued with the characteristics from which it sought emancipation”, although in a different manner. Furthermore, Asad connects the secularization process to the emergence of the modern nation-state, which “redefines and transcends particular and differentiating practices of the self that are articulated through class, gender, and religion.”⁷ By this, Asad conceptualizes secularism as a belief system with specific ontological and epistemological assumptions that, albeit claiming to have arisen in opposition to religion, are permeated by the latter. In that sense, religion is doubly essential for secularism. First, it builds the foil to demarcate the secular sphere as opposed to the religious one, which corresponds to myths, imaginations, primitivity, and inferiority, and by this also to childhood and savages. Second, having defined this “other”, the secular moral, political, and economic power relations correspond with the sacralization of their functioning and aspirations.⁸

Asad’s approach allows me to describe the discursive spaces in which secular sacralization occurs, infusing religion into the realm of the state rather than eliminating it (see also Tröhler, this volume). Therefore, I will attempt a source-based historicizing of the Turkish Alphabet Act from 1928 alongside a discourse-analytical reading⁹ of the late imperial, early republican time (1920–1929), which is essential for the earlier mentioned secularization narrative. Historicizing this time period and analyzing the discourse produced during it will help support my thesis about the secular sacralization of the Turkish Republic.

I will elaborate my thesis in four steps before coming to a conclusion. First, I will elucidate Ottoman language policies throughout the nineteenth century, after which, I will shed light on the heterogenous relationship of the political elite with Islam in the early 1920s. Then, I will sketch the political context of the Republic of

4 Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

5 Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 209.

6 Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 25.

7 Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 16.

8 Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 32–55.

9 Michel Foucault. *Schriften in vier Bänden: Dits et Écrits. Schriften, Band IV: 1980–1988* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2005).

Turkey up to 1926; this will display the political background for the Turkish Alphabet Act. Finally, in a fourth step, I will trace the discussions and concrete preparations of the act followed by its educational enforcement. My concluding analysis will question the three above-mentioned assumptions while answering the question of whether the 1928 change of alphabet really can be read as a total rejection of religion or as a crucial educational nation-building tool of the sacralized nation-state.¹⁰

2 The Ottoman Language in the Nineteenth Century: From Elite to Popular Language

Political discussions about the Ottoman language date back to the middle of the nineteenth century when several Ottoman bureaucrats and writers problematized that Ottoman Turkish was a cumbersome, complicated, and convoluted language in need of simplification. The rationale of easy and quick usability brought about suggestions to cut out Persian and Arabic grammatical constructions.¹¹ From the very beginning, Ottoman bureaucrats connected literacy rates among the population to imperial progress and development.¹² Searching for solutions to the empire's severe military, economic, and political problems in the realm of education displays that at least a part of the Ottoman elite already had an educationalized mindset.¹³ Thus, the policies and debates around the script were, first and foremost, demarcated as educational ones. However, these discussions must also be seen in connection to endeavors of language standardization in the Ottoman Empire initiated substantially by European political, economic, and missionary interests (see also Sabra, this volume).

One of the first comprehensive dictionaries in the Ottoman Empire was written by two French orientalist and diplomats who described Ottoman Turkish in their foreword as follows:

10 A preliminary version of this chapter was presented in the panel “The Global and Local Political Project of Secularization and Modernization Through Education Reform and Its Technologies, Objects, and Forms” on occasion of ISCHE 43, *International Standing Conference for the History of Education*, September 2022, Milano, Italy.

11 Mustafa Aydemir, “Tanzimat’tan Yeni Lisan Hareketi’ne Dil Sadeleştirme Çalışmaları,” *The Journal of Social Sciences* 3 (2016).

12 Hale Yılmaz, “Learning to Read again: The Social Experiences of Turkey’s 1928 Alphabet Reform,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011), 679.

13 See the concept of educationalization: Daniel Tröhler, “Educationalization of Social Problems and the Educationalization of the Modern World,” in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. Michael A. Peters (Singapore: Springer, 2016).

Simple and very poor in expressions in its origins but having become conquerors like the people for whom it serves as a language, the Turkish dialect has progressively enriched itself with all the treasures of Arabic and Persian. Such has always been the arbitrary way in which Ottoman authors have disposed of words from these two languages, that it is no exaggeration to say that at least three-quarters of them make up the current Turkish language.¹⁴

The two authors, Jean-Danielle Kieffer (1767–1833) and Thomas-Xavier Bianchi (1783–1864), of whom the former was an active member of the French Bible Society and publisher of the first Ottoman Turkish *Bible*, had the declared aim of taming this chaos “falsely called richness of language.”¹⁵

All dictionaries following Kieffer and Bianchi’s took over their categorization of the language, categorizing words as having Arabic, Persian, and Turkish word origins. It is not that the Ottomans were not aware of Arabic and Persian elements in their language; on the contrary, there was a whole literary genre called *galatat* in which Ottoman linguists concerned themselves with straightening the distorted usage of Arabic words in Ottoman parlance. However, until the nineteenth century, this language was perceived as one rooted in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish but not consisting of three different language systems.

In conjunction with its standardization, this linguistic division of the Ottoman language was not a benign definition issue; rather, the changed perception of Ottoman Turkish increasingly politicized the topic of language use during the nineteenth century. On the one hand, this politicization of language was discernible in Ottoman provinces like Bulgaria, where *Bible* translations by protestant missionaries, standardization of the vernacular language, and processes of nation-building were closely interlinked.¹⁶ On the other hand, the Ottoman state – formerly not interested at all in spreading Ottoman Turkish to its multilingual and ethnically heterogeneous population – deployed its newly found comprehensive schooling system to promote the learning of Ottoman Turkish.¹⁷

The historian Emine Evered has convincingly shown how the Ottoman state adopted standardizing and homogenizing educational policies, especially in provin-

14 Jean-Daniel Kieffer and Thomas-Xavier Bianchi, *Dictionnaire turc-français: a l'usage des agents diplomatiques et consulaires, des commerçants, des navigateurs, et autres voyageurs dans le Levant* (Paris, Marseille, Constantinople: L’Imprimerie Royale, 1843), foreword.

15 Kieffer and Bianchi, *Dictionnaire*, foreword.

16 Kevser Muratović, “National Literacy” in an Imperial Setting: The Strange Case of Istanbul’s Robert College,” in *National Literacies in Education: Historical Reflections on the Nexus of Nations, National Identity, and Education*, ed. Stephanie Fox and Lukas Boser (Historical Studies in Education; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 143–158.

17 Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, The State, And Education in The Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

ces and regions that were perceived as “at risk”.¹⁸ As the Ottoman state was ruling over a 40% non-Muslim population with a state-acknowledged right to religious freedom, Ottoman Turkish evolved into the “natural” candidate to display a minimum of state loyalty. This is an important shift since Ottoman Turkish had been an elite language for centuries throughout the whole territory and was enabling access to and signaling entanglement with the Ottoman state. However, the popularization of this language during the nineteenth century, which was educationally enacted, performed Ottoman Turkish as a marker of state loyalty. These language policies constituted the discursive backdrop for the rise of the Turkish language as the main marker of republican Turkey.

3 The Political Discourse on the Verge of Becoming the Turkish Republic

In order to analyze this case, it is also essential to understand how the discourse of nationalism, to which the language policies were connected, played out before and after WWI. In 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) under the Young Turks heralded the second constitutional era by overthrowing Sultan Abdülhamid II’s 33-year-long rule. Although CUP slogans stressed freedom, especially freedom of speech, thereby referring to ideals of the French Revolution (*Vive la patrie, Vive la nation, Vive la liberté!*), their nationalizing and homogenizing regime soon became just as restrictive and authoritarian as the dethroned sultan’s.¹⁹ Under the CUP leaders, who were educated in the Ottoman military education system, the empire entered the First World War as an ally of Germany and Austria. To be on the losing side in WW1 was even more devastating, as the Ottoman Empire had already lost all its Balkan territories – the homeland to many high-ranking CUP members – during the Balkan Wars from 1912–14.²⁰ The occupation and partitioning of the Ottoman Empire stipulated by the Treaty of Sèvres 1920, which had diminished Ottoman territory after WW1 in favor of Greece, Arme-

¹⁸ Emine Ö. Evered, *Empire and Education under the Ottomans: Politics, Reform and Resistance from the Tanzimat to the Young Turks* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

¹⁹ Hans-Lukas Kieser, *When Democracy Died: The Middle East’s Enduring Peace of Lausanne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

²⁰ J. Erik Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 71.

nia, and the victorious powers,²¹ provoked an armed resistance by Ottoman officers. Between 1919 and 1922, these officers led the so-called War of Independence.²²

The coverage during the Turkish War of Independence from 1919 to 1922 is revealing in terms of the discourse of nationalism under the Young Turks, who are oftentimes described as secular agents²³ opposing a religious regime. However, the coverage under scrutiny exposes a merging of national sentiments and Islamic affiliation alike. In the last year of War of Independence, the month of Ramadan was highlighted in almost all newspapers in a national-religious manner.²⁴ On 28th April 1922, *Akşam* – a newspaper that would later play an important role in promoting the new alphabet – published an image of a mosque on the front page with the emblematic note: “*Akşam* wishes all its readers a blessed month of Ramadan. We want to honor this month that takes place in the merriest year of our national and religious struggle, and we pray to our Lord for the loving forgiveness of the Anatolian martyrs and the victory of the Anatolian *ghazis*.”²⁵

Not only is the notion of *ghazi* decidedly Islamic wording for the struggle on God’s path – for centuries, it was used to denote Ottoman soldiers and sultans alike, but the whole article is also promoting national sentiment rooted in and originating from Islamic identity. The article continues as follows:

We should be thankful that for centuries it was Turkish independence standing as the one and only safe haven for the Muslim faith. It was the Turkish nation shedding its blood the most for Islam, and through her last battles, she saved her independence once and for all. Therefore, pray for our *ghazis*, since we owe them one of the greatest honors and achievements of the Turkish nation.

By the end of Ramadan, the newspaper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* reserved the center of its front page for an image of an Ottoman-Turkish soldier, fully equipped, with one hand leaning on his rifle while the other shades his far-reaching gaze. The related article displays the interwovenness of religious beliefs and practices with the idea of the Turkish nation, whereas the military manifested the amalgamation

21 Ryan Gingeras, *The Fall of the Sultanate: The Great War and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1922*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

22 Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

23 Carolin Liebisch-Gümüß, *Verflochtene Nationsbildung: Die Neue Türkei und der Völkerbund 1918–38* (Oldenbourg: DeGruyter, 2020), 43.

24 The Ottoman Empire lost WW1 as it had opted to join it on the side of Germany. In the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), Ottoman territory was cut down to a torso and redistributed under the Allies with huge rights of interference. As a reaction to this treaty, a liberation war took place of which Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) became a leading figure.

25 A distinctly religious connotated notion of a warrior on God’s path.

site of religion and nation. While mourning the end of Ramadan, the article reads as follows:

We greet our *ghazis* who spend *bayram* (religious festivity) in trenches in order to bring real independence to our lands! [. . .] Tomorrow we will praise God's greatness in all our mosques to reach the festivity of liberation and freedom that we expect from the faith of Muslim and Turkish Anatolia. We will pray for the spiritual peace of the martyrs of freedom who gave their lives for the national cause, and we will fall into prostration for our *ghazis* that remain in arms during the festivity and for our co-religionists under enemy attack.²⁶

Indeed, when the War of Independence was won, one of the first things to do to celebrate this victory publicly was to meet up in the *Ayasofa* for a joint prayer. Months after Ramadan, when a victory of the Turkish troops became apparent, another newspaper printed a photograph in which the returning army officers – celebrated as national heroes – devoutly raised their hands in Islamic prayer. General Refet Pasha's words were decorated above the picture: "Istanbul is ours, and it will be ours alone!" What he meant by "ours" became quite clear in the first sentence of the subtitle, namely "Istanbul[s] Muslims."²⁷

It was not only newspapers and army officers but also members of the Turkish parliament performing the same intermingling of Islam and the Turkish nation. Rauf Bey, for example, who was an MP in 1921 as well as after the proclamation of the Republic, held a short speech during a parliamentary session²⁸ which was exemplary of other sessions until 1925 that I analyzed. He talked frankly about his true belief that the nation will prevail by faith and diligence as it did throughout past centuries concluding with the Islamic formula *inshaAllah* ('as God wills'); his statements evoked applause and further words of praise by his fellow parliamentarians who obviously detected no contradiction between Islamic religiosity and national patriotism.²⁹

Concluding, it can be stated that neither the parliamentarians nor the sites of public debates differentiated between a Turkish, Muslim, and parliamentarian identity. Rather, national identity seemed to flourish through these three reference

26 "Again, we experience *bayram* on the battlefield", *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, 27. May 1922, Hoover Archives, Hidayet Dagdeviren Collection, box 6, call number 52000, folder 6.7/D39.

27 "Yesterday Istanbul celebrated its real festivity," *Ileri*, 20.10.1922, Hoover Archives, Hidayet Dagdeviren Collection, box 7, call number 52000, folder 7.11/D49.

28 The Turkish parliament (TBMM) was founded in 1920 as resistance to the earlier mentioned Istanbul government under the last sultan which has signed the treaty of Sèvres. Both governments existed parallelly until finally at the peace treaty of Lausanne, the TBMM under Atatürk persisted as the legitimate negotiator for the Ottomans/Turks. See Rogan, *The Fall* . . .

29 "Anatolian News", *Ikdam*, 30.11.1921, Hoover Archives, Hidayet Dagdeviren collection, box 27, call number 52000, folder C3.

points – synoptically imagined together. The Kemalist project – the political endeavors of Kemal Atatürk – emerged within this discursive field but in departure from it. A Turkishness based solely on ethnic and linguistic aspects, while seemingly discarding religion altogether, constructed the Kemalist demarcation line. This Kemalist “secular” imagination of the Turkish nation then became the officially unquestioned narrative and emblematic of the secularization project in Turkey.

4 Political Prelude of the 1928 Turkish Alphabet Act

The political and social processes leading to an exclusive Turkishness crowned by its own Turkish alphabet were by far not natural consequences of a progressing nation-state. Rather, the broader historical context reveals a variety of social and political contingencies within a struggle to gain hegemony.³⁰ This is important to mention since discussions about an alphabet change date back to the late nineteenth century with prominent proponents and were not an invention of republican times.³¹ In the following, I will discuss the contingent developments finally enabling decision-makers to implement a script change.

The first proposition to discuss such a change of alphabet came from two MPs during the 1st Turkish Economic Congress in 1923. The head of the congress, Kazım Karabekir (1882–1948), a former general considered a war hero and MP himself, rejected putting this point on the congress’s agenda. For him, this topic was futile and even harmful to the nation he imagined.³² Interestingly, opponents as well as supporters of the alphabet change performed within an educationalized discourse of progress and development; thereby, education in general and literacy specifically were regarded as the primary markers for which the Turkish nation to strive.

The question is how the proponents departed from this shared ground and how this departure could be understood. In 1924, MP Saraçoğlu – shortly before becoming minister of education, proposed the alphabet change again during a

³⁰ Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State: Power Struggle in the Early Turkish Republic* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011): 1–2.

³¹ Raşit Koç and Rıdvan Demirci, “Introduction of New Turkish Letters and Discussions on the Subject,” *The Journal of Social Sciences Institute* 41 (2018): 36. Müzehher Yamaç, “The Role of the Alphabet Reform in Turkey’s Modernization and Tekirdağ,” *Journal of Anatolia and Balkan Studies* 6, (2023): 237.

³² Hanifi Kurt, “Harf Değişikliği ve Basının Yeni Harflere Geçerken Takındığı Tutum,” *Akdeniz Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi* 19 (2013): 110. Koç and Demirci, “New Turkish Letters”, 40.

parliamentary session. While Şükrü Saraçoğlu's biography reads as a template of the Ottoman bureaucratic elite that was schooled in the imperial schooling system and studied abroad, in his case Geneva, his political career in the Republic depended on his Kemalist orientation. Unlike critical fellow parliamentarians who were booted out, Saraçoğlu became the Minister of Education (1924–25), Minister of Finance (1927–30), Foreign Minister (1938–42), and finally, even the Prime Minister of Turkey (1942–45). He was also the chief negotiator in the Turkish-Greek population exchange that followed the national homogenization logic of that time.³³ Although his proposal, too, stayed unheeded, the argumentation reveals an interesting new feature. He referred to the Arabic letters as the biggest culprit in illiteracy,³⁴ impeding development and progress in the Turkish Republic. Accordingly, the politicization of language that had already begun in the nineteenth century got a nationalized coloring. The Arabic letters became a foil to distinguish between Turkishness and Muslimness with the question of priority. The new imagined hierarchy was expressed by Kılıçzade Hakkı³⁵ – one of its supporters – as follows:

Are we only Muslims? Or are we Turks and Muslims? If we are only Muslims, then we only need the Arab letters and the Arab language. Then, the Qur'an will be enough for us as science. Besides that, there is not and cannot be any national strife and mission. If we are Turks, then we are in need of a Turkish culture. This culture will start first and foremost with our language.³⁶

The discursive differentiation of Turkishness and Muslimness correlated politically with two major developments of the early Republic. After the peace treaty of Lausanne (24th July 1923), and followed by the official proclamation of the Turkish Republic in October 1923, the legal push-back of Islam occurred. Under severe dis-

33 H.B. Paksoy, "Başvekil Şükrü Saraçoğlu'ndan Anılar (Anecdotes from Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu)", *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 14:2 (1990): 161. Bünjamin Saraç, "Şükrü Saraçoğlu (1887–1953)", *Tarih İncelemeleri Derigisi* 9 (1994): 391–405.

34 Aytül Tamer Torun, "Türk Ulusculuğu ve Dil: Harf Devrimi Tartışmaları (1923–1928)," *Loji* 1 (2018): 67. Kurt, "Harf Değişikliği", 111.

35 Kılıçzade Hakkı was an Ottoman intellectual originating from the Balkans who was educated in the Ottoman military education system and worked as a teacher for several Ottoman educational institutions next to his passionate publishing activity. His idea of a Latin script dates back to the 1910s, but it stayed unheeded, as did many of his suggestions to save the empire during the second constitutional era. In fact, his too-early retirement from the bureaucratic service indicates that his views, much less than gaining momentum, were declined by the Young Turks. His political ascendancy, though, took place in the Republican era when he was elected MP uninteruptedly for almost 15 years. See Celal Pekdoğan, s.v. "Kılıçzade Hakkı", *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2022): 414–416.

36 Bilal Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992).

cussions in the National Assembly, the sultanate was abolished in November 1923, as was the caliphate four months later in March 1924. Yet, it was Islamic argumentation and Islamic authorities that were deployed by both positions.³⁷ Obviously, Islamic sources still marked the discursive borders of the sayable and acceptable within the political elite. Intriguingly, the legal push-back of Islam was accompanied by the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and immediately followed by the Unification of Schooling Act³⁸ (*tevhid-i tedrisat*). By this, the political deployment of Islam and the inherited Ottoman schooling system were turned into the uncontested realm of the Turkish state.

What this would mean became obvious as, in 1925, when the so-called Sheikh Said Rebellion erupted. Sheikh Said was a Kurdish proponent of the influential Nakshibendi Sufi order who managed to uphold a growing rebellion against the abolition of the caliphate for months. This rebellion hinted at power centers besides the central state able to mobilize the religious as well as the ethnic and linguistic diversity crossing national borders: a threat that undermined the Kemalist claim for power. In this regard, the Sheikh Said uprising, officially framed as a Kurdish uprising,³⁹ was a double steppingstone: first, Ottoman multi-ethnicity was problematized in bringing the Kurdish national endeavor to the forefront; second, the Islamic political power structure that enabled the mobilization was ostracized as treasonous through an amendment of the Treason of Fatherland Law. This law equated the fatherland with the Turkish state, rendering political activism against the current government as treason.

Accordingly, the demarcation line was not the Islamic faith or religion per se – as is oftentimes mistaken – but political opposition to the state in general, as the legal and political aftermath of this rebellion reveals.⁴⁰ Consequently, newspaper censorship was legally introduced as well as the so-called Liberation courts that sentenced political opponents to death under martial law. Both proved to be tremendously effective in suppressing political opposition to the Kemalist elite that molded an increasingly narrow Turkish nationalism, rendering other available nationalist narratives illegitimate. Contrary to what later became the official ideology,

37 Nurullah Ardiç, *Islam and the Politics of Secularism: The Caliphate and Middle Eastern Modernization in the Early 20th Century* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2012). Selim Deringil, *Simgeden Millete. II. Abdülhamid'den Mustafa Kemal'e Devlet ve Millet* [From Symbol to Nation: State and Nation from Abdülhamid II. To Mustafa Kemal] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2007).

38 Abolition of the caliphate and the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs were both on 3rd March 1924, and the educational act was adopted three days later 6th March. Tolga Köker, “The Establishment of Kemalist Secularism in Turkey,” *Middle East Law and Governance* 2 (2010): 32.

39 Ebru Çoban, “Sheikh Said Case: Rebellion or Revolt,” *History Studies* 14 (2022): 42.

40 Ayşegül Can, “The Case of the Assassination of İzmir and the Liquidation of the Unions from National Companies,” *History Studies* 14 (2022).

Mustafa Kemal's position was highly contested during the early Republic.⁴¹ In 1924, former generals, war heroes of the national independence struggle, and parliamentarians split from Atatürk's Republican Peoples Party (CHP) and founded the Progressive Republican Party (PRP) as they no longer aligned with the Kemalist route. One major point of conflict was the rapid pace of the social and legal transformations instigated by Mustafa Kemal. A pace that, in the eyes of the PRP, was neither necessary nor helpful in building up the new republic that was imagined more as a continuity to the Ottoman Empire than as a counterplayer. Their "conservative" policies coalesced more with the discourse of nationalism that was described earlier and thus were politically and socially more connectible for the Turkish population. Within this discourse, PRP politicians could effectively challenge the credibility and authority of Kemal and his circle.⁴² Hence, if the Kemalists were not the first choice, the choices had to be abated by delegitimizing the Ottoman past as an antagonist to the Turkish nation while simultaneously benefitting from the inherited Ottoman institutions and infrastructure.

5 The Implementation of the 1928 Turkish Alphabet Act

The year 1926 was a seamless continuation of the abovementioned of any opposition.⁴³ Meanwhile, *Akşam* published a survey concerning the alphabet change in March 1926.⁴⁴ Within the next two months, the newspaper published the answers of the 16 contributors, of which only three spoke in favor of a change.⁴⁵ By 1928, this had changed. The change of mind and successive ebbing away of opponents were ascribed among others to the first Turkology Congress in Baku in the spring of 1926 and its reception in Turkey. Within this congress, ethnic Turks under Soviet rule had decided to embrace the Latin alphabet as a stronghold against Moscow's Russification policies, which certainly created a thrust beneath

41 Banu Turnaoğlu, *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017): 236–243.

42 See Erik Jan Zürcher, *Political Opposition in the Early Turkish Republic: The Progressive Republican Party 1924–1925* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

43 Köker, "The Establishment of Kemalist Secularism in Turkey," 35.

44 "Should we accept or nor accept the Latin letters", *Akşam*, 28.3.1928.

45 Fahri Kılıç, "Yeni Türk Alfabesinin Kabulünde Dil Heyetinin Yürüttüğü Çalışmalar," *CTAD* 16 (2020): 7.

the supporters of the alphabet change.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the political backdrop should be kept in mind since, in June 1926, an assassination attempt on Atatürk was uncovered in Izmir. After this, the Kemalist ruling elite intensified the exertion of all available powers: the liberation courts sentenced hundreds of people to death;⁴⁷ Atatürk's CHF was from then on the uncontested "option", and the newspaper landscape transformed into a government mouthpiece.⁴⁸

It was within such an atmosphere when, on 15th October 1927, Mustafa Kemal started with his famous speech – *Nutuk*. This speech was given at the first party congress of Atatürk's CHF party. On six consecutive days, he spoke for more than 36 hours – three hours in the morning, three in the afternoon. His declared aim was to report on the emergence of the new Turkey, covering the time between 1919 and 1927. The gigantic speech was transmitted by radio as well as newspaper summaries to the whole nation *in spe* ('future nation'). Considering that 50,000 copies were published by the Ministry of Education for a literate audience of 1.4 million people, its importance cannot be underestimated. For decades, scholarly works in Turkey and from abroad have taken *Nutuk* as an unquestioned source of historical facts and empirical material regarding the national independence struggle and the early republican years. However, more recent scholarship has uncovered the myths *Nutuk* has created about the birth of the nation, Atatürk's role in the independence struggle, and the enemies within the nation, which, tellingly, has not affected official Turkish historiography ever since.⁴⁹ "*Nutuk* was a comprehensive public declaration of Turkey's new official ideology", which became part of the school curriculum, thereby "contributing to the indoctrination of succeeding generations into the state ideology".⁵⁰ The main narrative of *Nutuk* is that the Ottoman state and its representatives were neither willing nor able to save the people of Turkey from its enemies. The Ottoman Empire was framed as the political and ideological antithesis of the Turkish Republic, which could only be guided to an enlightened future by an able and competent

46 Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi*, 117–120.

47 Cevdet Küçük, *İslam Ansiklopedisi* 23rd ed., s.v. "İstiklal Mahkemeleri." Istanbul: İslam Ansiklopedisi, 2001.

48 Turnaoğlu, *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism*, 242.

49 See Aysel Morin, *Crafting a nation: The Mythic Construction of the New Turkish National Identity in Atatürk's Nutuk* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest Information and Learning Company, 2004). Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London, IB Tauris, 2010), 6–17. Toni Alaranta, "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Six-Day Speech of 1927: Defining the Official Historical View of the Foundation of the Turkish Republic," *Turkish Studies* 9:1 (2008), doi: 10.1080/14683840701814042.

50 Aysel Morin and Ronald Lee, "Constitutive Discourse of Turkish Nationalism: Atatürk's Nutuk and the Rhetorical Construction of the "Turkish People'," *Communication Studies* 61 (2010): 486.

leader and the ones who followed him: Mustafa Kemal and those in his CHF. Everybody else was either belittled as a coward or even dismissed as a traitor to the nation. There was nobody left to object to *Nutuk's* narrative as the political process up to 1927 had drained all sources of political opposition: religious activism was institutionalized and integrated into the state system, Sufi brotherhoods were abandoned;⁵¹ the only opposition party, the Progressive Republican Party founded in 1924, was totally crushed after the Izmir incident a year later;⁵² and the relatively free press was under complete Kemalist message control with another amendment to the Treason of Fatherland Law.⁵³

The alphabet change was again communicated at the big CHF congress two weeks after this speech. From then on, it was no longer questioned whether the alphabet should change but how to properly prepare for the change. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, a language committee literally crafted the new letters based on the Latin alphabet and the analysis of 14 European languages. Thus, the Turkish letters – as they were posthumously baptized – developed in a feedback loop between the committee, Atatürk, and his prime minister, İnönü.⁵⁴

Mustafa Kemal's speech that opened the parliamentary session to decide on the acceptance of the Turkish alphabet revealed educational nation-crafting. The law was presented as the focal point for the nation's progress, which was exclusively imagined in educational terms and declared an international requirement of civilizational progress. The Turkish nation was described as being about to take the final and decisive step towards a quantum leap, but first, "the homeland's fatherland-loving grown-up children must face their important mission", which was to get a proper education.⁵⁵ While the population was infantilized as grown-up children in need of education, Mustafa Kemal was designated by law as the head teacher of the Turkish nation, providing this bitterly needed education. As the one-party rule of Atatürk's CHF was already cemented, no parliamentary

51 Tekke ve Zaviyelerle Türbelerin Seddine ve Türbedarlıklar ile bir Takim Unvanların Men ve İlgasına dair Kanun [Law on the Abolition of Dervish Lodges and Shrines and the Ban and Disappearance of Turbans and Certain Titles], 13.12.1925, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/arsiv/243.pdf>.

52 Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 20.

53 Hiyaneti vataniye kanununun birinci maddesinin tadili hakkındaki 15 nisan 1339 tarihli kanuna müzeyyel kanun [Amendment of the first article of the law on high treason, 15th April 1339, supplementary to the law dated], (26.02.1925), https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc003/kanuntbmmc003/kanuntbmmc00300556.pdf.

54 Fahri Kılıç, "Yeni Türk Alfabesinin Kabulünde Dil Heyetinin Yürüttüğü Çalışmalar," *CTAD* 16 (2020): 806.

55 Resmi Gazete, nr. 1030, The Honorable President's speech to the Turkish Parliament, 3 Tesrinsani 1928.

debate took place, and the law was accepted under applause. The law comprised the introduction of the new letters as the “Turkish letters”, their orthography, and the transition phase. It is remarkable that the transition phase for the public space was only one month. Within this month, newspapers, inscriptions, advertising boards, books, cinema boards, and alike had to be changed.⁵⁶ A few weeks later, an educational national offensive was headed by headteacher Mustafa Kemal who toured the country with chalk and blackboard to educate his citizen-children. During his tour, every newspaper heralded the coming of the “Venerable *Ghazi* Mustafa Pasha” – a religiously connotated title that was given to him by law in 1922.⁵⁷

The so-called Nation’s Schools Law⁵⁸ declared all citizens – women and men alike – to be members and students of the Nation’s Schools. Everybody was responsible for the learning and teaching of the new letters. Special schools for MPs were set up, every bureaucrat in a leading position worked as an additional teacher in his village or small town, and writing materials in stationery shops were adapted to the new alphabet as soon as possible.⁵⁹ According to this regulation, every public and private company was obliged to teach its workers, and even imprisoned persons were given access to school to learn the new alphabet (§46).⁶⁰ Interestingly, the military and the CHF were included in this regulation on organizational and operational levels. During the alphabet change, this educational offensive created unprecedented access to nearly every citizen. The proximity to the people was used by the state not only to enhance literacy among the population but also as a tool to inculcate the Kemalist nationalist ideology by adding an obligatory part with “necessary knowledge on citizenship” (§5) to the language course. The law reserved a whole section for “propaganda organization”, which was later renamed into the section “encouragement and motivation”. People who have attended the national schools with exceptional success should be rewarded with a copy of the constitution signed by the “venerable *ghazi*” (§46); other rewards comprised favored admission for agricultural, industrial, and commercial courses or free books published by the Ministry of Education. Moreover,

56 Resmi Gazete, nr.1030, Türk Harflerin Kabulü ve Tatbiki Hakkında Kanun [The Law of the Acceptance of the Turkish Letters], Kanun Numarası: 1353, 3 Teşrinisani 1928 (03.11.1928).

57 Ryan Gingeras, *Eternal Dawn: Turkey in the Age of Atatürk*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

58 Resmi Gazete, sayı 1048, Millet mektepleri teskilati talimatnamesi [Instructions for the organization of national schools], Kararname Numarası: 7284, 24 Teşrinisani 1928 (24.11.1928).

59 Kurt, “*Harf Değişikliği*,” 114. Yılmaz Çolak, “Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40 (2004).

60 All cited law paragraphs in this section belong to the Nation’s School Law.

people who did not attend these national schools received a fine and were excluded from bureaucratic and state-affiliated employment (§49, §50). Additionally, whoever did not finish the nation's school would be denied access to the newly set-up vocational and scientific courses (§32). Through this wholesome educational offensive, Mustafa Kemal, to whom alone the sanctity of religious struggle was ascribed, his CHF, the Turkish alphabet, and the belonging to the nation merged into an inseparable unity of Turkish national identity.

6 Conclusion

In April 1928, the telling part of the Turkish constitution: “The religion of the Turkish state is Islam. Its official language is the Turkish language”, was amended by cutting out the first part.⁶¹ This was described as the verbalized and legalized epitome of Turkish secularization. Hereby, this secularization process was understood as a ban on religion from the realm of the state.⁶² In contrast, my analysis has shown that Islam played a vital role in the national self-perception of the early Republican elite, still positively connected to its Ottoman past. Therefore, the historical inquiry about the alphabet change I have pursued has opened another perspective.

In this perspective, the Kemalists' ostensible eradication of Islam from the public sphere served, most and foremost, the disempowerment of an agile and connectible political opposition. The history of the Ottoman Empire has shown how Islamic argumentation could turn into a mighty political force, unite people around continents, raise money for the Islamic cause, and even make people die for it – Mustafa Kemal himself had deployed it during the War of Independence.⁶³

However, what was as obvious as its political power was its uncontrollability since Sunni Islam lacks an institutionalized church. Likewise a purely religious cast is also missing which rendered Islamic-argued mobilization accessible and deployable for a wide range of political agents. This versatile accessibility was tamed by the Kemalists initially through an argumentative separation of the sultanate from

61 *Teşkilatı Esasiye Kanununun bazı maddelerine muaddil kanun* [Some Amendments to the Constitution]. 14.4.1928.

62 Temuçin Ertan, “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasalarında Laiklik [Laicity in the Constitutions of the Republic of Turkey],” *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* [Journal of Ankara University's History of Turkish Revolution Institute] 39 (2007).

63 Mustafa Kemal, “Alem-i Islam Beynamesi 17.03.1921 [Declaration to the Muslim World],” Hidayet Dağdeviren devrien collection, Box 1–2, call number 52000, accession no: 52000–9.24, 1.8./DZ. There he speaks to a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual audience which was united by their shared religion of Islam.

the caliphate, attributing the former to the “traitor” monarch and last sultan, Vahidettin, whereas the latter was turned into a solely spiritual institution with the Turkish National Assembly as its legitimate base and as a political actor.⁶⁴ However, the wording of the law itself is regularly overseen in the discussion. There, the caliphate as a separate institution was abolished because “the meaning and conception of the caliphate is originally entailed in the government and the Republic”, which meant nothing less than incorporating this Islamic institution in the Kemalist republican project.

Indeed, the legal push-back was a Republican demarcation line, but rather than eliminating religion from the republican project, it was built onto it. Thus, the political equation and conflation of the caliphate with the government and the state contributed extensively to the sacralization of the Turkish state.⁶⁵ By this, the Turkish nation-state became “the core of an elaborate system of beliefs, myths, values, commandments, rituals, and symbols, and consequently an object of faith, reverence, veneration, loyalty, and devotion, for which, if necessary, people are willing to sacrifice their lives”.⁶⁶ Islam was doubly essential for this sacralization process: as the conceptual legitimization ground for the shifted locus of authority towards the Turkish nation-state and as the cultural and moral knowledge on which Turkish national identity could be constructed. When the 1928 amendment to the constitution adjusted the wording of the oath for parliamentarians from “I swear to God” to “I swear on my honor”,⁶⁷ the crucial question to be asked is, how did people know what honor is? Notions of honor and good character appeared as nationalized features of a Turk concealing their originating source, namely the religion of Islam.

Likewise, the Nation’s Schools Law spared Friday as a schooling day since this day was reserved for the Islamic Friday prayer performed in the congregation. It even mentioned that mosques should be used as teaching locations (§15). Accordingly, the legal eradication obscured that the Kemalist secularization project monopolized the deployment of Islam for political ends exclusively for the Turkish nation-state. From then on, it was the Turkish nation-state defining and confining by whom and how Islam could rightfully be used. This was possible as,

64 Ardic, *Islam and the Politics of Secularism*.

65 Mette Buchardt, “Educational Biblical Nationalism and the Project of the Modern Secular State,” *Croatian Journal of Education* 22 (2020). Onur Atalay, *Türke Tapmak: Seküler Din ve İki Savas Arası Kemalizm* [Worshipping the Turk: Secular Religion and Kemalism Between Two Wars] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018).

66 Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), xiv.

67 *Teşkilatı Esasiye Kanununun bazı maddelerine muaddil kanun* [Some Amendments to the Constitution]. 14.4.1928.

thanks to the dominant discourse of Turkish nationalism, a gendered differentiation between culture and civilization was assumed. Correspondingly, culture was associated with the private, the feminine, and the society whereas civilization was paired with the public, the male, and ultimately the state.⁶⁸ As Islam was a constitutive part of this culture, it had to be “controlled, channeled, and coordinated in accordance with the directives of ‘civilization’, given free rein only within the latter’s boundaries”.⁶⁹

Thereby, enacting the alphabet change through educational institutions and endeavors displayed a twofold crucial role. While it first served the communication of the new national hierarchy to the masses in which the nation-state was the uncontested bearer of legitimacy, it subdued other available national narratives connected to the Ottoman past. It is essential to understand that while the Ottoman language was the *lingua franca* within the Empire and especially the bureaucratic elite, the Ottoman script was the *litterae francae* with which Bosnians, Kurds, Arabs, Caucasians, Albanians, and so on, wrote in their own language, connecting local cultures to the Ottoman state. By the script change, this link was cut.

To sum up, the analysis of the Turkish Alphabet Act as an essential part of the Kemalist secularization project up to the 1930s unraveled three connected aspects. First, the Turkish Alphabet Act can be conceptualized as a political power game embedded in Kemalist endeavors to establish hegemony during a time that provided multifarious accessibility to various political actors. Accordingly, introducing the Turkish alphabet was a nation-building tool towards a more exclusive and linguistic Turkishness that rendered Kemal and his CHF the only legitimate agents within this political entity while simultaneously concealing the continuities in inherited institutions, personnel, and organizations, as well as the moral and ethical commitments. As such, second, the law was less a final step towards the total rejection of religion than the enactment of the sacralization of the Turkish nation-state. As shown, the monopolization of Islam under the state conferred religious legitimacy to the newly founded republic. Third, this new hierarchy was communicated to the population by the alphabet change, thereby displaying that the sacralization of the nation-state and the educationalization of society were mutually dependent. In contrast to the abolition of the caliphate and sultanate or the legislative reforms of the early Republic, the script change was an everyday, visible, and bodily practice that was designed to reach each person in the Republic. It established access and control of the entire infantilized “feminine” society

68 Umut Özsu, “‘Receiving’ the Swiss Civil Code: translating authority in early republican Turkey,” *International Journal of Law in Context* 6 (2010): 67–68.

69 Özsu, “‘Receiving’ . . .,” 76.

by means of education. Thus, education provided an intermediary space between state and society, or civilization and culture, in which the technocrat Kemalist state elite could monitor and navigate culture by cultivating an Islam-informed national identity.

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George Sabra

The American University of Beirut and Religion: From Pietism to Liberal Protestantism to Secularism

Abstract: The chapter explores the history of American University of Beirut (AUB), one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in Lebanon and the whole Middle East. Founded in 1866 as the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), renamed AUB in 1920 by American Protestant missionaries, it continues to exist until today as a secularized institution. The chapter follows AUB's historical development from the marriage between religion and a Middle Eastern institution of higher learning to the 20th century divorce, i.e., secularization: What factors played a role in the dissolving of religion, also as a research topic and what effects did this radical secularization process have on an academic institution that lives and operates in the deeply religious world of the Middle East? And what can this history tell us about the relation between missionaries, liberal religious actors and the development of institutional secularization and thus also about the overlooked role of higher education in the history of secularization?

1 Introduction

The American University of Beirut (AUB) is one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in Lebanon and the whole Middle East. It was founded in 1866 as the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), renamed AUB in 1920 by American Protestant missionaries, and it continues to exist until today. Its relation to religion tells a very interesting story, that also brings to the fore the often overlooked role of higher education in the history of secularization (see also Kyselov, this volume). The chapter aims, first, to tell the story of AUB and religion and to try to understand it. It is an attempt to reflect on that marriage between religion and a Middle Eastern institution of higher learning that has ended up in divorce, i.e., secularization. What factors played a role in that divorce and what effects did that have on an academic institution that lives and operates in the deeply religious world of the Middle East? And what can this history tell us about the relation between missionaries, liberal religious actors and the development of institutional secularization?

A point of departure for answering such questions, is the place of religion in history of AUB – a history of some 158 years now. I suggest that the relationship

between the Syrian Protestant College (SPC)/AUB and religion has gone through four phases: the classical missionary concern, the modern missionary ideal, growing secularization and the disappearance of religion from the university.

2 The Classical Missionary Concern 1866–1902

The first phase could be entitled the “classical missionary concern”; it covers the early history of SPC under the presidency of Daniel Bliss (1823–1916) which lasted for some 36 years (1866–1902). SPC here is quite openly and unashamedly “a Christian College founded as a Missionary Institution in the fear of God and on the work of God”,¹ whose main goals were to provide the most modern western form of higher education combined with “devotion to Christian ideals.”² Its American missionary founders viewed it as one of their many institutions which would also witness to the truth of the Evangelical³ faith, but, given the nature of the enterprise – an educational one for all kinds of people – it could not be directly and overtly evangelistic. For that reason the decision was taken from the outset that the proposed college be governed and sponsored by a board that was – institutionally – not connected to the American Mission. SPC was indeed a missionary institution, but only indirectly so, thus it should not be the responsibility of the American Protestant Mission, especially financially. The SPC was founded as a body independent of the American Protestant Mission, and its first president, Daniel Bliss, had to resign from the Mission in order to be the president.⁴ This institutional distinction from the Mission did not at all affect the structuring of the new college along Evangelical principles or its being as Protestant an institution as any Protestant college in the USA. The president was to be chosen from among the missionaries of the American Mission to Syria, the institution had to be strictly Evangelical in character, every professor had to be Evangelical, and all the members of the Board of Managers should belong to some branch of the

1 “Resolutions of the Board of Managers at the Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting, July 9th, 1902” in *Annual Reports to the Board of Managers of the SPC 1866/67-1901/02*. (Beirut), 246.

2 Stephen B. Penrose, *That They May Have Life. The Story of the American University of Beirut 1866–1941*. (Beirut: The American University of Beirut, 1970 – originally 1941), 4.

3 The terms “Evangelical” and “Protestant” are synonymous in the Middle East, and so are used interchangeably here.

4 *The Missionary Herald. Reports from Ottoman Syria 1819–1870*. Ed. Kamal Salibi & Yusuf K. Khoury. (Amman: Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, 1995), vol. 5, 106.

Evangelical Church.⁵ And so it was in the earliest years. The first three professors, in addition to Bliss: Cornelius van Dyck (1818–1895), George Post (1838–1909) and John Wortabet (1827–1908) were not only Evangelical – they were ordained Protestant ministers.⁶

At the inauguration of the first building of the new institution, College Hall, in 1871, Daniel Bliss uttered his famous and since then oft-repeated declaration:

This College is for all conditions and classes of men without regard to color, nationality, race or religion. A man white, black or yellow; Christian, Jew, Mohammedan or heathen, may enter and enjoy all the advantages of this institution for three, four, or eight years; and go out believing in one God, in many gods, or in no God. But it will be impossible for anyone to continue with us long without knowing what we believe to be the truth and our reasons for that belief.⁷

This statement was applied seriously and faithfully. There was no pressure put on any student to convert to Protestantism, but Christian Evangelical principles were emphasized wherever possible. Most certainly students could not miss knowing what Protestantism was all about – and more importantly – how Protestants lived and behaved. The professors were expected to provide the main models here.

As for religion in the curriculum and in campus life, all students were required to take Bible classes, and boarding students had to attend regular Bible classes on Sunday afternoons. There were morning and evening prayers required of all, as was also the Sunday preaching service. In the early years there was even an obligatory midweek prayer meeting.⁸ Bliss himself taught the Bible classes – once a week in the Collegiate Department, but for the seniors only in the first term. In the last two terms senior students had to take moral philosophy – also with Bliss. It is important to note that what was taught was the Bible, not theology. The religious instruction consisted of weekly expositions of Biblical passages and stories “to familiarize the students with the spiritual meaning of its facts and history which the students would have learned in the Preparatory Department.”⁹ Bliss himself described this activity by saying that he was anxious to “impress the students with the great truths of the Bible.”¹⁰ The preaching in the Chapel was openly Christian. Bliss writes in one of his letters to his family in December 1873:

⁵ Henry Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), vol. 1, 274; see also Frederick Bliss, *The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss* (New York: Revell, 1920), 167–168.

⁶ Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 36–39.

⁷ Quoted from Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 28.

⁸ *Catalogue of the Syrian Protestant College 1881–82*, 32; also Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 146.

⁹ *SPC Catalogue 1887–88*, 24.

¹⁰ Daniel Bliss, *Letters from a New Campus*. Collected and annotated by Douglas and Belle Dor-man Rugh and Alfred H. Howell (Beirut: AUB, 1994), 121.

“I trust that we shall all be wise enough to preach Christ and Him crucified, in the Chapel. The errors will fall themselves before the truth.”¹¹ In addition to all these religious activities, evangelistic revival meetings were sometimes held on campus (e.g., in 1885).¹² These were events where calls for conversion and personal commitment to faith in Jesus Christ were preached and evoked. Moreover, a YMCA was organized on campus in 1886; it involved both religious and social and humanitarian fellowship. The religious activities of the young College were intensive. Even as early as 1873, Bliss could boast: “There is no doubt now that the religious influence of the College is felt far and wide. The Faculty feel more and more its importance and their responsibility. The prayers offered at the beginning of our faculty meetings indicate a deep-felt impression that immortal souls are committed to our care. We hear nothing more against our preaching in the Chapel.”¹³ This language of “immortal souls . . . committed to our care” reveals the deeply religious and evangelistic missionary character of the early phase of SPC. Education was no doubt very important, but it was all for the sake of leading souls to Christian truth, or at least placing them before that truth. The last comment about “we hear nothing more about our preaching in the Chapel” is not about student or parent protests against such an activity, but it is about the protests of members of the American Mission who were unhappy that the boarding students of the SPC were attending a worship service on Sundays on campus – first in College Hall, then after 1891 in the Chapel, and were not being taken to the Mission Church. Of course at this time, the overwhelming majority of the students were Christians. In 1894, e.g., there were 235 students enrolled at the College; only seven were non-Christians (five Muslims and two Jews).¹⁴ During Daniel Bliss’ presidency there were some objections to the religious requirements imposed on everybody, but the Board of Trustees, especially under the strictly evangelical William A. Booth, never accepted to relax those requirements.¹⁵

Any discussion of the place of religion in the structure and the life of the College from 1866–1902 cannot overlook the events of 1882. The “Lewis Affair”, as it came to be called, is often portrayed as a struggle between religious conservatives and religious liberals about Darwin’s ideas on evolution. In a sense it was such a struggle, one that had taken place – and would still take place – on many Ameri-

11 Ibid., 166.

12 Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 50.

13 Bliss, *Letters from a New Campus*, 165.

14 Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 52.

15 Objections to the religion requirements of the College were raised to the Board of Trustees more than once, e.g., in 1888 and 1895: see Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 52.

can campuses in the USA.¹⁶ Yet, it would be somewhat simplistic to conceive the whole affair and its repercussions, namely, the resignation of Lewis, the student protests, the resignation of Cornelius van Dyck and the expulsion of some students, as merely a result of a religious controversy. This is not the place to go into it in detail, but my research has led me to conclude that, for President Bliss at least and for the internal repercussions of the crisis, the religious aspect was not the main issue. Edwin Lewis' Commencement Address which mentioned Darwin, his subsequent resignation and the student protests were merely the occasion used by Bliss and faculty member George Post to settle accounts with van Dyck and Lewis. The latter had been critical of Bliss' administration; there was also a hidden rivalry between Bliss and van Dyck which secretly fueled the crisis.¹⁷ It is not possible to elaborate on this within the scope of this discussion, but a clear indication that "evolution" was not so important a religious issue for Bliss himself – though it certainly was for some of his old missionary friends and also for W. Booth the chairman of the Board of Trustees – is that a few years later, Bliss himself refers to Darwin positively in an address.¹⁸ Be that as it may, the 1882 affair did have one important consequence for the place and role of religion on campus. The Board of Trustees decided to require all faculty members to sign a "Declaration of Principles". This declaration was actually the creed of the American International Evangelical

16 For example: Vanderbilt's Board terminated the lectureship of Professor Winchell in 1878 for his Darwinistic views which were seen to undermine biblical authority; the Controversy at Princeton took place also in the 1870s: see George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-Belief*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 189–190 (for Vanderbilt) and pp. 202–205 (for Princeton).

17 Professor Edwin Lewis, much to Bliss' irritation, used to write the Board of Trustees on his own, and in this incident, again he communicated with its Chairman, William Booth, without informing the President or the Faculty: see the President's annual report of 1883 in *Annual Reports to the Board of Managers of the SPC 1866/67-1901/02*, 69. That van Dyck was more popular than Bliss and Post is attested by Jurgi Zeydan, as quoted by J. Munro, *A Mutual Concern: The Story of the American University of Beirut*. (New York: Caravan Books, 1977), 26. Another indication that the van Dyck resignation had little to do with a "religious controversy" between conservatives and liberals is that he continues to teach at the Theological Seminary after the 1882 affair and his resignation from the SPC. The Seminary was far more conservative theologically than the College: see Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, vol. II, 496, where van Dyck is reported as teaching at the Seminary in 1884.

18 "No man is superior to another in all respects. Linguists and grammarians learn much from common people. Darwin in obtaining his vast knowledge of the habits of plants, fishes and animals, was aided by farmers, fishermen, hunters and shepherds." D. Bliss, "The Race of Life" A Baccalaureate sermon delivered by Dr. Daniel Bliss at SPC in July 1888 and again on April 7, 1895 in *The Voice of Daniel Bliss*. (Beirut: The American Press, 1956), 5.

Alliance;¹⁹ it consisted of ten points that began with a strict affirmation of the “Divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures”, affirmed the central Christian doctrines of Trinity, fall of man, incarnation, atonement, justification by faith alone, conversion, resurrection, judgment, church, sacraments and ended with insistence on the inspired word of God and rejection of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox teachings and practices. It also contained a pledge to cooperate “in advancing the chief aim of this Institution, which, as a missionary agency, is to train up young men in the knowledge of Christian truth, and if possible, secure their intelligent and hearty acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God, and of Christ as the only Saviour, and at the same time inspire them with high moral purposes and consecrated aims in life.”²⁰ Here we have a strong reiteration of the self-understanding of SPC as a “missionary tool” whose aim, if possible, is conversion to Biblical Christianity, namely, Protestantism.

Two more things need to be mentioned in this period concerning religion at SPC. The first is “The School of Biblical Archaeology and Philology in connection with SPC”. It was established by the Board of Trustees in January of 1887 and aimed at “enabling ministers and other scholars to pursue biblical, philological and archaeological studies in the lands of the Bible, and facilitating the further exploration of the geography, archaeology . . . in the service of Biblical scholarship.”²¹ In some years between 1887 and 1924, there are course offerings listed – Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Biblical Literature, Ecclesiastical History, History of Religions; in some others a couple of students or research scholars are listed.²² Apparently, the university museum was an offspring of this project, but there is no trace of the School itself after the academic year 1923–24. It seemed to have lasted until 1924, but then it simply drops out of existence.

The other thing is the Theological Seminary of the American Protestant Mission. This was founded in 1869 in Abeih – three years after the founding of SPC – for the specific purpose of training “native” young men for the ministry. At the founding of SPC it was consciously decided to keep the theological training in a separate institution from the College, but the two institutions cooperated closely. In 1882, the Seminary was moved to Beirut, and the College gave it grounds for

19 Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, vol. I, 274, 707–8.

20 The full text of the “Declaration of Principles” was appended to the President’s annual report of July 10, 1883, in *Annual Reports to the Board of Managers of the SPC 1866/67-1901/02*, 80.

21 *SPC Catalogue 1886–87*, 41–42.

22 The SPC catalogue of 1920–21 lists the following courses under the School of Archaeology: Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Biblical Literature, Ecclesiastical History, History of Religions (p. 132). In the 1889–1900 Catalogue, 3 students are listed; 1900–01: one student; 1901–02: no students; 1902–03: one student.

erecting a building – the Theological Hall, completed in 1883. At that time it was the last building on campus to the south, and it had a separate entrance directly from the street. It functioned as the Theological Seminary from 1883–1892 when it was closed and transferred to the mountain town of Souk el-Gharb. The Theological Seminary was listed in the SPC catalogs from 1886–87 until 1890–91 but always with the note “This Institution is not organically connected with the College.” Although it was foreseen that Seminary students join classes at the College to improve their literary training, and it was also hoped that by the mingling of the two types of students – College and Seminary – and by personal contact and acquaintance, a mutual benefit would be gained in promoting religious toleration, removing prejudices and broadening views on religious and scientific matters, the experiment seems to have failed. Supply of theological students ran very low by 1891; SPC graduates were not being attracted to the ministry, so the Mission decided to discontinue theological training in Beirut.²³ Theological Hall remained closed for some years then it was bought by the College in 1898 and re-named Jessup Hall (after a major donor for its purchase, William Jessup, chairman of Board of Trustees). Theology, or theological studies and reflection, thus did not find a place in the College.

The absence of theological studies from the College as a branch of the academic curriculum was not simply due to the division of labor between the College and the American Mission’s Theological Seminary. In the later years of his presidency, Daniel Bliss’ religious convictions had been evolving and going more in the direction of liberal Protestantism. To be sure, in the 36 years of Bliss’ term as president, religion was central to the life and teaching of the College. It was everywhere: in the classrooms, in the morning and evening prayers, in the persons and example of the faculty, in extra-curricular activities, in the structure of the weekends, and in the policies of the Board members. But, whereas Bliss could speak in 1873 of “preaching Christ and Him crucified in the Chapel”, in the late 1880s and 1890s the tone changes. Howard, the son of Daniel Bliss, tells us that in his early years Daniel inherited the Calvinist tradition, but that gradually he adopted the modern views of Lyman Abbot.²⁴ Lyman Abbot was one of the most famous representatives and popularizers of a liberal evangelical Reformed theology and a form of social Christianity; he was open to modern scientific thought, especially to Darwinism and to biblical criticism.²⁵ Thus, in the addresses and sermons of

²³ The account about the Theological Seminary and its relation to SPC is based on: *Al-Kulliyah*, vol 16 (1930), 162–164, and on Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 53–56.

²⁴ *The Reminiscences of Daniel Bliss*, 254.

²⁵ “Abbot, Lyman” in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Theologians*. Ed. P. Carey and Joseph Lienhard (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 2–3. One of Abbot’s famous books was: *The The-*

the later Bliss we start to find a liberal Protestant definition of religion and of how religion should be in schools of higher education. “The very object of a religion”, said Bliss in an 1885 sermon, “consists in lifting a man out of a bad condition into a good condition or in keeping him from falling from the good into the bad.”²⁶ Christianity thus becomes for him a transformation of character, a life of morality, and not doctrines and theology and creeds and Biblical facts and laws. The central thing about religion becomes “feeling” and “acting” in view of the right.²⁷ “Not in church, not in creed, not in sacrament, but in doing God’s will is everlasting life . . . Life and religion are one, or neither is anything.”²⁸ Religious is thus the person who feels God and acts according to God’s will, not the one who believes doctrines and creeds. Religion is a state of the soul and salvation is character and life. Jesus’ teaching, in the words of Lyman Abbot, was not theological, but vital.²⁹

3 The Modern Missionary Ideal 1902–1949

These later views of the mature Bliss became the foundation and starting point for the second phase – namely the presidencies of Howard Bliss (1860–1920) and Bayard Dodge (1888–1972). If the first period could be called the “classical missionary concern”, this second one – spanning over almost the first half of the twentieth century – deserve the designation the “Modern Missionary Ideal”. In fact, the “Modern Missionary” is the title of a seminal article written by Howard Bliss in 1920,³⁰ but which really characterized the program and vision of his whole presidency as well as that of his son-in-law, Bayard Dodge, as far as the religious message and character of the College/University was concerned.

Howard Bliss took over from his father in 1902. Two significant developments mark the transition from the classical missionary concern to the modern missionary ideal in the very first year of Howard Bliss’ term: first, the local Board of Managers – made up entirely of local missionaries – disbands, leaving the Faculty and

ology of an Evolutionist (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897). The library of the Near East School of Theology has the personal, autographed copy of Howard Bliss.

26 *The Voice of Daniel Bliss*, 36.

27 *Ibid.*, 44 (Sermon in 1896).

28 *Ibid.*, 69.

29 Lyman Abbot, *What Christianity Means To Me. A Spiritual Autobiography* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 20.

30 Howard S. Bliss, “The Modern Missionary” *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1920. The text of the whole article is reprinted in Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 178–196.

the overseas Board of Trustees to take full charge of overseeing and running SPC.³¹ This, perhaps, was the real independence of the College from the American Protestant mission, not the symbolic resignation of Daniel Bliss from the Mission Board back in 1866. Second, Howard Bliss abolishes the compulsory faculty oath to the Declaration of Principles introduced after the 1882 incident because it went against his convictions.³² Again, this was also the real break with the traditional missionary project. Henry Jessup, the famous missionary who wrote a major history of the work of the Protestant mission in Syria and Lebanon, notes that upon the abolition of the Declaration of Principles, the missionaries hoped that the College Trustees would “continue to make sound judgment in choosing faculty,” but he ends by saying that “the abolition of the Declaration has never commended itself to the missionaries of Syria, Palestine and Egypt.”³³ The SPC began to slip away very quickly from the control of the classical missionary mentality, a development that had already begun in the mind and outlook of the later Daniel Bliss but was now being implemented institutionally by his son.

The transition to the new missionary ideal was, however, gradual and slow. There was continuity between the first phase and this second one: Bible classes were still a requirement for all; chapel was daily and required of all students; Sunday morning services were regularly held, and there was even a Sunday evening prayer service held in the West Hall auditorium for the students of the Preparatory Department.³⁴ In fact, in 1902 there was even a proposal to establish a College Church in order to provide “a concrete opportunity to those who have experienced a change of heart to commit themselves to the new course of life.”³⁵ Such a church would be non-denominational, with religious, rather than theological conditions for membership. But the proposal eventually failed because the time was not yet ripe for it.³⁶ The YMCA continued its activities, but, as of 1905, and in line with Howard Bliss’ modern missionary ideals, it was opened to non-Christians on the basis of a vow based on Jesus’ teachings and life, not on faith *in* Jesus.³⁷ Meanwhile, the number of non-Christian students was steadily growing. In 1908, Muslim students

31 Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years*, vol. II, 708.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*

34 Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 295.

35 *Ibid.*, 132.

36 *Ibid.*, 132–133.

37 The special covenant that Muslims, Jews and Druze had to assent to in order to join the YMCA was as follows: “In becoming a Fellowship Member of this Association, you desire to testify to the help you have received in your daily life from the teachings and life of Jesus, and you desire to associate yourself with those who are learning from Him. You promise that you will attend regularly the weekly meetings of the Association Bible Classes, and that you will make it a special

were about 15% of the total student body (128 out of 876). Compulsory Bible classes and Chapel attendance came again under attack. Muslim students protested, and in 1909 a major crisis ensued, which ended by the Faculty and Board reaffirming the Christian character and commitment of the SPC and not relaxing the required nature of both Bible classes and Chapel services. Only 8 Muslim students withdrew from the College, and life returned to normal.³⁸ The Board of Trustees did not accept to make religious instruction voluntary and did not initiate “Alternative Exercises” except after World War I had begun, when the Ottomans forbade SPC to teach religion except to Christians. That was when “Alternative Exercises” were developed for non-Christians who had conscientious objections to attending Christian religious instruction.³⁹ Also worth mentioning during the presidency of Howard Bliss is that there was some thinking about establishing a theological faculty – an idea suggested by the president himself: “Eventually and in full cooperation with the missionaries of the Near East, we should have a School of Theology. Our School of Archaeology and Biblical Philology should be put on its feet. Post-graduate courses should be established”.⁴⁰ No further reference was made to this idea, however; it never materialized as a School within the College.

Howard Bliss’ views on religion were those of Protestant liberalism (see also Hellström, this volume), a theological direction that had been quickly gaining ground in major theological seminaries and divinity schools in the USA in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Mention was made earlier of Lyman Abbot, a major representative of Protestant Liberalism who had influenced the later Daniel Bliss. Before becoming president of SPC, Howard Bliss had been an associate pastor of Rev. Abbot in a church in Brooklyn, N.Y. He worked and trained with Abbot.⁴¹ The Liberal Protestant school of thought stresses the basically ethical essence of Christianity, the priority of spiritual experience over any form of external authority – be it that of church or creed or Bible, and the centrality of Jesus’ life and teachings as guidelines and example over against dogma and metaphysics. In Protestant Liberalism there is an abandonment of proselytism, an openness

object of your prayers and endeavors to help your fellow students, particularly through the advancement of the spiritual life among them.”

38 The whole story of the non-Christian student protests and its consequences is narrated in detail by Howard Bliss in the “Forty-Third Annual Report of the Syrian Protestant to the Board of Trustees 1908–09”, in *Annual Reports to the Board of Managers of the SPC 1866/67-1901/02*, 4–16. See also Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 134–142.

39 Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 143–145.

40 Howard Bliss, *The SPC During the Great War and After. 1914–1920*, 10.

41 In his spiritual autobiography, *What Christianity Means to Me*, Abbot mentions both Daniel and Howard Bliss, recalling that the latter was his colleague in pastoring a church in Brooklyn, see p. 143.

to a critical study of the Bible, and an inclusiveness of other religions along with Christianity as also ways to the one truth. Howard Bliss' famous manifesto, "The Modern Missionary", is one of the best expressions of liberal Protestantism. The SPC is missionary, affirms Bliss, and so its real aim is to make known to its students "the adoption of the Christian Ideal."⁴² Required was not the adoption of the Christian faith – as was the classical missionary concern, but the 'Christian Ideal', which is obviously an ethical ideal. SPC is missionary in a modern sense, so it celebrates as an institution, the birth of the prophet Mohammad along with its Muslim and Baha'i students.⁴³ Christianity is unique, but it respects all other religions, and it does not believe that it is "the sole channel through which divine and saving truth has been conveyed"; Christians can learn from others; the modern missionary is neither apologetic nor judgmental, for he emphasizes only the positive in the others and points to the kernel of truth in their religions, rather than to their errors.⁴⁴ The Bible is not God's only vehicle for divine expression; authentic echoes of God's voice are found in other books.⁴⁵ Dogma and theology are not pursued and stressed, but rather the inward consciousness of divine power in the soul and the Jesus-like conduct of the person. The spirit of Jesus is the heart of the matter, not right doctrines and creeds. The "central essential thing" the modern missionary insists on is "the personal assimilation in the disciple's life of the teaching and the spirit of Jesus. It is this deliberate purpose, it is this passion that counts."⁴⁶

It is this powerful message of liberal Protestantism that was put into action by Howard Bliss, even at the beginning of his term by abolishing the oath to the Declaration of Principles. The First World War disrupted the course of the College for a while, but Bliss' program was really the charter for his son-in-law, Bayard Dodge, who totally espoused this ideal of the modern missionary and carried it through for a quarter of a century.

Bayard Dodge took over in 1923. He too had studied theology and had been aiming for the ministry, but he never did become ordained. He got his Bachelor of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary just before World War I, at a time when Union was a major center of theological liberalism and social gospel Christianity. In his inaugural address of 1923, Dodge states:

⁴² H. Bliss, "The Modern Missionary", as found in Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 181.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 182–183.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

To develop the spiritual natures of our students, we do not propose to proselytize or to emphasize names and forms. To us Protestantism means religious freedom, and as a Protestant institution we wish to give our students freedom of worship and freedom of belief.

We feel that religion is not an ulterior aim of education; it is not a quantity of tangible facts to be taught, or a creed to be subscribed to: it is something much more fundamental; it is the consciousness of a spiritual power, controlling life and seeking good. Religion is not for the chapel alone, but can be found in the spirit of honest study, good sportsmanship, and consecration to the welfare of mankind. It must be learned in every phase of the university life.⁴⁷

Dodge's liberal view of religion had come quite a way from the original missionary conception. Protestantism now means religious freedom, not religious truth; religion is something very internal – a consciousness of a spiritual power; religion is no longer the ulterior aim of education, which it was in the early years of SPC; and religion is not only in chapel, in worship and prayer, but it is a way of living, of doing everything, especially as devotion and service to the “welfare of mankind.” Bible classes continue to be required, but now students have a choice between Bible or Ethics; courses in religion are offered, and these include “History of Religions”, “Origin and Development of Religions”, “Religions of the Near East” in addition to courses in Biblical studies about the Old and New Testament and Early Church History.⁴⁸ In the 1930s, and after the Near East School of Theology (NEST) was established in Beirut (1932) as a result of the merger of the former Theological Seminary of the American Mission with the Armenian Seminary – the School of Athens, NEST is affiliated with AUB, and begins to appear in the AUB catalogue as of 1936. AUB students were allowed to take courses at NEST. In fact, NEST served as the Department of Religion for AUB in this period.⁴⁹ Daily chapel and religious services continue; non-Christians who object could still go to alternative services.⁵⁰ There were campus lectures on religious topics and a series of special religious meetings “to deepen the spiritual consciousness of students”. Prominent Christian, as well as Muslim, speakers were invited: Henry Sloane Coffin (1935), John Mott (1937), and the Harvard theologian Julius Seelye Bixler. In

⁴⁷ *Inaugural Address Delivered by President Bayard Dodge at the American University of Beirut. June 28, 1923, 7.*

⁴⁸ Courses in Religion begin to appear in the AUB Catalogs as of 1919–20.

⁴⁹ As of 1936–37, the course offerings of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) begin to be included in the AUB Catalogues under “Religion” courses in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Later, in the 1940s and up until the early 1960s, there is a joint program between AUB and NEST called the “Combined Course in Theology and Arts” which involves taking courses from NEST and the School of Arts and Sciences.

⁵⁰ Apparently, the “Alternative Services” were not very popular. Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 294, notes that in 1938–39, only 13 students opted for them.

1935, a lectureship was established by a former graduate, Dr. Daud Himadi, whereby representatives of different religions were invited to address different aspects of religions.⁵¹

A few years after Howard Bliss took over, the text in the university catalogue under “Religious Exercises and Instruction” was changed, and it remained so throughout the Dodge Presidency. It stated now that the “purpose of the College [later University] is to impart strength of character and purity of personal character, in the hope that its students maybe fitted to become leaders in a movement towards righteousness in society.”⁵² The College/University is still affirmed to be a “Christian Institution” and teaching the principles of the Christian religion, but the Christian religion now means a high moral character that issues in dedicated service. Dodge was a thoroughgoing adherent of the social gospel theology: Christianity and true religion are not doctrines or creeds or theology, but service to the neighbor and to the community. God is the persistent impulse for the good in the human heart; the kingdom of God is an ethical ideal to be realized in society.

There is a saying from the early twentieth century that “the distinguishing mark of the German university is scholarship, and so it produced scholars; the spirit of the English university is culture, and so it produced gentlemen”.⁵³ Well, it could be said about AUB under Howard Bliss and Dodge that the American University of Beirut aspired to produce men of character dedicated to service.

4 Growing Secularization 1950–1976

The third phase of the story of religion at AUB begins after the Dodge era ends. In the 1950–51 University catalogue, the text under the item “Religious Activities” changes. There is no more mention that the purpose of the University is “to impart strength of character and purity of personal character . . . in a movement towards righteousness in society.” Now it only asserts that “the University has no connection with any religious body” but “it believes the religious life is an essential part of the student’s experience.” Chapel services continue, but these had been for a very long time now daily assemblies for some moral or edifying talks. They were not religious in the strict sense of the word. And in 1958–1959, required Chapel services were discontinued, most probably as a consequence of Lebanon’s

⁵¹ Penrose, *That They May Have Life*, 297.

⁵² *SPC Catalogue 1908–09*.

⁵³ A statement attributed to L. Abbot. I quote it from J. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 248.

sectarian events of 1958. Students are encouraged to develop their own interests in their own religious denominations, not on campus, and the subsequent catalogues even name those denominational institutions that students can go to.⁵⁴ The classic statement of D. Bliss is still quoted but is clearly out of place because it is no longer true that “it will be impossible for anyone to continue with us long without knowing what we believe to be the truth and our reasons for that belief.” In fact, the students are expressly told to go to their denominations for their religious needs because “these are better able than the university itself to stimulate the religious interests of students . . .” In other words, if you want religion, go outside the campus!

Courses in religion are still offered, and the Near East School of Theology still serves as a department of religion for AUB until 1968–69, for, in the early 1960s, there is not yet a department of religion proper; religion courses are offered under other departments – History, Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology. There is thus a Committee on Religion with representatives from each of the above-mentioned departments. This continues until 1967–68, when a proper Department of Religious Studies is established. It offered a B.A. in religion; then in 1974–75 it became a graduate program only, with the B.A. becoming interdepartmental. That department, however, soon acquired the reputation, at least it was so in my student days in the early 1970s, of being the best department to go to for the highest grades with the least effort.

Interestingly, the 1964–65 catalogue drops out completely any section on Religious or Spiritual Activities. The 1965–66 “Introduction to the Catalogue” finds Bliss’ founding statement placed under the heading “History”. The Statement of Policy briefly states that “the AUB was founded to assist in the spiritual, intellectual and social development of students in the Middle East.” Reference to religious interests is subsumed under student life in later catalogues, and students are given addresses to seek for such religious activities.⁵⁵ The mention of religious interests of students drops out completely in the 1975–76 catalogue.

This third period is the period of growing “secularization” of the university. Things religious become privatized, and the topic of religion assumes a modest place in the academic curriculum as an optional topic. Indeed, as Munro rightly observed, “The AUB was changing from an institution which prided itself on developing men’s souls as well as their minds, to one whose concern was above all academic. There was less emphasis on the development of the whole personal-

54 The *AUB Catalogue of 1963–64* (p. 19) informs Protestants that they can go to the University Christian Center (on Makhoul Street), Catholics to the Newman Center (Makhoul Street), Orthodox to the Orthodox Youth Center; and Muslims to the Islamic Center of Beirut.

55 *AUB Catalogue 1965–66*, 11.

ity.”⁵⁶ This was the end of the “Modern Missionary” ideal. The last great attempt to relate the whole university to religious thought and reflection was in the centennial celebrations of 1966–67, when the Philosophy Department, headed by Professor Charles Malik (1906–1987), organized two symposia and invited some of the most distinguished Christian and Muslim theologians and thinkers to lecture on “God and Man in Contemporary Muslim and Christian Thought.”⁵⁷ But that was a lone event with no consequences for the place of religion or religious thought at AUB. Another series of centennial lectures was held during 1966–67 under the title “The University and the Man of Tomorrow.”⁵⁸ Not one lecturer mentioned the topic of religion in relation to university education or research. The “man of tomorrow” in the view of a host of internationally renowned and local scholars will, apparently have no place or thought for religion.

5 The Disappearance of Religion 1976–2014

The early years of the war in Lebanon mark the beginning of the fourth phase. In the 1978–79 catalog, there is no more mention of “religious interests” of students under Student Life; there is no university chaplain anymore; and the Department of Religion disappears. The practice of beginning the Commencement Exercises with prayer (Invocation) – performed since the first commencement in 1870, is discontinued in the early 1980s.⁵⁹ The religious services held for the university community in the Chapel (ever since the founding of SPC) are no longer held. The end of all religious activities on campus comes in late 1980s when a university decision is taken to ban all religious functions in the Chapel which now is called Assembly Hall. The death blow to any widespread exposure to the study of religion was in 1986–87, when the readings and discussion of the Bible and the Qur’an were completely removed from the Civilization Sequence required courses. Since the late 1980s, “religion” has been practically eradicated from the life and curriculum of the university.

⁵⁶ Munro, *A Mutual Concern*, 98.

⁵⁷ Two books resulted from those centennial lectures: *God and Man in Contemporary Christian Thought*. Proceedings of the Philosophy Symposium at AUB, April 27–30, 1967. Edited by Charles H. Malik (Beirut: AUB Centennial Publications, 1970); and *God and Man in Contemporary Islamic Thought*. Proceedings of the Philosophy Symposium at AUB, February 6–10, 1967. Edited by Charles H. Malik (Beirut: AUB Centennial Publications, 1972).

⁵⁸ *The University and the Man of Tomorrow*. The Centennial Lectures. General Editor Fuad Sarraf. (Beirut: AUB, 1967).

⁵⁹ The last mention of an opening Invocation at Commencement is in the printed program of 1981.

6 The SPC/AUB History of Secularization in a US History Perspective

How does one account for the story of religion at AUB – a story that began with religious missionary zeal in 1866, shifted to a moral missionary ideal in the early 1900s, got reduced to elective courses in religion and a modest department in the mid twentieth century, to finally disappear completely from AUB in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

A popular and widespread explanation of the shift from the first phase to the second is that the earliest missionary founders of SPC soon discovered that they could not convert people to Protestantism; there were too many “nominal Christians”, i.e., non-Protestants, and a growing number of non-Christian students. The classical missionary enterprise failed, so they shifted to preaching moral ideals and to a social gospel type of religion. This is the same explanation that is usually given for the fact that Protestant missionaries founded so many schools and engaged in social work. It is purported that they failed at conversion, so they turned to education.⁶⁰ This explanation is too simplistic, although it does have elements of truth in it. To be sure, Protestant missionaries failed in converting on a large scale; not everybody who received an education at Protestant schools or at SPC became a Protestant. Nevertheless, what happened at SPC/AUB, at least in the first three phases described above – from 1866 until 1976 or so, was actually the same story that was played out in most American Christian colleges and universities. The AUB went the “way of all flesh” – i.e., it suffered the fate of all similar denominational as well as non-denominational Christian institutions of higher learning in the USA in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, as far as religion is concerned. Since the early 1990s there has been an increasing interest in the relation between religion and higher education in American colleges and universities, and many studies have been produced about this topic.⁶¹ It

⁶⁰ Actually, education was an essential component of the Protestant missionary activity, for, to be a Protestant or to see the Christian truth in the Protestant way, one had to be able to read the Bible. The whole Protestant missionary enterprise depended on the ability to read and understand texts, specifically, those of Holy Scripture.

⁶¹ *Theology and the University. Essays in Honor of John B. Cobb, Jr.* Ed. D.R. Griffith and Joseph C. Hough Jr. (New York: State University of New York, 1991); *Religious Studies, Theological Studies and the University Divinity School*. Ed. Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) D. Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); James T. Burthchaell, *The Dying of the Light. The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities*

is impossible to understand the history and development of the SPC/AUB, especially concerning the place and role of religion, without knowing the story on campuses in the USA. It is basically the same story.

The parallels between the US history and the AUB developments are striking. Most Protestant colleges and universities in the US started out with required chapel services, required Bible courses, and required faculty oaths to doctrinal statements;⁶² almost all of them had YMCAs and organized revival meetings on campus.⁶³ And almost all of them gradually relaxed chapel services and Bible courses until they dropped out of the curriculum; almost all abolished the faculty oaths,⁶⁴ insisted on religion as a builder of moral character and a dedication to service,⁶⁵ almost all shifted to the Liberal Protestant approach which emphasized Christianity not as a system of theology or ritual, but as a way of life: Christianity is “something caught, not taught.”⁶⁶ What J. Marsden concludes concerning the American situation applies literally to the AUB of Howard Bliss and Bayard Dodge: “Christianity in academia was located either in the subjective lives of individuals or in ideals of service to humanity with which no one was to quarrel.”⁶⁷ The similarity of the story with American institutions continues in the post-Dodge phase: in the later twentieth century, as the influence of religion and religious life starts to recede in the overall aims and structures of colleges and universities, departments of religion begin to be established, and this “became the pattern for teaching religion in American higher education.”⁶⁸ That was also the time in the 1960s when a department of religion was established at AUB.

The upshot of all this is that the shifting place and role of religion at SPC/AUB followed the pattern and the developments taking place in American colleges and universities. SPC/AUB was living its “American” life here in Beirut; it was adapting to, and accompanying, developments in the concept, mission and structure of American institutions of higher learning, and not simply or even primarily responding to its context of increasing non-Protestants and non-Christians among students and faculty. No doubt the local context played some role, but it was not

from their Christian Churches. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998); Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul. How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with their Religious Traditions*. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2001).

62 Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 19.

63 Ibid., 20.

64 Ibid., 227 (Princeton); Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge*, 19.

65 Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 347–348.

66 Ibid., 347–348; 173.

67 Ibid., 410.

68 Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge*, 26.

decisive concerning religion except in the fourth phase, which witnessed the disappearance of religion from the university. The AUB chaplaincy was abolished, prayers in commencement services were eliminated at during the Lebanese war; and the Bible and Qur'an dropped out of the Civilization Sequence program as a result of a conflict in one class and also as a reaction to the kidnapping of an AUB professor in the 1980s by religious extremists.

The "way of all flesh" for American universities, including the well-known universities such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago and many others, is that they were all founded and shaped by church bodies; all gradually moved through several phases: first, making education "nonsectarian" by "identifying with a general, generic Christianity; then by an appeal to spiritual and moral ideals" of a vaguely religious type, "and finally by the exclusion of specifically Christian religious values and practices in the name of allegedly universal intellectual, moral, and democratic qualities."⁶⁹ That is exactly what happened at SPC/AUB, with the difference that AUB, mainly due to the fifteen-year Lebanese war went on to eliminate religion completely from any aspect of university life and practice.

This process of secularization has been studied and analyzed in depth in many American publications recently – as I have already indicated above. Many factors go into the process, including financial considerations and fundraising issues, but the most important factor for the demise of the Protestant character of colleges and universities was their espousal of liberal Protestantism and the assumptions of the Enlightenment about "real knowledge as that which comes only through experiment and verifiable experience, while faith is relegated to a private and subjective sphere."⁷⁰

Also, the effect of the Enlightenment's attack on the epistemological claims of classical Christian theology, as well as Deistic or rationalistic theology, had huge consequences in the academic and intellectual theological sphere. Many, primarily in the Anglo-American world, felt that it was no longer possible to defend or express the Christian faith in terms of knowledge and truth claims. The Christian faith was no longer viable for many as a form of knowing, so theologies were developed in which the Christian faith was basically conceived as either a form of doing (morality) or a form of feeling (consciousness) or both together. Christianity became either moral action or a spiritual experience (a consciousness of the Divine). If one reads the later Daniel Bliss, Howard Bliss and Bayard Dodge, one finds that they all belonged to the school of thought that considered the Christian faith not so

⁶⁹ Benne, *Quality with Soul*, 4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

much as embodying truths to be known, formulated, studied, reflected upon, explained, and critiqued, but as a life that ought to be lived, a consciousness of a higher spiritual power that shapes personality and urges service to fellow human beings. And all three reflected that in their conceptions of what it means to be a Christian college/university. All three – and these were really the towering founders of SPC/AUB, always emphasized moral life over truth, religious feeling over doctrines, spiritual consciousness over theological knowledge. Religion was not really something to be studied in the university; it was to be practiced. “Christianity is life, not doctrine, it is something caught more than taught.”⁷¹ Thus, religion at AUB was in their time “a grand moral vision based on the selfless example of Jesus; superiority to other religions is not intellectual and dogmatic but moral. No need to ask, discuss and argue whether Christianity was true or not. No need to ask whether one could continue to believe the Bible in the face of biblical criticism and the challenges of modern science and philosophy – because religion does not really belong in the domain of knowledge.

It is this basic moral, liberal protestant outlook that excluded religion from the realm of thought, reflection and critique that eventually ousted religion very smoothly and quietly from the university’s academic vision. It was this initial policy of promoting the practice but avoiding the study of religion that resulted in neither practice nor study, for there came a time when there was no one to practice and nothing to study. In fact, it was this viewpoint that, no doubt unintentionally, caused skepticism in many a student about their religious faith.⁷²

71 Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 173.

72 One student, Anīs al-Khūrī al-Maqdisī (1885–1977), who later became the prominent AUB professor of Arabic Literature and Chair of the Department, wrote in his autobiography that he had been raised in a very pious and religious Protestant family, but his religious faith began to be threatened and to undergo changes at the Syrian Protestant College, especially in the last year of his studies. As soon as he got introduced to the natural and biological sciences, doubt concerning the Bible arose in his mind. He described that as a sever shock and a shaking of his faith, and he remained lost in doubt for years, even after graduation.: “If I am to blame anyone, I blame those who did not do a good job in directing us at this delicate stage of our lives; they should have led us gently and gradually in our mental journey from youth to maturity.” (Anīs al-Khūrī al-Maqdisī, *Mā’a al-zamān*, Edited by Yusef Ibish & Yusef Khoury. (Beirut: Maqdisī Printers, 1977), 101.

7 The SPC/AUB History of Secularization in a Lebanese and Middle Eastern History Perspective

It is clear, therefore, that what happened at AUB was very much the same as what had taken place at other American universities in the United States but with two differences. The first is that the secularization of universities and colleges in the U.S. accompanied the secularization of society. Not so in Lebanon and the Middle East. While Lebanon has been more exposed to a secular mentality among many of its intellectuals and some of its educational and other institutions, Lebanese society has remained very confessional and sectarian; religion remains up until this very day a most dominant factor in society – in social, political and even economic matters. AUB was sidelining religion and ignoring it in its life and thought in a society that was not really secular. In a sense, AUB was going against its context in ousting religion from its intellectual purview, for who can deny the centrality of religion for the Middle East and its peoples? AUB is located in the heart of a region that has given birth to three great world religions – Judaism, Islam and Christianity – all three of which are still alive and well and vigorously shaping lives, structures, policies, behavior and actions in this region and beyond. Religion is the main donor of identity in Lebanon and the surrounding countries; it is the most basic shaper of people's beliefs and of public life. One can understand the early policy of AUB that opted for religion as “a benign and enlightened ethicism”⁷³ to use the words of Kenneth Cragg, but one could nevertheless regret the fact that SPC and AUB merely *reflected* Lebanon's (and the Middle East's) religious diversity and make-up rather than *reflected upon* it.

The other difference with the U.S. and other western developments was that universities that secularized in the west normally retained a place for religion and religions in their institutions, not as theology and not as practice, but as a topic worthy of study, i.e. as either philosophy of religion and/or as religious studies. Except for the short-lived experience of the religious studies department at AUB (1968–1978), religion disappears from the academic vision of the university in the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first decade and a half of the twenty first.

A recent development could be viewed as an attempt on the part of AUB to respond to its context: the establishing of an M.A. in Islamic Studies within the Centre of Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (CAMES). Made possible by a donation

73 Kenneth Cragg, *The Arab Christian*. (London: Mowbray, 1992), 221.

of 10 million dollars from Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan of the United Arab Emirates, CAMES set up a graduate degree in Islamic Studies in 2014. It is described as

an interdisciplinary program with the goal of providing students with the background to expand their knowledge and understanding of classical and modern Islamic religious thought, context and textual traditions. It highlights ethics as the overarching principle and *fiqh* as highly informed by the spirit of ethics. Framed in the paradigm of ethical pluralism, this program . . . offers a shared space where social scientists and scholars in Islamic jurisprudence collaborate in an effort to provide *maqasidic fiqh* and new interpretations of the Islamic corpus.⁷⁴

The program of study includes courses and seminars on Qur'anic Studies, Islamic Civilizations, Islamic Ethics, Sociology of Islam, Approaches to the Qur'an, Art and Architecture in Islamic Civilizations, Islamic Philosophy, Islamic Movements and Reform, Islamic Thought and Modernity, etc. When asked why a program in Islamic Studies was established at the University after decades of avoiding religion and religious studies, and why only Islam and not other religions, the current Director of the program responded that Islam was the dominant religion in the region and the one that is linked to all kinds of controversies and problems. It was natural to introduce such a program in order to offer a possibility of studying Islam in an academic and objective setting different from the dominant traditional and uncritical approaches of *shari'a* schools. There was no need seen to introduce the study of other religions, given the present context of the Middle East.⁷⁵ It is obvious that the reason behind setting up such a program is the attempt to deal with the revival of Islam and Islamism in the Middle East since the late seventies of the twentieth century. In other words, AUB began to respond to its context and realize the importance of tackling the issue of religion. But could this be considered the beginning of a fifth phase in the history of the relationship of AUB and religion? It is too early to tell. For one thing, the newly introduced program is only about Islam, and so does not take into account other religions in the Middle East. Could one really understand the Middle East without taking into account its religious component and its religious pluralism? Furthermore, shouldn't "religion" as such be a topic of study in a university – any university, but especially one in the Middle East?

⁷⁴ AUB website: <https://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/comes/Pages/history.aspx>.

⁷⁵ Interview with Prof. Sari Hanafi, Director of the M.A. in Islamic Studies at AUB on September 4, 2023.

8 Concluding Remarks

In many ways, the dominant cultural and intellectual atmosphere at the American University of Beirut remains that of the Enlightenment and of Modernity.⁷⁶ Modernity thought that religion would disappear: “from Voltaire to Marx every Enlightenment thinker thought that religion would disappear in the 20th century because religion was fetishism, animistic superstition, irrationalism . . .” Every nationalistic ideology – including Arab nationalism and Syrian nationalism, which were rampant at AUB from the 1950s till the 1970s – thought that religion could be privatized and individualized so that the public sphere could be managed without it. That did not take place. Religion did not disappear, and it could not be privatized for ever. Atheistic ideologies have crumbled, nationalistic ideologies are waning, empires have fallen, economic systems have disintegrated, but the great historical religions have survived.⁷⁷ Shouldn’t all of this be material for research and reflection in a contemporary university that seeks to be relevant to, and claims to be in the service of, society?

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⁷⁶ I allow myself to make this judgment on the basis of the fact that I am an alumnus of AUB, and also that I was an adjunct professor there for over 15 years.

⁷⁷ J. Kitagawa, “Introduction” in *Religious Studies, Theological Studies and the University Divinity School*. Ed. Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 35.

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Oleg Kyselov

Atheistic Education in the USSR. The Case of Soviet Ukraine

Abstract: The chapter focuses on implementing the course “Basics of Atheism” in Ukraine’s universities during the 1950s and is based on archive materials collected in Ukraine. It will be shown in a broader context – on the one hand, how education was secularized by Bolsheviks in 1917 and further, and on the other, how atheistic education functioned in the late Soviet era. The chapter shows the implementation of the course “Basics of Scientific Atheism” as mandatory in Soviet universities and the changes in the syllabi during the 1980s. The author speculates on the reasons for the desecularization of Ukraine after the collapse of the Soviet Union and concludes that as Soviet ideology and practices replaced religion in the USSR, religious doctrines and rituals have replaced communism in independent Ukraine.

1 Introduction

The Soviet Union positioned itself as a communist state, meaning communism was the state ideology, and all spheres of the state’s life were subordinated to this ideology. Education was not an exception. Moreover, the Communist Party paid much attention to education because it was considered one of the most critical factors in forming conscious citizens of the Soviet Union. Materialism and atheism were an important element of communist ideology. Religion had no place in a communist society; according to Marx, it had to perish with the change of socio-economic relations. However, the communists paid attention not only to the economy, the development of which was to cause the demise of religion, but also to religion itself. It is useful to consider the legislation on religion in order to get a general idea of the state of religion in communist times and the religious policy of the Soviet state. However, it is also worth considering that during Vladimir Lenin’s¹ (1870–1924) and

¹ His real last name was Ulyanov. Lenin was the head of government of Soviet Russia (1917–1924) and the USSR (1922–1924).

Note: I would like to express my gratitude to Anna Mariya Basauri Ziuzina and Steven Ramey for their help with this text.

Joseph Stalin's² (1878–1953) rules, along with the official legislation, there were also secret directives, orders, and circulars that dealt with the practice of fighting religion.³ Their content often contradicted the provisions of Soviet legislation – the latter deprived religion of any influence on political, economic, social, educational, etc., spheres. Religion became the private matter of a citizen (with the exception of members of the Communist Party for whom it was not allowed), and the activities of religious organizations were reduced only to conducting religious rituals. After reviewing a crucial standpoint of Soviet legislation on religion and education, I will trace the development of atheistic educational institutions in the 1950s and 1960s and explain why they sprouted like mushrooms after the rain. Then, I will show how the mandatory course on atheism was introduced in Soviet universities and educational institutes – starting from Ukraine's *The Basics of Atheism* in the late 1950s and ending with the *History and Theory of Religion and Atheism* in the late 1980s – and then transformed into *Religious Studies* at the beginning of the 1990s. I will in this context emphasize some key changes in their syllabi. I finish the chapter with some remarks on the reasons for the desecularization of Ukraine in the 1990s.

2 Religion and Education in the Soviet Legislation

Even though the Ukrainian People's Republic existed from 1917 to 1921, the Bolsheviks pronounced the parallel existence of various Ukrainian state formations: the Ukrainian People's Republic of Soviets was established in 1918, with the capital in Kharkiv; the same year, the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Ukraine was established in the Russian city of Kursk. The latter did not play any fundamental role in the life of Ukraine but issued various decrees that, after the Bolsheviks seized power in Ukraine, became part of the legislation in the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic (Ukrainian SSR, UkSSR, or Soviet Ukraine).⁴

The decree *On the separation of church from state and school from church*, dated January 22, 1919, was the basis for all religious legislation in Soviet Ukraine. It proclaimed the separation of church from state, granted the right of free belief or disbelief, prohibited the conduct of religious rituals in state and public institu-

² His real last name was Jughashvili. Stalin was General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1922–1952) and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union (1941–1953).

³ Victoria Smolkin. *A Sacred Space is Never Empty. A History of Soviet Atheism*, (Princeton University Press), 29, 46, 52.

⁴ This was the republic's official name from 1919 to 1937, later renamed to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (the words 'Soviet' and 'Socialist' changed their positions).

tions, transferred acts of civil status from church to state, separated school from church, and prohibited the teaching of religion in schools; it also prohibited mandatory (forced) church fees or taxes and transferred church property to the state. Therefore, religious organizations could use churches and liturgical objects only after obtaining permission from the authorities. Several resolutions of the People's Commissariat of Education of the UkSSR clarified the principle of separating school from church. They prohibited the conduct of religious rituals inside schools and teaching religious beliefs, ordered the removal of all religious symbols and images from the university's premises, and made the teaching of religious disciplines non-compulsory. Religious schools and seminaries were nationalized and turned into secondary schools. The law on public education of the UkSSR was issued in 1922. It postulated that upbringing and education should be free from any religious influence. Teaching religious education to persons under 18 (minors) was prohibited, and scientific and educational institutions were obligated to carry out anti-religious propaganda.⁵ In the beginning of the 1920s, this propaganda was to be carried out in three dimensions: "1) anti-religious actions and intra-church issues; 2) broad natural and scientific educational work and 3) anti-religious propaganda aimed at exposing religious superstitions, rites and cults".⁶

The issues of religion and education were reflected in the constitutions of Soviet Ukraine. The 1919 Constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience and the right to religious and anti-religious propaganda. There was also a discriminatory provision about clerics, stating that they could not be elected to representative bodies and were deprived of electoral rights. Instead, the Constitution of 1929, on the one hand, provided equal political rights regardless religion, though the restriction of the right to vote for worshipers remained. On the other hand, the right to freely disseminate religious views disappeared from it. The same provisions remained in the Constitution of 1937. The last constitution of the UkSSR of 1978 banned inciting religious enmity and hatred.

Here, the peculiarities of Marxist-Leninist understanding of freedom of conscience are worth noting. "Bourgeois freedom of conscience" was understood as a free choice of religion and the conduct of religious rites, as well as the imposition of faith in God and worship to the supernatural. Instead, the Marxist understanding of freedom of conscience recognized the right of a person not to practice any religion at all, to be free from religion, and to have and disseminate atheistic views. The right to carry out atheistic propaganda and education was perceived

⁵ Костянтин Литвин and Анатолій Пшеничний, eds. *Законодавство про релігійні культури*. (Київ: Політвидав), 71–86.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 35.

as a positive aspect of freedom of conscience, leading to a scientific and materialistic worldview.

In 1932, the instructions were adopted, according to which a religious community had to have 50 founders in order to register. The activity of the clergy were limited only to the place of residence of the believers of the community and the church's location. The priest's renunciation of religious activities⁷ had to be official, with a printout of notes in the press and submission of a statement to local authorities. The same instructions prohibited the involvement of minors (up to 18 years) in various religious communities, circles, and gatherings, except for general prayer meetings.⁸ The last provision, together with the legislation on separating school from church, significantly impacted the reproduction of religion through the education and upbringing of children in a religious way.

As a Ukrainian scholar of theological education Vitaly Khromets notes, during the Soviet period, "the development of education on the territory of Ukraine . . . was characterized by a hostile attitude towards religion in general and theological education in particular. After the closure of Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy in 1923, theological education on the territory of Ukraine was liquidated entirely till the beginning of the World War II."⁹ The theological education gradually began to recover with the change in Stalin's policy on religion that became softer during World War II,¹⁰ with the opening of pastoral and theological courses in Lviv, Kyiv, Lutsk, and Odesa, which later became the basis for the opening of seminaries in the last three cities.

In the *Instruction on the application of the legislation on cults (in the USSR)*, dated March 16, 1961, clergymen were prohibited from any charitable, medical, educational, or tourist-excursion, catechetical activities. In order to hold gatherings and religious processions and to open theological educational institutions or

7 The clergy was severely affected by discrimination, constant harassment, deportations, and executions. As a result, almost 2,000 people renounced their religious status in 1929 and 1930 alone. See: Осип Зінкевич and Олександр Воронин, eds. *Мартирологія українських церков у чотирьох томах. Том 1. Українська православна церква. Документи, матеріали, християнський самвидав України.* (Торонто-Балтимор: Українське видавництво "Смолоскип" ім. В. Симоненка, 1987), 1031.

8 Литвин & Пшеничний, *Законодавство*, 107, 112–113.

9 Віталій Хромець. *Богословська освіта в Україні: релігійний і світський контекст* (Київ: Дух і Літера, 2019), 128.

10 During the Second World War, Stalin changed his policy toward the Church and decided to use the Russian Orthodox Church as a means of mobilizing the people. The Russian Orthodox Church was officially recognized in the USSR in 1943, but it still faced many restrictions on its activities. To oversee its affairs, a council called the 'Council on the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church' was established, with Georgii Karpov, an NKVD (police) colonel, as its head.

publish religious literature, it was necessary to obtain permission from the local or central authorities.¹¹

Thus, we see that the Bolsheviks, from the very beginning, wanted to reduce the influence of the church on education, nationalize religious educational institutions, and exclude religious subjects from public schools (there were no private schools in the USSR). At the same time, measures were taken to include an anti-religious/atheistic element in educational institutions. At the end of the 1920s, there was a debate in the USSR about non-religious education in schools, which ended in its condemnation. Education at schools should not be “non-religious” but “anti-religious”.

3 Emergence of Atheistic Educational Institutions in the 1950–1960’s

There is also fragmentary evidence of the training of atheistic cadres in the 1930s. For example, an atheistic faculty was opened at Kyiv Institute of Public Education in 1930.¹² The history of religion and atheism course was introduced as optional in pedagogical institutes.¹³

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union issued two resolutions *On significant shortcomings in scientific-atheistic propaganda and measures to improve it* and *On errors in the conduct of scientific-atheistic propaganda among the population* in 1954, which became the starting point for the development of both Khrushchev’s new anti-religious campaign and the establishment of scientific atheism. Since the publication of these decrees, the term “scientific atheism” was widely used, and institutions and units of scientific-atheistic nature began to open in the USSR. In particular, the first department of this profile in the Soviet Union was opened at Taras Shevchenko State University of Kyiv (Kyiv University) in 1959; it was called the Department of History and Theory of Atheism, and the departments of scientific atheism were opened in 1964 at Lviv University and Kyiv Pedagogical Institute. In the beginning of the 1980s, there were 11 departments in Soviet Ukraine with the word “atheism” in their names. These departments, except Kyiv and Lviv universities, were called “Atheism, Ethics and Aesthetics” (Kyiv, Vin-

11 Литвин & Пшеничний, *Законодавство*, 175.

12 Зінкевич and Воронин, *Мартирологія українських церков* . . . , 1033.

13 Олександр Молчанов, *Розвиток наукового атеїзму на Радянській Україні у 20–30-ті роки*. (Дисертація, Інститут філософії АН УРСР, 1970), 105.

nytsia, Voroshilovgrad,¹⁴ Zaporizhzhia, Lutsk, Rivne, and Ternopil Pedagogical Institutes) and “Atheism, Ethics, Logic, and Aesthetics” (Uzhhorod and Donetsk Pedagogical Institutes).¹⁵ Names reflect an inevitable evolution of Soviet education programs, where, at a certain moment, ethics, aesthetics, and logic were defined as mandatory subjects for all specialties. I suppose that “atheism” featured first in the names of these departments not according to the alphabetical principle but because it was the first discipline to become mandatory.¹⁶ The existence of these 11 departments does not mean that the discipline *Basics of Scientific Atheism*¹⁷ was not taught in other universities and educational institutes. Philosophy departments provided its teaching since scientific atheism was considered one of the philosophical disciplines (as, in fact, ethics, aesthetics, and logic).

In contrast to Stalin’s “godless five-year plan,” Khrushchev’s anti-religious campaign, according to the famous saying, “struggled not with people in religion, but with religion in people.” That is, instead of shooting priests and destroying churches, as was the case in the 1930s, the communists had to influence the population ideologically to convince them to abandon “religious survivals.” This is precisely what scientific atheism was supposed to do. In the name of the discipline, the word “scientific” can be interpreted with two meanings. First, in the Soviet Union, Marxism was the only possible academic approach in the humanities¹⁸ and social sciences. Marxist philosophy – historical and dialectical materialism – was a scientific doctrine. So, when the Soviet communists used the phrase “scientific atheism” for them, in particular, it sounded like atheism based on a single scientific approach – Marxism. Second, “scientific atheism”, at least in the 1950s and 1960s, was

14 Nowadays Luhansk.

15 ЦДАВО, Ф. Р-2, Оп. 14., Спр. 2652, арк. 206–210.

16 Although the course on atheism was not the first mandatory course, the fourth – after the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Dialectical Materialism, and Historical Materialism*. See William W. Brickman. “Resistance to atheistic education in the Soviet Union”, *Journal of Thought*, Vol. 9, No. 1, (1974), 23.

17 The original title of the course – *Osnovy naukovoho ateizmu* (ukr. – *Основи наукового атеїзму*) or *Osnovy nauchnogo ateizma* (rus. – *Основы научного атеизма*) – scholars sometimes translate as *Introduction to the Scientific Atheism* (Anna Mariya Basauri Ziuzina and Oleg Kyselov, “Atheism in the Context of the Secularization and Desecularization of Ukraine in the 20th Century” In *Freethought and Atheism in Central and Eastern Europe: The Development of Secularity and Non-Religion*, ed. Tomáš Bibík et al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 292) or *Fundamentals of Scientific Atheism* (Atko Rimmel and Meelis Friedenthal “Atheism and Freethought in Estonian Culture” In *Ibid.*, 97; Māra Kiope, Inese Runce, and Anita Stasulane “The Trajectories of Atheism and Secularization in Latvia from the German Enlightenment to Contemporary Secularity” In *Ibid.*, 146).

18 Humanities were defined as sciences in the Soviet Union. The same situation exists nowadays in post-Soviet countries.

closely connected with natural sciences – advances in physics, chemistry, biology, etc. Atheists followed the new discoveries in sciences and used them in anti-religious lectures and propaganda, demonstrating that the conclusions of science contradict religious ideas (the teachings of the Church). Therefore, the discipline's name also sounded like a scientific denial of religion and affirmation of a materialistic worldview.

4 From the *Basics of Atheism* to the *History and Theory of Religion and Atheism*

The introductory course on atheism in universities and educational institutes, and later the specialization in scientific atheism at the philosophical faculties of the USSR is crucial for understanding state atheism in UkSSR. The course was aimed at preparing new cadres for atheistic propaganda and agitation. The lack of atheist cadres became noticeable not only with the introduction of Khrushchev's new anti-religious campaign but also in connection with the USSR's annexation of new territories – Western regions of Belarus, Ukraine (current Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, and Zakarpattia regions), Moldova, and the Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the expansion of the political and ideological influence of the USSR on the countries of Central Europe (the countries of the Warsaw Pact) and other parts of the world (see also Buchardt, this volume). The USSR sent its cadres everywhere to conduct ideological work.¹⁹

In the Soviet Union, the course *Basics of Atheism* was first introduced in the Ukrainian SSR in the 1957/1958 school year, as a minister education order mentioned this in 1958.²⁰ However, instructors who participated in the Ministry of Education seminar in 1959 said that the course had already been taught for two years.²¹ The course could be first introduced gradually – initially in humanities and social sciences programs and only then in all others. Although, in 1959, the course *Basics of Atheism* was already mandatory in ordinary universities and educational institutes of Soviet Ukraine, while it had an optional status in the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic. In the same year, it was already discussed that this course would be “introduced as an elective at the historical and philosophical faculties, pedagogical, agricultural, and medical universities” of the

¹⁹ Jan Tesař, *The History of Scientific Atheism. A Comparative Study of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Union (1954–1991)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 115.

²⁰ ІЦДАВО, Ф. Р-4621, Оп. 1, Спр. 226, арк. 9.

²¹ ІЦДАВО, Ф. Р-4621, Оп. 1, Спр. 157, арк. 7.

country.²² In Soviet Ukraine, the course had 14 hours in technical universities and 24 hours in humanities.²³

Volodymyr Tancher (1915–1998), the most authoritative scientific atheist in the Ukrainian SSR, was the author of the course syllabus project and later the leader of the syllabus developing group. He was the head of the first department of atheism in the USSR, which was opened at Kyiv University. In the archive, I have found a transcript of the discussion of the syllabus' first edition.²⁴ The syllabus itself is not in the archive; however, from the discussion, it becomes clear that the course included six topics: religion and atheism, the emergence of religion, modern Christianity, the radical opposition of science and religion, criticism of Christian morality, the attitude of the Communist Party and the Soviet State to church and religion.

The first version – the *Basics of Atheism* syllabus project – had topics about Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam, but they were removed later.²⁵ Kuptsov²⁶ from the Kyiv Institute of Food Industry, positively evaluating the removal of these topics, said: “In the conditions of Ukraine, this is absolutely correct; we need to pay more attention to the Christian religion and to expose the reactionary essence of this religion.” However, during the discussion of the syllabus, Kostenko from Zhytomyr University disagreed with the fact that Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam had been excluded from the syllabus, arguing that graduates of institutes and universities were sent to regions of the USSR, where knowledge about these religions could be helpful.²⁷ In his speech, A.T. Belousov from the Conservatory emphasized that students were interested in various religions of India, China, the contemporary USA, and Great Britain. He believed the course *Basics of Atheism* should satisfy this interest.²⁸

The course was considered as practical. During the discussion, some instructors said that, based on their essays, the students then spoke to the public and gave public atheistic lectures. Other seminar participants noted that such a small course should not be expected to deconvert religious students. “A course in atheism in 14 hours or even in 28 hours cannot turn believers into non-believers. This

22 Ibid., apk. 3.

23 Ibid., apk. 22.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., apk. 14.

26 As a rule, the minutes of such meetings recorded only the last names of the discussion participants, sometimes their initials.

27 Ibid., apk. 17.

28 Ibid., apk. 24.

requires much work. There should be a whole system of lectures and visual aids; small university teams should connect with other departments”.²⁹

How did Volodymyr Tancher understand this course? During the discussion of the experience of teaching this course, the question of the connection between the topics “Criticism of Christian morality” and “Modern Christianity” arose. Tancher explained that, at first, it was necessary to provide students with general knowledge about Christianity and only then move on to criticism of its individual aspects.³⁰

In many speeches, instructors of Ukrainian universities focused on the fact that the course *Basics of Atheism* should pay more attention to sectarianism.³¹ In particular, one of the instructors noted: “. . . I think it is expedient to single out the issue of sectarianism in a separate topic. This will correspond to the state of sectarianism in Ukraine today to a greater extent. Currently, there are $\frac{3}{4}$ of sectarian communities in Ukraine. Considering the complexity of the struggle against sectarianism, it is necessary to devote at least 2–3 hours to this issue and allocate it into a separate topic”.³²

According to the order of the Minister of Education *On the expansion and improvement of the training of scientific and pedagogical cadres in the philosophical disciplines in the universities of the Ukrainian SSR*, dated April 4, 1961, there was a shortage of philosophical cadres in the republic, at a time when dialectical and historical materialism, scientific atheism, and the foundations of Marxist-Leninist ethics and aesthetics became general education courses in universities and educational institutes. In this regard, the order suggests institutions to increase the number of students at the philosophy faculty of Kyiv University, preparing and publishing textbooks and teaching aids in philosophical disciplines, and training cadres through Ph.D. programs; in particular, one place was allocated for the specialty of scientific atheism.³³

In the same year, textbooks on the basics of scientific atheism began to be published. The most authoritative and popular textbook in the Ukrainian SSR was written by Volodymyr Tancher, first published under the title *Basics of Atheism* (1961), which received the label “Approved by the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the Ukrainian SSR as a textbook for universities of the

29 Ibid., арк. 30.

30 Ibid., арк. 4.

31 Sectarianism at that time meant almost all Protestant denominations: Baptists, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Adventists, as well as Jehovah’s Witnesses.

32 Ibid., арк. 27.

33 ЦДАВО, Ф. Р-4621, Оп. 1, Спр. 226, арк. 10–13.

Ukrainian SSR,³⁴ later republished as *Basics of Scientific Atheism* four times (1968, 1971, 1974, 1975).

The Ministry of Higher Education of the USSR approved the commission to develop one unified syllabus of the course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* for the country in 1961. Ilya Pantskhav (1906–1986), chair of the Department of History and Theory of Atheism at Moscow State University, was appointed as the head of the commission. Significantly, only Tancher of the 16 commission members was not from Moscow, and most likely only because he already had experience in developing a syllabus at the republican level. Other commission members represented Moscow universities and educational and research institutes. The Department of History and Theory of Atheism of Moscow State University and the Atheism Sector of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR had three and four representatives, respectively. Two persons represented the Ministry of Education, and one represented the magazine *Nauka i Religia (Science and Religion)*.³⁵

Having a unified syllabus for all universities was a common practice in the USSR. As a result, there was a requirement to have the texts of all lectures in the departments, which ensured a unified approach to delivering different courses. On one hand, it allowed instructors to deliver any lecture provided by the department at any time. On the other hand, some commissions checked the availability of lecture texts and their content.

In 1961, the Ministry of Education of the Ukrainian SSR issued a directive *On measures to strengthen scientific research work in the field of some topical problems of historical materialism*, which also refers to research on scientific atheism, in particular, research on sectarianism.³⁶ The document focused on many philosophical disciplines, such as sociology, ethics, and aesthetics. A particular emphasis in the document was made on the connection of scientific research with the practice of communist education (that is, education that should transform ordinary Soviet citizens into conscious communists). Specifically, the document stated:

*Collecting and summarizing the facts characterizing the process of overcoming capitalism's survivals in the minds of various population segments is necessary. It is necessary to study and identify those channels, through which the influence of an ideology hostile to socialism seeps into the environment of the Soviet people. It is impossible, for example, to successfully combat the ideological influence of churchmen and sectarians if our cadres study and know poorly the examples and methods of their activities, their influence on Soviet citizens, etc.*³⁷

34 ЦДАВО, Ф. Р-4621, Оп. 1, Спр. 228, арк. 54.

35 ЦДАВО, Ф. Р-4621, Оп. 1, Спр. 213, арк. 63–64.

36 ЦДАВО, Ф. Р-4621, Оп. 1, Спр. 216, арк. 248.

37 Ibid., s. 216, a. 250.

Two more official documents in 1964 regulated atheistic education in the USSR. The order of the Minister of Higher and Secondary Education of the USSR *On strengthening atheistic education in higher and secondary special educational institutions* about the specialization in scientific atheism of some students from the Faculty of History, as well as the study of the course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* immediately after studying dialectical and historical materialism. The resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU *On measures to strengthen atheistic education of the population* determined that, in addition to an exam or test in scientific atheism, students must also pass a test in atheistic work, which includes atheistic lectures, participation in the making of posters and radio programs, and discussions on atheistic topics in mass auditoriums.

Basics of Scientific Atheism became mandatory in the USSR's universities, pedagogical, agricultural, and medical institutes, and in others as optional classes until the middle of the 1970s. Meanwhile, in Soviet Ukraine, it was a mandatory educational discipline for all universities and secondary special educational institutions.³⁸ Textbooks on scientific atheism included topics related to specific specialties (medicine, agriculture, etc.). The scientific atheism course syllabus was diversified into three groups: for all universities, for philosophy faculties where scientific atheists were trained, and for pedagogical institutes. The process of opening new departments that provided the course on scientific atheism continued. In 1973, a new syllabus of the course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* and all-Union textbook, *Scientific Atheism*, were prepared by the syllabus developers, and the authors of the textbook were experts from Ukraine – Volodymyr Tancher and Borys Lobovyk³⁹ (1923–1999). The course was taught in over 500 universities, with 20 specialized departments in the USSR, in 1975.⁴⁰

The Inter-University Council for the Coordination of Research on Scientific Atheistic Education of Student Youth operating in Soviet Ukraine issued recommendations for improving atheistic education in 1976. In particular, among other things, the Council recommended that instructors of scientific atheism should pay attention to the refutation of the idea of God and attempts to substantiate it based

38 “Рекомендації по організації науково-атеїстичного виховання студентської молоді”, *Питання атеїзму*, 1976, № 12, 74–80.

39 Borys Lobovyk was also one of the well-known scholars in Soviet Ukraine. He was the chair of the Department of Scientific Atheism (later – Department of Atheism, Ethics, and Aesthetics) of Kyiv State Pedagogical University (1964–1982) and the Department of Scientific Atheism (later Sector of Theoretical Problems of Scientific Atheism) of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the UkSSR (1982–1991).

40 Юрий Зуев, “Институт научного атеизма (1964–1991)”, *Вопросы религии и религиоведения*. Вып. 1, Ч. 1, 30.

on the speculations of theologians on the problems of morality and the development of art and science. According to the recommendations, instructors should also criticize superstitions and demonstrate the negative influence of religion on social processes not only in the past “but also nowadays.”⁴¹

The syllabus of the course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* was revised several times in 1980, 1982, 1985, and 1987, when the names of particular topics were clarified. The list of recommended literature was changed, which mainly consisted of the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, the General Secretaries of the CPSU (Brezhnev, Chernenko, and Gorbachev), the Constitution of the USSR, documents of the Communist Party and a textbook on scientific atheism. The discipline had 24 hours,⁴² of which 20 (i.e., ten classes) were allocated to lectures, and 4 (i.e., two) to seminars. The last syllabus of the atheism course reflected the changes in the late USSR and how religion and atheism were perceived at the level of public consciousness – interest in religion increased, and atheism was criticized. The last syllabus was titled *History and Theory of Religion and Atheism* (1990). More emphasis was placed on freedom of conscience, although the syllabus authors did not abandon Marxism or atheism. The changes during the ten years – from 1980 to 1990⁴³ – were the following. The first topic in the 1980 syllabus was titled *The subject of scientific atheism* and had two hours for it. Starting from 1985, only one hour was dedicated to this topic. The title was changed to *The subject of the course “History and theory of religion and atheism”* in 1990 due to renaming of the course. The second topic was *Religion as a social phenomenon*, which lasted two hours and never changed. All syllabi had the same third topic – *Modern religions*, but four hours in 1980 and 1982 syllabi were increased to five hours in 1985. They might have taken this additional hour from the first topic. Other changes were applied to the fourth topic – *Atheism and social progress*. Four hours in 1980 were decreased to three hours in 1987 and two hours in 1990, with the last syllabus title changed to *Atheism and spiritual culture*. The next topic experienced radical changes. It was titled *Worldview basics of atheism* with four hours in 1980. Still, it was renamed into *Scientific atheism about the world, society, and human* in 1982 and *Philosophical and scientific justification of atheism* in 1985. They kept the last title in the 1987 syllabus but decreased the hours to three. The commission changed the title again in 1990 and increased the hours to four. The new title was *Freethought and atheism in the history of spiritual culture*. The sixth topic was *Atheism and religion in a socialist society*, with two hours in the

41 “Рекомендації . . .”, 76.

42 2 academic hours is one class lasting 1 hour 20 minutes.

43 Михаил Смирнов, “Научный атеизм в советском высшем образовании: периодизация и содержание”, *Вестник Ленинградского государственного университета им. А. С. Пушкина. Философские науки*, 2018, №3, 144–171.

1980–1987 syllabi. Still, it was changed to *Atheism in the system of scientific worldview* with one additional hour in the 1990 syllabus. *The scientific-atheistic education* was a necessary part of scientific atheism, and it had two hours in the 1980, 1982, and 1985 syllabi but four hours in 1987. They changed the title and topic in 1985 to *Atheistic education*. Remarkably, the topic was put away in the syllabus in 1990. Instead, they put *Freedom of conscience in a socialist society* with three hours.

Besides lectures, syllabi also have 4 hours (or two classes) for seminars. So, the topic for the first seminar in the 1980 syllabus was *Worldview basics of atheism*. It was changed to *Incompatibility of scientific and religious worldviews* in the 1982 syllabus. The following two syllabi – in 1985 and 1987 – had another title for the first seminar – *Scientific basis of the CPSU and Soviet State attitude toward religion, church, and believers*. As Smirnov noted previously, this topic was one of the questions to discuss in the second seminar.⁴⁴ In the 1990 syllabus of the course, the first seminar was dedicated to the *Marxist-Leninist understanding of religion*. The topics of the second seminar changed two times. It was titled *Atheism and religion in a socialist society*, and the communist attitude toward religion was one of the questions to discuss. Nevertheless, this topic was changed into *Forms and methods of atheistic upbringing* in the 1985 and 1987 syllabi. The topic of the second seminar was changed one more time in 1990. Similarly, as the topic of the last lecture on atheistic education was changed to the problem of freedom of conscience, the topic of the second seminar was changed to *Freedom of conscience in the USSR*. Both – lecture and seminar – reflected the changes that occupied Soviet society under the policy of the last General Secretary of CPSU (1985–1991), Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (1988–1989), Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (1989–1990) and the first President of the USSR (1990–1991) Mikhail Gorbachev (1931–2022).

The upbringing of a new person was defined as one of the main functions of the Communist Party. One of the central elements of this upbringing was the inculcation of a scientific-materialistic worldview, an integral component of which was atheism. Atheistic education was declared to be overcoming religious survivals, forming a harmonious and comprehensively developed person, and establishing in them a scientific worldview and communist morality.⁴⁵ It may sound strange to Western readers, but the communists wrote a lot about spirituality, the “formation of the spiritual world of the individual,” which was considered the ultimate goal of communist education. This was a kind of Soviet analog of “spirituality without reli-

⁴⁴ Смирнов, “Научный атеизм”, с. 162.

⁴⁵ Євграф Дулуман and Володимир Фомін, ред. *Взаємозв'язок атеїстичного та морального виховання*. (Київ: Наукова думка, 1983), 6.

gion” since Soviet education was not only secular but also anti-religious, “militantly atheistic.” Of particular importance in the formation of atheistic beliefs was the mandatory course *Basics of Scientific Atheism*, which performed at least four essential functions: political – explained to students the USSR policy on religion; ideological – formed students’ clear (“correct”) ideological views on religion and the Church; upbringing – created in students an irreconcilable attitude towards any manifestations of religion, and educational – provided a specific set of knowledge about certain religions to use them later in scientific and atheistic criticism.⁴⁶

In the 1970s, the course was perceived as helping students learn the theoretical foundations of scientific atheism, including Lenin’s atheistic legacy, important principles of the CPSU’s attitude toward religion and the Church, as well as mastering the skills of organizing a system of scientific-atheistic education of working people. Besides the theoretical and practical part, the course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* had a critical and informational side, which discussed different religions and their confessions. The course was based on philosophy, history, and natural science knowledge. Of course, it was based on the Soviet variant of Marxist philosophy – dialectical and historical materialism, which was defined as the only possible scientific approach. Although the natural science component occupied a small part of the course itself, the topic “Science and Religion” was quite popular among professors of atheism. In the 1960s and 1970s, many atheists followed the development of various natural sciences disciplines. They often simplified these achievements for a broad audience and used them when reading propaganda lectures on atheism, contrasting the achievements of science with the religious worldview and teachings of the Church.

Professional atheists realized that the course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* was insufficient. They believed conducting extracurricular work with students and involving them in scientific and atheistic activities was necessary. The Soviet communist system provided control and ideological influence on its citizens throughout their lives and in various locations. There were some atheistic poems in elementary school, reading literary works with a negative image of priests, and studying the theory of evolution in middle and high school. Elementary, middle, and high school teachers were seen as educators, organizers, lecturers, and propagandists. The Communist Party treated the teaching staff quite seriously – those disloyal to the communist ideology were not allowed to work at school. At certain times, religious people were even prevented from obtaining a university education. The Soviet authorities collected information about the activity of schoolteachers in the atheistic sphere – to what extent were atheistic topics reflected in classes and extracurricu-

⁴⁶ Смирнов, “Научный атеизм”, 152.

lar activities? For example, one article discussed the results of a survey of natural sciences teachers in 1973 in the Zaporizhzhia region. Most likely, the survey was amateur because it was conducted by the Department of Marxism-Leninism of Melitopol Pedagogical Institute, not by professional sociologists. One hundred forty-five teachers were interviewed, which was hardly a representative sample. However, such polls were conducted constantly, and on their basis, local authorities and Communist Party cells made policy decisions. All 145 interviewed teachers said they were engaged in atheistic work in the classroom, and 70% in extracurricular time. 44% of young teachers and 53% of older ones participated in atheistic propaganda among the population. The article's author presented the study results and concluded that the "atheistic activity of teachers is still not at the appropriate level."⁴⁷

The course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* existed until the end of the 1980s. As Mikhail Smirnov notes, in practice, the discipline had multiple names. Along with the most common *Basics of Scientific Atheism*, colleges and universities also taught *Scientific Atheism, History and Theory of Atheism* (or *Theory and History of Atheism*), and, finally, by the second half of the 1980s, *History of Religion and Atheism*.⁴⁸ Already in 1990–1991, during the Soviet Union, there were cases of renaming the educational course to *Religious Studies*. Actually, in the late 1980s, *religious studies* became the unofficial name for *scientific atheism*, as the latter was sharply criticized for the aggressive and crude anti-religious policy of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁹ However, the communists tried to influence the "working masses" constantly. Some researchers, particularly Victoria Smolkin, conclude that various kinds of atheistic propaganda and agitation have not impacted Soviet society greatly. As soon as the state control over this religious sphere was weakened, a significant interest in religion immediately appeared. However, Smolkin notes that this was often not a religious conversion but ordinary curiosity – people went to religious services as if they were going to the theater or the circus – to get a certain aesthetic pleasure, to satisfy their cultural interest.⁵⁰ Sonya Luehrmann notes that *methodicians* – people involved in different types of propaganda and agitation activities – used their knowledge and skills acquired during the Soviet era to promote religious denominations after the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁵¹

47 В. Курилко "Особенности атеистической подготовки будущих учителей", *Вопросы атеизма*, 1979, № 15, 96.

48 Смирнов "Научный атеизм", 146.

49 Oleg Kyselov, "From Scientific Atheism to Religious Studies: The Field in Ukraine", *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, 2022, Vol. 51, Issue 2, 50–56.

50 Smolkin, "Sacred space", 211.

51 Sonja Luehrmann, *Secularism Soviet Style. Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 60.

5 Concluding Remarks: Desecularization of Ukraine

In general, education in the USSR was devoid of the influence of religion, and they constantly tried to include an anti-religious or atheistic element in it. This happened at all levels of education – from elementary school to university. In the latter, in the 1960s, the course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* was introduced. As we have seen, in Soviet Ukraine, the course on atheism was introduced a little earlier than in other Soviet republics, and compared to Soviet Russia, the course was mandatory for all training programs in universities, colleges, and even special secondary education institutions. The reason behind this might be that Ukraine had the highest level of religiosity in the USSR due to its large Western region not being affected by the Bolshevik anti-religious campaign in the 1920s and 1930s. After all, this region was annexed by the USSR only after World War II. Due to this atheistic educational policy in the USSR, several generations of citizens (especially from cities) did not receive any religious education but instead were under the influence of atheistic propaganda. However, not everybody became conscious atheists. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, during the next ten years, most of the population of post-Soviet countries declared belief in God, manifested religious identity, and practiced one or another religion or alternative spiritual practices. For many, religion began to perform the same functions as the Soviet communist ideology – it explained the world, provided guidelines in life, regulated behavior, formed a sense of belonging to a certain community, etc. In 1991–1992, the university course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* was replaced by *Religious Studies*, which had long been required for all majors at all types of undergraduate institutions. The course *Religious Studies* was delivered, as I quoted a senior colleague Volodymyr Kozlenko elsewhere,⁵² by yesterday's scientific atheists who threw out topics related to atheism and Marxist and Soviet attitudes to religion, introducing at their expense topics related to the history of religion in Ukraine or so-called “world religions” (which in Ukraine still include only the “universal religions” – Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam).

Education, in general in the USSR, without a doubt, was a tool to produce conscientious, devoted, and loyal citizens. Their loyalty had to be to the state and to the Party's ideology, which was supposed to have an overall knowledge about its enemies – capitalists and churchmen: the last personified old state system, outdated worldview, and unliked thinking. Communists opposed a scientific worldview and Marxist ideology to a religious one. Although the state used pressure on different levels of social and political life, religion and religiosity weren't fully

⁵² Basauri Ziuzina and Kyselov “Atheism”, 305.

overcome. There were different reasons for that. Only one of them is that religion⁵³ became a kind of anti-communistic marker, as it was persecuted in the 1920–1930 and then controlled in the 1950s–1970s. It resulted in different groups opposing the Soviet system and communist ideology using religion as a marker of their opposition in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. However, religiosity became a common fact in the 1990s, and former communists used it as a trend. Even the Communist Party of Ukraine, after the state became independent in 1991, cooperated with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the 1990s and the 2000s. The Communist Party promoted the interests of the Church in Ukraine’s Parliament, and the Church published interviews with its leader in religious media, thereby suggesting its adherents vote for the party in elections.

Ukraine experienced a “religious renaissance” in the 1990s: religious communities got official registration from the state, built places for religious worship, opened religious schools and colleges, published religious newspapers and magazines, foreign missionaries gathered thousands of people in the stadiums, new religious movements recruited young people, the idea of private Christian education was spread (see also Hellström, this volume), and some public schools even provided classes on Christian Ethics for their students although the separation of church from state and school from church was still a part of official legislation (see also Kaščák, Neumann and Deniskova, this volume). How did such a quick desecularization of Ukraine happen if the state supported a complex program of population atheization for so long? Wasn’t education an effective tool for overcoming religious beliefs and practices? Probably it was, but the Soviet system tried not only to represent religion in a negative light through the undergraduate course *Basics of Scientific Atheism* but also made attempts to replace religious practices and beliefs with secular ones. Soviet rituals and holidays had the same functions as religion – identification, integration, communication, etc. As soon as the Soviet Union collapsed, communist ideology, holidays, rituals, and organizations became senseless for citizens who searched for alternatives that they found in religious traditions. They turned to the pre-Communist beliefs and practices even if they did not want to be identified with a certain Orthodox Church.⁵⁴ Soviet ideology was replaced by religious doctrines and communist organizations by religious communities.

53 I use singular form, not plural; however, in fact, there was persecution of adherents of different religious traditions, branches, churches, and denominations, as well as some near-religious forms of spirituality like esoterism as well as religious philosophers or wider – the supporters of philosophical idealism.

54 So called “Just Orthodox” Christians who identify themselves with orthodox Christian tradition but not with a particular religious community. See: Catherine Wannier, *Everyday Religiosity and the Politics of Belonging in Ukraine*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2022).

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Emma Hellström

Reformed Christian Education as a Welfare State Tool for Fostering Democratic Citizens in Post-war Sweden, 1945–1969

Abstract: Post-war Sweden was characterized by a series of changes, not at least in the field of education. After the Second World War, the fear of politically and religiously indoctrinating propaganda increased. This meant that views on how to educate democratic citizens began to change. Previously, civic education had been equated with a Christian framework. However, after 1945 the notion of the necessity of the Christian faith in the fostering mission began to be challenged. Hence, democratic education was charged with new values such as objectivity, critical scrutiny, and solidarity.

This new view of democratic education was closely linked to the construction of the Social Democratic welfare state. Previous research has suggested that this welfare project was not compatible with a Christian interpretive framework. Instead, the development of modern society after 1945 has been described as a secular and enlightened project in which Christianity was no longer significant. However, this is a too-simple interpretation of the historical development.

The purpose of this article is to analyze how the school subject Christianity was transformed to become compatible with new democratic ideals between 1945 and 1969. By combining excerpts from parliamentary debates, curricula, and textbooks, I will argue that the post-war period entailed a process of secularization since the conception of the necessity of the Christian faith was challenged. Nevertheless, the fostering role of Christianity was not undermined, but changed. Hence, I will claim that the secularization process also conveyed an ethical turn in which the ethical and cultural aspects of Christianity were reinforced.

1 Introduction

Questions that have been raised more frequently in recent decades are whether religion disappeared in the context of modernization and democratization processes, or if religion was rather transformed to become a part of the new social,

national, and democratic conceptions in European states.¹ This chapter seeks to contribute to this discussion by highlighting the example of Sweden and Swedish Christian education after the Second World War. Instead of losing its relevance in fostering desirable citizens during the post-war era, Lutheranism continued to be an important national, ethical, and cultural symbol in the democratic welfare state through education.

The end of the Second World War posed major challenges for Europe – a redrawn map, countries in need of rebuilding, and above all, the need to preserve democracy and anchor the idea of human dignity. The end of the war also entailed major changes for Sweden. As Sweden's neutrality in the war had kept its industries intact, a significant increase in exports and thus economic growth made the crafting of the Swedish welfare state possible.²

The crafting of the welfare state and other modernization processes have often been labeled as rational, secular, and enlightened projects in which religion was no longer significant (see also Steiger, this volume).³ This framing reflects a progressive narrative of the emergence of modern Sweden. I argue that this picture is far more complicated. Religion did not disappear in modernizing processes but was transformed and thus became a vital part of the civic mission of schooling and welfare state crafting.⁴ Hence, the relationship between religion, education, and the welfare state is not just a simple reflection of secularization. This understanding, however, does not question the idea of institutional secularization (the gradual separation between state and church matters), it rather sheds light on how education and education reforms contributed to a secularization. At the same time, it also upheld the ethical relevance of Christianity. This chapter will show how Christianity and Christian education were transformed and became a part of the new society's social, ethical, and democratic conceptions from 1945 to 1969.

The end of the Second World War not only enabled general welfare state development but was also a starting point for extensive school reforms, these ended in 1962 with the introduction of the comprehensive school. Throughout the first

1 Mette Buchardt, "The political project of secularization and modern education reform in provincialized Europe. Historical research in religion and education beyond Secularization R.I.P.", *International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 2(2021): 164.

2 Daniel Béland et al. "Introduction", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State (2nd edn.)*, Daniel Béland et al. (Oxford University Press, 2021), 1–3; Magnus Dahlstedt & Maria Olson, *Utbildning, demokrati och medborgarskap* (Malmö: Gleerups, 2013), 68.

3 E.g. Tomas Englund, *Medborgerlig läroplanskod för folkskola, fortsättningsskola och grundskola 1918/19?* (Stockholm, 1980); Nanna Kihldal & Stein Kuhnle, *Normative Foundations of the Welfare State: The Nordic experience* (London: Routledge, 2005).

4 Buchardt, "The political", 164–168.

half of the 20th century, Christian education had been the core of civic education in Swedish primary schools. After the war, the fear of political and religious indoctrination led to a change in how democratic and social education should be transmitted through teaching. It was no longer self-evident that conformity to the Christian faith was the basis for a strong democratic society. Therefore, after 1945 democratic and civic education were included with new values, such as objectivity, critical inquiry, tolerance, and solidarity.⁵ Consequently, a new type of citizen was to be shaped, but what role should Christian education play in this new educational project?

The study is situated between the history of education and church history. For the purpose of this chapter, it is necessary to combine these fields of research, as they highlight the complexity that surrounds issues regarding religion, Christianity, education, democratization, and secularization. This analysis is inspired by the concept of hegemony, which, in this chapter, aims to illustrate the transition from a perception that ethical acting was realized through Christian faith to a notion that Christian ethics were important in its own right, and thus a basis for the democratic values of Swedish society.⁶ Concretely, I investigate in what ways Christianity was transformed in curricula, parliamentary debates, and textbooks, and to what extent these changes were expressions of a secularization of schooling.

2 Secularization and Analytical Mainlines

For a long time, Swedish pedagogical research has taken for granted that Swedish society and its schools became secularized during the first decades of the 20th century as a result of democratization and modernization processes. This perception reflects a simplistic view of this historical development. Daniel Tröhler argues that a traditional view on secularization neglects the fact that there is a difference between church and religion. The power of the church has undoubtedly declined over the past centuries. However, from a more general perspective, the same cannot be said about religion. Therefore, it is important, as Jeroen Dekker points out, to distinguish between institutional and cultural secularization.⁷ Ingela Naumann

5 Dahlstedt & Olson, *Utbildning*, 30–32, 35.

6 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971); Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (University of California Press, 2002).

7 Tröhler, Daniel “Giving Language to Taboos: Nation and Religion in Modern Educational Reasoning”, *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 10:2 (2023): 21–36; Jeroen Dekker, “In search of multiple compability. Modernization, secularization, religion and education in history”, *International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 2(2021).

and Pirjo Markkola emphasize that the cultural impact of Lutheranism extends beyond the visible intervention of the Church.⁸

Lutheranism's political and cultural impact on the Nordic welfare states in the post-war era can be understood in light of Mette Buchardt's description of the Danish welfare state's approach to education in the 1950s and 1960s. She argues that education reforms at the time aimed at fostering citizens that should embrace a mentality based on righteousness, and solidarity through work, equality, and participation appropriate to the welfare state.⁹ Buchardt maintains that the welfare state educational reform in the period focused on useful knowledge as specific qualities that pupils should learn through education. In addition, schools in the 1950s and 1960s were supposed to produce capable students for a world characterized by competition as a result of the Cold War. However, the task of teaching was also to shape good, happy, and responsible citizens.¹⁰ One means to achieve this objective was through Christian education, an education that was considered to convey all the values and norms the welfare state emphasized as preconditions for good citizens.¹¹

Based on Buchardt's description of the welfare state education reform and Christian education, it can be argued that Christianity underwent a process of culturalization. For example, Buchardt asserts that culturalization of religion in education went along with a clearer separation between the state church institution and the school system in the interwar period across the Nordic states. This secularization process should hence be understood as a process of integration.¹² The integration into the cultural heritage entailed that Christianity continued to be an important formative framework also after World War II. Similarly, Tröhler argues that religion was incorporated into the nation and the school of the nation-state. Thus, religion became less visible, but not less important.¹³ In the same vein, it is my claim that Lutheranism in Sweden continued to be an important national, historical, and cultural symbol through education.

8 Daniel Tröhler, *Languages of education: Protestant legacies, National Identities and Global Aspirations* (London: Routledge, 2011), 3; Pirjo Markkola & Ingela Naumann, "Lutheranism and the Nordic Welfare States in Comparison", *Journal of Church and State* 56:1 (2014), doi:10.1093/jcs/cst133.

9 Mette Buchardt, "Between dannelse and 'real life'", *International Journal for the History of Education* 10(2020):189.

10 Buchardt "Dannelse", 198.

11 Emma Hellström, "Christian education and the creation of democratic citizens: Presentations of Christianity in Swedish textbooks during the 1930s and 1940s" in *Secular Schooling in the Long Twentieth Century? Christianity and Education in Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands*, (eds.) Roos, Merethe., Westberg Johannes & Edgren, Henrik. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024); Buchardt, "The political", 166.

12 Mette Buchardt, "Cultural Protestantism and Nordic Religious Education: An incision in the historical layers behind the Nordic Welfare state model", *Norddidactica* 2 (2015): 147–148, 154–155.

13 Tröhler, *Languages*, 3–4.

Based on source material consisting of national curricula, parliament debates, and textbooks, this chapter investigates how Christian education in Swedish primary schools was transformed and depicted in a period of educational reforms along with the development of a democratic welfare state.

The sources are selected in order to show how Christian education was perceived at different levels in the Swedish school system. The inclusion of the political debate shows how important the question of Christian education still was in Swedish society after World War II. In order to answer the key question – how Christianity and Christian education were transformed to become a part of the new society’s social, national, and democratic conceptions? – the source material is processed in relation to how curricula, parliament members, and textbooks depicted the relevance of Christianity in Swedish society.

3 Christian Education: An Ideological and Ethical Foundation in the Swedish Welfare State, 1945–1969

The early decades of the 20th century revealed major changes in Swedish society and its schools. In 1919–1921, Sweden underwent a process of democratization that, among other things, included the introduction of universal suffrage.

At the same time as the introduction of political democratization, a new curriculum for Swedish primary schools was launched in 1919. It was influenced by democratic currents in Swedish society and has been regarded as a watershed in the history of the Swedish primary school. Among other things, Luther’s Small Catechism was removed as the most important textbook, and should henceforth be read only as a historical text. Instead of the dogma advocated by the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Sweden, Christian education should be based on Christian ethics and on a general Christian message, found in the Bible and the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁴

Furthermore, the introduction of political democracy was not self-evident and widely threatened all over Europe during the 1930s. Societies suffered from economic depressions, that led to high unemployment. In Sweden, the absence of social security made the situation untenable for workers. Strikes were frequent

¹⁴ Karin Moberger, “Religionsenhet och religionsfrihet i folkskolans kristendomsundervisning 1911–1919 II”, *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift* (1962): 143, 179, 183–179; Karl Göran Algotsson, *Från katekestväng till religionsfrihet* (PhD diss., Uppsala University, 1975).

and wages decreased. In 1932, the political situation began to stabilize when the Social Democrats gained a government position that in various constellations lasted for 44 years. The extent of their strong influence can be discerned in the depiction of the crafting of the Swedish welfare state as a Social Democratic project.¹⁵ A broad definition of the welfare state is how states organize and provide economic, political, social, and cultural services for the people. Yet, how to provide welfare differed between countries.¹⁶ The core of Swedish welfare – universalism, emphasis on equality, and social security – is assumed to reflect the ability of the Social Democratic Party to abandon class conflict in favor of class alliances.¹⁷

Previous research has argued that the introduction of the curriculum of 1919 and the crafting of the welfare state made Christianity and Christian education irrelevant for educating democratic citizens.¹⁸ This is a too-simple interpretation of secularization. Robert Nelson argues, for example, that Lutheran ethics created a powerful normative basis for the emergence of the Nordic welfare states.¹⁹ Based on insights from my dissertation, this chapter will show that the fostering role of Christianity was not undermined during the post-war period, but changed and thus became a crucial part of Swedish society's democratic and ethical ideals.²⁰

4 Curricula: Pluralism and Knowledge *About* Christianity

After the Second World War, there was a need to consolidate and evolve democracy. A way of doing this was to introduce critical thinking in education as a vaccine against political, social, and cultural oppression. As a result, it was no longer possible to unilaterally emphasize Christianity.²¹

15 Kjell Östberg, *Folk i rörelse: vår demokratis historia* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 2021), 153, 156, 172, 221.

16 Béland et al. "Introduction", 1–3.

17 Mette Buchardt, "The Nordic Model and the Educational Welfare State in a European Light: Social Problem Solving and Secular Religious Aspirations When Modernizing Sweden and France" in *The Nordic Educational Model in Context: Historical Developments and Current Renegotiations*, ed. Daniel Tröhler et al (London: Routledge, 2023), 114–115.

18 Englund, *Medborgerlig*, 34.

19 Nelson, *Lutheranism*, 23.

20 Emma Hellström, the role of religion in the rise of democratic schools. the negotiation over Christian education in Swedish primary schools, 1920–1969, (PhD diss, forthcoming, Uppsala University).

21 Dahlstedt & Olson *Utbildning*, 49–50, 52–55, 68.

The ideas of pluralism and critical thinking, which were intensively discussed after the war, finally gained some impact in a new curriculum launched in 1955. A more pluralistic approach was marked by the inclusion of other religions.²² This inclusion was probably a result of the legalization of freedom of religion in 1951.²³ Although the curriculum stated that teaching about other religions was required, Christianity was still seen as the superior religion and the best option. Teaching about other religions was only mentioned in a short passage as “teaching about non-Christian religions.” The focus remained on “providing knowledge about the Bible, Christian faith, and ethics.”²⁴ Giving this concrete presentation of Christianity corresponded with another key statement in the curriculum that emphasized that “pupils should be stimulated to make their own reflections, observations, and summaries.”²⁵ This shows how teaching was still conducted within a Christian framework; at the same time, it encouraged pupils to reflect on the content they encountered. Although it is clear that pupils no longer should be educated to become non-questioning Christians, there was also an implicit desire that the pupils should become ethical Christians.²⁶

The curriculum emphasized the relevance of Christianity in Swedish society by stating that “it is important that the teaching does not become too historical so that the importance of Christianity seems to lie in the past. Teaching must be related to the pupils’ everyday lives.”²⁷ This framing is an example of how Christianity and Christian ethics were included and incorporated into a wider social context and thereby presented as highly relevant in contemporary society.

The curriculum of 1955 implied the beginning of a break with the religious framework. The introduction of the comprehensive school in 1962 made this break even more obvious, by the introduction of the concept of objectivity.²⁸ It was emphasized that the teaching should “be objective in a sense that it mediates concrete knowledge about the meaning and content of different philosophies of lives without authoritatively trying to influence pupils to adopt a particular belief.”²⁹ This understanding of objectivity shows that schooling henceforth should transfer knowledge *about* Christianity and not *in* Christianity as it previously had done. This change can

22 Curriculum of 1955 (Stockholm: Kungl. Skolöverstyrelsen, 1955), 54.

23 Algotsson, *Katekestväng*, 289.

24 Curriculum of 1955, 54. My translation. All the following quotes are my translation.

25 Curriculum of 1955, 57.

26 See also Johan Wickström, “Religion i folkskolans styrdokument – ett bidrag till religionsbegreppets didaktiska historia”, *Norddidactica* 11:3 (2021), 71–96.

27 Curriculum of 1955, 57.

28 Curriculum of 1962 (Stockholm: Kungl. Skolöverstyrelsen, 1962), 217.

29 Curriculum of 1962, 221.

be interpreted as an expression of secularization, since the Christian faith was no longer presented as the formative framework. However, if other aspects of the curriculum are being considered, it is also possible to argue that this process of secularization created an ethical turn that consolidated the ethical value of Christianity in a democratic welfare state.

The new curriculum admittedly emphasized that Christianity was to be treated in the same objective manner as Judaism and Islam. Nonetheless, this did not prevent the curriculum from emphasizing the ethical and cultural importance of Christianity. It was stated that “Christianity is an essential part of the religious, ethical, and social values on which our culture, society, and coexistence are founded [. . .].”³⁰ This understanding reveals a distinction between Christian ethics and faith, and thus two sides of the secularization process.³¹ Christian ethics should be presented as truth since all people could agree on the societal importance of Christian values (solidarity, responsibility, humility, helpfulness, etc.). There was, however, no agreement on the necessity of the Christian faith as a guiding principle for a democratic society. This is the reason the Christological doctrine was to be presented objectively and only knowledge about Christianity was to be conveyed. Consequently, the new curriculum was an expression of secularization since it no longer aimed to convey the Christian faith as the only option. However, this secularization also became a means to enhance the ethical and cultural importance of Christianity in the democratic mission of schooling.

The decoupling between ethics and faith reveals a hegemonic shift. Instead of being the only tool for fostering democratic citizens, Christian education became part of a larger educational project and should, “in conjunction with all school subjects have a fostering impact on the pupils.”³² This change became even more established in the curriculum of 1969. In this curriculum, the name of the school subject was changed from Christian education to Religious education. As a result of this, it was stated that “teaching in Religious education should address different philosophies of lives, and give prominence to ethical issues. These issues should be examined from the perspective of Christianity, other religions, and non-religious beliefs.”³³ This inclusive and broader approach did not mean that the emphasis on the ethical and social significance of Christianity was reduced (see also Buchardt, this volume). It was stressed that knowledge about Christianity not only had a general educational

³⁰ Curriculum of 1962, 221.

³¹ See Buchardt, “The Nordic”, 119, for a discussion on how secularization also could entail a resacralization of the state.

³² Curriculum of 1962, 221.

³³ Curriculum of 1969 (Stockholm: Kungl. Skolöverstyrelsen, 1969), 175; Algotsson, *Katekestväng*, 489.

value but also served as a tool “for the individual’s orientation in life.”³⁴ This shows that the fostering role of Christianity was not undermined, but changed. It was rather the notion of the Christian faith in the fostering mission that began to disappear during the post-war period. The framing of Christianity in curricula further illustrates how Christianity in the secularization process was adapted to maintain its social relevance. The recurring emphasis on Christian values as a guiding principle shows an ethical turn where Christianity was considered valuable in conveying ethical and moral messages, necessary for orientation in Swedish society. This way of framing Christianity can be understood as a way of creating a common ethical language that enabled Swedish democracy to function and develop.³⁵

5 Textbooks: Critical Reflections and Christian Values as a Way of Legitimizing the Relevance of Christianity

The way curricula used Christian ethics to portray an ideal democratic identity was even more pronounced in textbooks during the post-war period. Furthermore, some textbooks also presented Christianity as not the only option for a philosophy of life. Unlike curricula, this conception was expressed already in 1945 in the textbook *Being a Christian (Att vara kristen)*, written by Karin Beckman (1905–2009). By consistently using terms such as “a Christian believes”, the textbook indicated that not everyone was a Christian. Rather, Beckman stated that being a Christian was one way of living and that this book wanted to be one of many means “when you seek the meaning and direction in your own life.”³⁶ Similar approaches did not exist in textbooks used in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁷ Consequently, it is reasonable to argue that the 1940s marked a starting point for challenging the Christian faith as the only norm for living a good life. However, this change did not mean that Christian ethics became irrelevant in fostering democratic citizens.

Instead of concerning itself with complex and contested presentations of Christological and eschatological dimensions, the textbook alluded to the human-

³⁴ Curriculum of 1969, 176.

³⁵ See also Janne Holmén, “Social democracy from the ashes of Lutheranism-confessional pluralism and value indoctrination in Swedish textbooks in religion 1945–1975”. I *Secular Schooling in the Long Twentieth Century? Christianity and Education in Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands*, (eds.) Roos, Merethe., Westberg Johannes & Edgren, Henrik. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024).

³⁶ Karin Beckman, *Att vara kristen* (Stockholm: Sv. Bokförlaget, 1945), 7.

³⁷ Hellström, “Christian education”.

ity of Jesus and the ethical and cultural aspects of Christianity. It was emphasized that “you already know that one demands that a good comrade and good friend should be reliable, righteous, not betray a given trust, not deceive or hurt your comrades, not be afraid of trouble when it comes to helping a friend.”³⁸ All these virtues, according to Beckman, originated from the Christian idea of loving one’s neighbor. The decreasing space that was given to Christological aspects can be interpreted as a sign of secularization. Drawing on Buchardt’s previous work on culturalization, it can also be seen as a way of legitimizing the relevance of Christianity in a democratic society by making use of Christian ethics.³⁹ Using Christian ethics to demonstrate contemporary cohabitation issues showed that Christianity still concerned modern people. Beckman’s presentation further highlights the emerging division between Christian ethics and faith. It was no longer self-evident that it was only faith in God that enabled humans to act ethically.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, Christian values were still necessary for societal and ethical development.

The increasing decoupling between Christian ethics and Christological aspects became even more visible in how the miracles of Jesus were presented. A textbook published in 1951, *Jesus and His Apostles (Jesus och hans apostlar)*, stated that “people have always told remarkable stories about those who have proved more powerful than others. Sometimes, these stories also included things that did not happen in reality. Such stories are called legends.”⁴¹ This introduction to the section about the miracles of Jesus indicates that the textbook considered these miracles as legends only.

The textbook continued to describe what miracles Jesus performed, e.g. how he cured a lame and a blind man and raised the dead. Thereafter, it was emphasized that the miracles had often been “taken as evidence that Jesus’ message was a descendent from God.”⁴² However, according to the authors of the textbook, the divine power of Jesus was not the most important thing. Although the miracles described Jesus’ omnipotence, the textbook did not dwell on Jesus’ divinity. Rather, the miracles were a way of expressing an act of faith healing (*helbrägdagörelse*) and Jesus’ humanity. Nonetheless, the emphasis on Jesus’ humanity did not mean that the Christian faith was perceived as unimportant (see also Tröhler, this volume). When describing the miracles, it was often stated that “when Jesus saw their faith, he

38 Beckman, *Att vara*, 36.

39 Buchardt, “Cultural”, 147–148.

40 Bo Nylund, *Teologi genom seklerna* (Uppsala, 1971), 79–85.

41 Gustav Boström, Gustav Lindberg & Anna Maria Roman, *Jesus och hans apostlar* (Stockholm: Sv. Bokförlaget, 1951), 38.

42 Boström, Lindberg, Roman, *Jesus*, 38.

said: my son, your sins are forgiven.”⁴³ Hence, blindness and paralysis were perceived as the result of human sin. By adhering to Jesus’ message, humans regained their ability to see and walk. The Christian faith was still considered important, but should not be preoccupied by dogmatic doctrines. The textbook’s approach to the miracles of Jesus thus reflects a liberal theological heritage, where the ethical deeds performed by Jesus were at the forefront.⁴⁴

Although the textbook embraced the Christian faith, it conveyed an important difference compared to earlier textbooks.⁴⁵ After describing the miracles of Jesus, it was stressed that

Nowadays there are different opinions about the miracles of Jesus. Some people believe that everything in the Gospel is true. Others believe that some of the stories are legends. Christian people also think differently about these things.⁴⁶

The quote shows that the textbook provided space for alternative views. This attitude towards the miracles of Jesus illustrates that the Christian faith was not degraded as such but only certain aspects within it.

The liberal theological heritage that could be traced in *Jesus and his Apostles* highlights an attempt to bridge the gap between Christianity and contemporary culture.⁴⁷ Using Christian ethics for this purpose was prominent in the textbook *Primary School Reader: Christianity (Folkskolans läsebok: Kristendom)*. In describing the Christian message of love, it was stated that “Jesus went around helping those who were sick and poor in body and mind.”⁴⁸ Thereafter, the textbook emphasized that these Christian ideas had slowly taken hold in Swedish society. An example was the establishment of different types of social insurance programs that helped people in need. The cost for these were covered by taxes. Hence, it was stressed that those who “pay their taxes fulfill their Christian duty to help their neighbor.”⁴⁹ The pursuit to connect Christian ethics to welfare state crafting displays how Christianity was legitimized as a democratic, ethical, and cultural symbol. This way of connecting Christianity to a wider societal development

⁴³ Boström, Lindberg, Roman, *Jesus*, 37.

⁴⁴ Urban Claesson, *Folkhemnets kyrka. Harald Hallén och folkkyrkans genombrott. En studie av socialdemokrati, kyrka och nationsbygge med särskild hänsyn till perioden 1905–1933* (PhD diss., Uppsala University, 2004), 160.

⁴⁵ Hellström, *Christian*.

⁴⁶ Boström, Lindberg, Roman, *Jesus*, 39.

⁴⁷ Buchardt, “Cultural”, 147–148.

⁴⁸ Rut Claëson et al., *Folkskolans läsebok: Kristendom* (Stockholm: P. A. Nordstedt & Söner, 1945), 234.

⁴⁹ Claëson et al, *Folkskolan*, 234.

could be seen as an attempt to transform Christianity into a social and ethical glue for Swedish society, without any apparent religious connotation.⁵⁰

6 Textbooks and the Ethical Turn

The gradually changing relationship between Christian faith and ethics became increasingly marked in the 1960s. Many textbooks used Christian ethics to highlight how to act in everyday life. Christian ethics, thus, served as a tool for depicting the ideal citizen. An example can be found in a textbook series called *Religious Education for primary school* (Grundskolans religionskunskap), published between 1962 and 1967 and written by Maj Bylock (1931–2019) and Bertil Lunell (1901–1983).⁵¹

The fact that the Christological doctrine had been degraded became evident in discussions concerning the content of the Bible. Bylock and Lunell alleged that “there are myths in all religions Christianity is no exception.”⁵² Furthermore, it was stated that “myths have been created to explain things that cannot be understood through knowledge and we must remember this when reading the Bible.”⁵³ Bylock and Lunell emphasized that the Bible had never claimed to be a textbook in science. This discussion about the content and myths of the Bible was something new and should be seen as an expression of a secularization of schooling, since the Christian truth claim was subordinated to that of natural science. However, as previously argued, it is possible to claim that this secularization entailed an ethical turn that consolidated the perceived connection between Christian ethics and democratic values.

A clear example of the connection between Christian ethics and democratic values can be found in the story of the Tower of Babel. Bylock and Lunell noted that this story was not a factual description. The purpose was rather to convey ethical messages. According to Lunell and Bylock, the essence of the story was that “pride makes humans an enemy of God.”⁵⁴ The ethical message was thus that pride was something bad that entailed negative consequences.

That pride was not wanted in a democratic society was further illustrated in the description of the Ten Commandments. It was stressed that “although the Ten Commandments are over 3000 years old they form the basis for most of our society’s

50 See also Buchardt, “The Nordic”, 108; Nelson, *Lutheranism*, 23.

51 Maj Bylock & Bertil Lunell, *Sexans kristendomskunskap* (Stockholm: Liber, 1967).

52 Bylock & Lunell, *Sexans*, 12.

53 Bylock & Lunell, *Sexans*, 13.

54 Bylock & Lunell, *Sexans*, 45.

laws.”⁵⁵ The essence transferred by the textbook was that the Ten Commandments should set an example of unwanted traits such as jealousy, pride, selfishness, greed, etc.⁵⁶

The Ten Commandments were thus used to manage undesirable moral behavior in contemporary society. In the textbook *The Christian Faith* (Den kristna tron), written by Hans Gerrevall (1924–2002) and Rudolf Johannesson (1913–1992) in 1961, it was stressed that “Christian ethics and commandments were necessary to counteract the growing youth culture that created impurity, greed, recklessness, and sexual promiscuity.”⁵⁷ This shows that the ideals that were associated with a democratic citizen did not differ from Christian ethics. Hence, there was no ambition to separate Swedishness from a Christian heritage. Swedishness and a democratic mind were equated with Christian ethics characterized by cooperation, solidarity, discipline, faithfulness, and responsibility. By referring to Jesus’ parables and the Christian message of love it was clear how these desirable virtues could be obtained. The way of distinguishing between Christian ethics and faith indicates that Christianity and Christian education during the 1960s were perceived as a kind of buffet or “smorgasbord” from which the most useful parts could be selected to reinforce certain societal principles.⁵⁸

Bylock and Lunell used the Christian message of love to demonstrate an international solidarity ethos. As part of the civic education in Swedish schools during the 1960s, it was important to show solidarity towards people in need outside Sweden’s borders. Therefore, a section in the textbook described the UN organ UNICEF, which was depicted as an “organization that works for the good of children by providing health care, nutrition, education, etc.”⁵⁹ Bylock and Lunell implied by placing the work of UNICEF in the midst of the ethical principles conveyed by the Sermon on the Mount, that Christian ethics contained universal ethical messages that could serve as a guide to solidarity and helpfulness. This was a way of showing that Christian ethics no longer were dependent on faith in God.⁶⁰ Instead, the ideals of Christianity were presented as a source of motivation, strength, and endurance to fight against injustice.⁶¹

55 Bylock & Lunell, *Sexans*, 47.

56 Bylock & Lunell, *Sexans*, 47–50.

57 Hans Gerrevall & Rudolf Johannesson, *Den kristna tron* (Stockholm: Diakonistyrelsen, 1961), 26.

58 See also Nelson, *Lutheranism*.

59 Bylock & Lunell, *Sexans*, 34–36.

60 Nylund, *Teologi*, s. 79.

61 See Ida Olenius, “Andlig beredskap. Beredskapstidens insatser för att stärka den svenska befolkningens inre styrka”, *Historielärarnas årsskrift* (2022), 132–145.

The decoupling between ethics and faith that, on the one hand, marked a secularization process and, on the other, created an ethical turn that enhanced the importance of Christian ethics in a democratic society was further emphasized when Bylock and Lunell used Jesus' parables to illustrate human responsibility. A telling example is the parable of the ten pounds. Bylock and Lunell stressed that the parable could be interpreted in different ways but that the most common way was "to see it as a picture of the attributes and benefits that have been given to humans." Bylock and Lunell alleged that "society was a pound that humans had been given to manage."⁶² In the context of both strong industrial growth and a growing environmental awareness, the pupils were urged to reflect on how the pound (society) was managed and how it ought to be managed.⁶³

The ethical turn became even more obvious when an explicit connection between Christianity and human dignity was created. Gerrevall and Johannesson emphasized that the idea of human dignity had its strongest origin in Christianity. To substantiate this, they used a quote from Paul that asserted "that neither ethnicity nor religion or gender mattered, as all people were equal before God." Furthermore, it was underlined that God's law inevitably affected all people. Regardless of religious affiliation, all people accepted these laws as "they agreed that love, care, and consideration were the guiding principles of human interaction."⁶⁴ The conception that all people could embrace Christian ethics demonstrates how Christianity was transformed into an ethical religion that could function as a basis for a national and democratic identity. Drawing on Daniel Alvunger's previous research on Social Democracy in Sweden, this ethical turn could be seen as an example of secularized Lutheranism.⁶⁵ The textbooks obviously regarded Christianity as a transmitter of ethical dictates that needed to be defended and exalted, since it mediated values that were the foundations of Swedish democracy. The essence of the textbooks shows that upholding Christian values was not the same as educating Christian individuals. It was rather a question of transmitting Christian morality.

⁶² Bylock & Lunell, *Sexans*, 37.

⁶³ Bylock & Lunell, *Sexans*, 37; Henrik Ekman, *Naturen vi ärvde: en miljöresa från tyst vår till het sommar* (Stockholm: Nordstedts, 2021).

⁶⁴ Hans Gerrevall & Rudolf Johannesson, *Den kristna tron* (Stockholm: Diakonistyrelsen, 1961), 89.

⁶⁵ Gerrevall & Johannesson, *Den kristna*, 9; Daniel Alvunger, *Nytt vin i gamla läglar: Socialdemokratisk kyrkopolitik under perioden 1944–1973* (PhD diss., Lund University, 2006), 28–36.

7 The Political Debate: Christian Education as a Way to Educate Democratic Citizens

The notion that Christian ethics were a cornerstone for obtaining a democratic and Swedish identity was also visible in political debates. During the 1950s and 1960s parliament members frequently tried to show the interconnectedness between Christianity, democracy, and the welfare state and thereby legitimize the societal and ethical relevance of Christianity.

In 1954 the Social Democratic priest Bertil Mogård (1892–1970) pointed out that the Swedish welfare state was built on Christian ideals. He asserted that the message of biblical stories created solidarity and responsibility between people. Mogård emphasized that the messages conveyed by the prophets Amos and Hosea contained parallels to the Swedish welfare state. By reading Amos and Hosea, Mogård underlined, “we would learn about their concern for widows, and the fatherless, their appeal for justice and righteousness.”⁶⁶ This ethical turn can be seen in the light of what Buchardt has called Educational Biblical Nationalism. By stressing the historicity of biblical texts and the good deeds performed by the prophets, the Swedish people could trace their modern identity and democratic endeavors back to the Bible. This new framing of Christian education can be understood as a secularization model, since the dogma was disregarded in favor of the ethical and cultural value of the Bible (see also Wright, this volume).⁶⁷ However, it also shows how this ethical view of the Bible functioned as a pedagogical tool linked to core values in the democratic society and thereby contributed to upholding the relevance of Christianity. Hence, what paved the way for secularization in one way, e.g. the degradation of the Christian faith as the only option for living a happy and righteous life, enhanced the ethical importance of Christianity in another. This ethical reinforcement is an example of how Christian ethics were internalized in the democratic society through schooling.⁶⁸

Just like textbooks, parliament members tried to substantiate the importance of Christian ethics by claiming that Christianity had paved the way for democracy. In 1958, there was a joint motion signed by members from all parties except the Swedish Communist Party. It emphasized that “the preservation of our Western heritage is of utmost importance to us all. This spiritual cultural edifice is built on the foundation of Christianity, which still is one of the strongest guarantees for true

⁶⁶ Parliamentary minute FC (1954), nr. 24, p. 19.

⁶⁷ Buchardt, “Educational”, 144–145.

⁶⁸ See also Tröhler in *Languages of Education* where he discusses how Christianity was incorporated into the nation and school during the 19th century.

democracy and human dignity.”⁶⁹ The connection between Christianity and democracy illuminates how Christian human dignity was perceived to be the guardian of fundamental democratic values. This conception was further demonstrated in 1960 when the later prime minister Torbjörn Fälldin (1926–2016) stated:

There is no doubt that much of what we value so highly in our democracy is rooted in Christian principles. When young people of our time seek guidance in dealing with mental and ethical problems, we must not fail to impart values and norms that are supported by the majority, which are rooted in the Christian heritage, and hence are a prerequisite for human coexistence and for the survival of the democratic society.⁷⁰

Fälldin’s emphasis on the connection between democracy and a Christian heritage shows that he represented a notion that Christian ethics were necessary to educate good, diligent, and happy citizens, who could develop and maintain Swedish democracy.⁷¹ Just like the textbooks, Fälldin did not seem to think that the Christian faith was necessary in order to realize the ethics. Rather, the conception of the universality of Christian ethics displays a decoupling between Christian ethics and the Christological doctrine.

This ethical turn meant that Christianity was used to depict the ideal citizen, and thus also could serve as a tool to counteract immoral behavior. The fear of immoral behavior should be understood in the context of a growing youth culture in which greasers, rock, pop, dance halls, and sexual liberation threatened to drive youths into moral depravity.⁷² In 1963, the conservative politician Märta Boman (1902–1986) alleged that Christianity was needed to handle moral decline: “Throughout history, Christianity has transferred clear commandments and principles. As the influence of Christianity declines, sexual indulgence and cohabitation problems will be the inevitable consequences.”⁷³ According to Boman, Christian ethics was “the way out of difficulties and laid the foundation for a righteous life that triumphed impurity and weakness.”⁷⁴

The above statements point to that many parliament members during the 1950s and 1960s were convinced that Christian ethics were necessary for building a moral and democratic welfare society. Nonetheless, not everyone in the Swed-

69 Parliamentary motion SC (1958), nr. 9.

70 Parliamentary minute SC (1960), nr. p. 118. Fälldin belonged to the agrarian party Farmers League which was renamed to The Centre Party in 1957.

71 See Buchardt, “Dannelse”, p. 198, for a discussion on the education of happy citizens in a Danish post-war context.

72 Yvonne Hirdman, Jenny Björkman, Urban Lundberg, *Sveriges historia, 1920–1965* (Stockholm: Nordstedts, 2012), 89–100.

73 Parliamentary minute SC (1963), nr. 4, p. 49.

74 Parliamentary minute SC (1963), nr. 4, p. 49.

ish parliament defended Christianity. Critics of a strong Christian education admittedly conceded “that the human perception of good and evil is largely based on Christian concepts.”⁷⁵ However, this did not mean that the school should emphasize a particular philosophy of life as the one and only option. They argued that it was doubtful “whether Christianity was the only basis for democracy.”⁷⁶ Real democracy and civic education could only be achieved through cooperation between all school subjects.⁷⁷ In 1959, the Social Democrat and Folk High School principal Stig Alemyr (1924–2006) emphasized that “too little attention is paid to other ways that undeniably exist for achieving happiness and harmony in life.” Alemyr alleged that society “is built on a conglomerate of all experiences gained by humanity from different beliefs and religions throughout the ages.” This, according to Alemyr, did not degrade Christianity as an important tool for fostering citizens. It merely expressed that Christianity alone could not educate democratic citizens.⁷⁸ Based on these parliament members’ understanding of Christian education it is possible to discern two sides in the debate. One that seemed to equate Christianity with democracy and civic education, and one that understood Christianity as subordinated and included in a larger project for fostering democratic citizens. Neither of these two sides, however, described Christianity as irrelevant. The difference was whether Christianity should be the dominant force or not. Both sides are examples of how religion did not disappear in modernizing processes and education reform. The new understanding of Christian education should rather be seen as a process of integration in which Christian ethics continued to exercise a strong but implicit influence in fostering democratic citizens.⁷⁹

8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined how Christianity and Christian education were transformed and became a part of the new society’s social, ethical, and democratic conception and how this transformation can be understood in relation to the secularization of schooling.

The examples from curricula, textbooks, and parliamentary debates show that due to the post-war societal climate Christian education underwent a trans-

⁷⁵ Parliamentary minute SC (1950), nr. 1, p. 185.

⁷⁶ Parliamentary minute SC (1950), nr. 1, p. 185.

⁷⁷ Parliamentary minute SC (1950), nr. 1, p. 185.

⁷⁸ Parliamentary minute SC (1959), p. 51–52, 56.

⁷⁹ Buchardt “The Nordic”, 114–117.

formation that could be labeled as a secularization process since it was no longer desirable to conduct teaching *in* Christianity. However, this transformation also was a means to enhance the ethical and cultural importance of Christianity in Swedish primary schools. Drawing on Buchardt's discussion on the relationship between state and religion, the Swedish example displays how different educational spheres were arenas for renegotiating the relation between Christianity and the educational mission promoted by the democratic state.⁸⁰

The renegotiation and ethical turn symbolize a hegemonic shift. By emphasizing the ethical value of Christianity at the expense of Christological aspects, a decoupling between ethics and faith is revealed. It was no longer self-evident that the most ethical and desirable citizens were devout Christians. Hence, the notion of ethics being realized through faith was no longer the dominating narrative.⁸¹ This hegemonic shift occurred during the post-war period with the legalization of freedom of religion in 1951, the quest for critical thinking, objectivity, equality, and democracy that arose after the war, and above all, the endeavor to create a common school for the whole population. The pursuit to create a comprehensive and common school made the process of secularization inevitable, since the Swedish population no longer was homogenous in terms of religion. However, this is only one side of the coin. On the other side, it is obvious that secularization – meaning no longer educating devout Christian individuals – also entailed an increasing emphasis on the ethical aspect of Christianity. This consolidated the importance of Christian ethics in fostering democratic citizens in the Swedish welfare state. The different source material thus displays how different pedagogical quests in transforming religion for the new comprehensive school can be seen as a political project of secularization. This was necessary to implement in order to unite pupils from different backgrounds with different philosophies of lives. Hence, to preserve Christianity as a foundation for a Swedish identity, the ethical and cultural aspects were enhanced to function as a uniting element since there was a widespread notion of the universality of Christian ethics.⁸²

The ethical turn that was visible in curricula, textbooks, and parliamentary debates, therefore, shows how Christian education was considered a tool for creating a common ethical language that could function as a social and ethical glue of the democratic society.⁸³ By emphasizing the ethical turn in the secularization process, this chapter has shown that Christianity in the post-war and democratization era was still seen as crucial for pupils' orientation in life. Thus, this conclusion chal-

⁸⁰ Buchardt, "The Nordic", 107–108.

⁸¹ Nylund, "Teologi", 79.

⁸² See also Olenius, "Andlig".

⁸³ Holmén, "The ashes".

lenges previous research which has claimed that Christianity and Christian education during the 20th century lost its moral and civic role in Swedish education.⁸⁴

As Buchardt previously stated, the Nordic countries developed a Nordic version of cultural Protestantism that influenced the Nordic societies long after liberal theology had been overturned.⁸⁵ The Swedish post-war example confirms this claim but also adds that not just the cultural aspect of Christianity was preserved, but above all the ethical aspects. The reinforcement of the ethical aspects further illustrates the political and pedagogical project of secularization, and at the same time emphasizes how Christianity became re-actualized as ethics and hence as a guiding principle for how to evolve a democratic identity. From a culturalization perspective, Buchardt argues that this enabled Christianity to become a part of the Nordic welfare state mentality.⁸⁶ I allege that Christianity as a part of the welfare state mentality became even more prominent because of the strong emphasis on Christian ethics.

Drawing on Alvunger's research on Swedish Social Democracy, this ethical turn can be seen in the light of secularized Lutheranism. The decoupling between ethics and faith shows how previous confessional patterns (ethics) lost their confessional framework and instead were adapted to and incorporated into the organization of the secular welfare state.⁸⁷ Consequently, the norms and ideals mediated by Christian education were necessary for understanding the Swedish cultural heritage, and thereby also for educating democratic citizens.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how different educational arenas have functioned as tools for secularizing efforts which, in the case of mid-20th century Sweden, resulted in an ethical turn where the importance of Christian ethics as core values for a democratic identity was reinforced when the Christological and eschatological doctrines were diminished in the secularization process. This shift highlights that the fostering role of Christianity was not undermined, but changed. It was the notion of the necessity of the Christian faith in the fostering mission that began to dissolve during the post-war period. Therefore, I argue that the transformation of Christian education due to education reform resulted in Christianity becoming a tool for the Swedish welfare state in educating democratic citizens.

⁸⁴ Englund, *Medborgerlig*, 268.

⁸⁵ Buchardt, "The Nordic", 115–117.

⁸⁶ Buchardt, "Dannelse".

⁸⁷ Alvunger, *Nytt vin*, 28–29.

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Mette Buchardt

A Spiritual Socialist Education: “The Problem of Culture” in Senegalese Educational Republican State Crafting Beyond French Laïcité and Soviet-Style Atheism, 1950s–1960s

Abstract: With Mamadou Dia and Léopold Sédar Senghor, French Union politicians, anti-colonial activists and theorists and main state crafters in the formative years of the Republic of Senegal as prisms, the chapter explores how anti-colonial, religious African Socialist modernism took shape from the time of its drafting to its crafting, especially from the early 1950s to the early 1960s. How was religion mobilized as culture and spirituality when designing an African Socialist model, leaving behind the colonial empire and forming an alternative to the “materialism” of the new imperial powers of the USSR and US? How were the radical religion-state separation model of republican-empire France and Marxist-Leninist atheism the Soviet way opposed in order to create a “third way” model for socialism – the African and Senegalese way? And how did the new framework reconfigure “education” as a state-crafting concept, tool and part of the new social imaginary?

1 Introduction

From the late 1950s to the early 1960s when the Republic of Senegal was crafted and reforms were drafted after 500 years of colonialism, including as an official colony under French republican imperialist rule since 1884, the concept of laïcité was part of the program. The word used was the same as the name for the French Third Republic model for radical religion-state separation that was implemented in metropolitan France in the early 1880s and early 1900s. Nevertheless, Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906–2001) – poet, philosopher, politician and the first President of Senegal – and his close collaborator and later political enemy Mamadou Dia (1910–2009) – economist, journalist, teacher and school director, who became the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal – meant it slightly differently.

Being the main state crafters in the early years of decolonization and the foundation of what became the Republic of Senegal in 1960, Senghor and Dia had both been elected politicians in the French Empire, what was redefined as a so-

called union after WWII, and anti-colonial socialists involved in the development of Pan-Africanism, working for unity among Africans, including the diaspora, and fighting colonial rule and racism. Both of them also had a clear religious affiliation; in the case of Senghor, notably Catholic Christianity, whereas Dia was a devout Muslim, and both saw religion in the plural sense as a crucial resource for transforming French West Africa, of which Senegal formed part, into independent republican societies. The vision was a socialist society in an “African way,” preferably in an equal confederative structure with France to avoid the weaknesses of “balkanization” and “micronationalism”¹ and prevent neocolonial exploitation, including getting trapped in the USSR-US Cold War competition. Activating African civilizations figured as a central and reinterpreted resource in the framework they developed. In this broad ideological vision for a new society, religion in the plural sense as cultural assemblage – a so-called “métissage,” [mixing] – was to educate and connect people in the new republic. This new form of laïcité was also to be the antidote to the Soviet Marxist-Leninist atheism – and to the French laïcité model, where the aim was separating religion from state institutions such as education (see also respectively Kyselov, Kaščák, Neumann and Danišková and Stieger, this volume). Working for and drawing on Pan-Africanist socialism and socialist humanism, but not Soviet-leaning communism, Senghor and Dia worked for what philosopher and political theorist Souleymane Bachir Diagne has conceptualized as “spiritual socialism,” an ideological program in which education, as also pointed to by Diagne, played a central role.²

1 E.g. Mamadou Dia, *The African Nations and World Solidarity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), 140. Translated from *Nations Africaines et solidarité mondiale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960) into English with a preface by Mercer Cook (1903–1987), a US-American professor in Roman languages, Pan-Africanist activist and later diplomat to Senegal and Gambia and also a translator of Senghor’s work.

2 Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “Religion and the Public Sphere in Senegal: The Evolution of a Project of Modernity,” in *Crediting God. Sovereignty and Religion in the Age of Global Capitalism*, ed. Miguel Vatter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 103, 110; Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “A Secular Age and the World of Islam,” in *Tolerance, democracy, and sufis in Senegal*, ed. Mamadou Diouf (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 44. See also Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *L’ence des savants. Réflexions sur la philosophie Afrique* (Dakar/Paris: Codesria / Présence Africaine Éditions, 2013), e.g. 89–96. Friedrich Axt, *Léopold Sédar Senghor und die Erziehungspolitik der Republik Senegal* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1979) analyzes the education philosophy of Senghor and its operationalization in, for example, bilingual education. Although pointing to the key role played by Senghor’s conceptualization of “Métissage Culturelle,” the focus is rather on Senghor’s relation to Marxism, where it is stated that “[d]ie Einbettung der Religion in die neue Konzeption der Sozialismus erfolgt als Postulat,” and the contribution of religion and “die Afrikanische Religiosität” stays, according to Axt, undefined and unoperationalized, 67–68.

Dia and Senghor developed their ideas on religion and culture as a resource in an African model for socialism in speeches and writings especially in the decade leading up to 1959, where the Mali Federation was founded, comprising present-day Mali, at the time French Sudan, and present-day Senegal. Furthermore, the vision of a spiritual socialism that was to educate the republic and its citizens not only across religions but by means of religions was among the leitmotifs during their common rule of the independent Republic of Senegal as of 1960. While aiming for a model that conceptualized Christianity, Islam and what was sometimes cast as “animism” and sometimes as traditional African religion as the core resources of “La Civilization Négro-Africaine” and thus of “négritude” and “africanité” as well as republican citizenship education, the question of culture and the understanding of religion as culture became a central tool.³

Following the work of Senghor and Dia from the early 1950s up until the break between them by the end of 1962, the chapter explores the formative years of what became Senegalese religious modernist republicanism and its educational aspirations by asking the following questions: how did the ideology for state-religion relations that developed navigate the geopolitical spaces at the time in light of decolonialization and Cold War competition, and how was the state-religion question used to envision and politically craft a social education program of a society in the new state?

First, the chapter unfolds its methodological frame drawing on Chakrabarty’s conceptualization of “provincializing Europe” and on global history approaches, situating the study within colonial history of education research and their contributions to the study of political secularization reform and presenting the sources studied (section 2). Second, the text turns to the ideological programs that developed within the frame of Senghor and Dia’s engagement in Pan-African socialism from the early 1950s on and how religion was transformed into “culture” and “métissage” in this context to be operationalized into textbooks, political interventions in the formulations of an African socialist model for laïcité and institutional reform efforts up until 1962 when the partnership of Senghor and Dia ended (sections 3–5). The chapter concludes (section 6) by discussing the Senegalese religious modernist state-crafting program in relation to other socialist and social

3 E.g. Léopold Sédar Senghor, “L’Afrique Noire. La Civilization Négro-Africaine,” in *Liberté. Négritude et Humanisme* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1964), 70–82, originally printed in *Les plus beaux écrits de l’Union française et du Maghreb : présentés par Mohamed el Kholi, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Pierre Do Dinh, A. Rakoto Ratsimamanga, E. Ralajmihiatra* (Paris: La Colombe, Éditions du Vieux Colombier, 1947); Léopold Sédar Senghor, *The Foundations of africanité or Négritude and arabité* [*Les Fondements de l’africanité ou Négritude et arabité* 1967]. Translated by Mercer Cook (Paris: Présence africaine, 1971).

democrat programs at the time that were situated differently in relation to empire and imperialism, such as the Nordic social democrats. Finally, the chapter sums up with the question the exploration raises for further developing historical scholarship in educational secularization reform and educational modernity.

2 Theoretical Considerations and Method: Provincializing European “Modernization”

The case of early Senegalese republican state crafting speaks in several ways to the scholarly discussions about approaching secularization as a political project instead of directing attention to secularization as a social and cultural process. In continuation, the case of religious modernist socialist reformers reinterpreting and utilizing religion as a resource for state crafting and aiming to teach a population to be a population in what was to become the Republic of Senegal enables further explorations into how education reform and state-religion reform overlapped. “Education” in this context should be understood as something that includes but is also not confined to formal education within a state education system. Rather, “education” should be seen as a question of how to operate public enlightenment and thus the whole question of “educating” as a state and how in this sense education reform was an arena for battles around and negotiations of state-religion relations. Furthermore, the case of the modernist reform program in question also holds the potential to challenge the perceptions in European and thus Empire-centered as well as cultural imperialism-critical scholarship of secularization as European and Europe as the cradle of modernity from where modernization was dispersed.

While “empire” has often, both among its proponents and later among its political and scholarly critics, been understood as a secularizing force, historical research into the role of education in the colonial projects has contributed to complicating the picture and pointed to the complex character and hence not-so-secular secularization efforts of empire. In studies on Bengal during British rule, historian Parna Sengupta has shown, for instance, how colonial education actually reinforced the place of religion in the development of Indian modernity through the missionary involvement in the expansion of modern education. Also, in the metropolitan terrain of empire, missionary work influenced education and led to new practices concerning religion in schools (see also Sabra, this volume). As shown by historian Rob Freathy and colleagues, the so-called world religion approach to religious education, which was introduced in a late twentieth-century re-

form in the UK, can be traced back to missionary work and the ecumenical movement that sprang from it in the early twentieth century.⁴

The case of Senegalese republican religious modernism and its educational character is another form of modernity, contrasting colonial models – more concretely, the models of the republican French Empire and the new imperial power USSR – and rejecting the separation of religion and state while insisting on religion as a resource for the political project of modernization. Drawing on Dipesh Chakrabarty's iconic formulation, the case of early Senegalese religious modernist republicanism enables historical research to go further in “provincializing Europe” epistemologically and hence also methodologically.⁵

The methodological point of departure for this exploration is hence that borrowings and transnational exchange are only a limited methodological approach to understanding the landscape of religious modernist state crafting in question. The methodological discussions within the fields of comparative history, transnational history and global history of how to understand, for instance, the Enlightenment – a concept and historical monument deeply connected to the notion of secularization – offer a methodological language here: are “enlightenment” and “secularization” to be understood and explored as European phenomena that spread worldwide – as claimed in a so-called diffusionist view, for instance, with approaches critical to “cultural imperialism”? Or should such phenomena rather be understood as different and contextual reactions to similar circumstances, as local mobilizations related to global conditions – as in a “global history” approach (drawing not least on Sebastian Conrad)?⁶ This exploration methodologically

4 Parina Sengupta, *Pedagogy for Religion. Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2011); Rob Freathy, Stephen G. Parker, and Jonathan Doney, “Raiders of the Lost Archives: Searching for the Hidden History of Religious Education in England,” in *History, Remembrance and Religious Education*, ed. Stephen G. Parker et al. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015), 105–137; see Mette Buchardt, “Religion and Modern Educational Aspirations,” in *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, ed. Michael Peters (Singapore: Springer 2020); Mette Buchardt, “The political project of secularization and modern education reform in ‘provincialized Europe’: Historical research in religion and education beyond Secularization, R.I.P.,” *IJHE. Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 11 (2021–2): 164–170.

5 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Frederick Cooper, “Provincializing France,” in *Imperial Formations*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler et al. (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press / Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2007), 341–377.

6 Sebastian Conrad, “Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 999–1027; Sebastian Conrad, “‘Nothing is the way it should be’: The global transformations of the time regime in the nineteenth century,” *Modern Intellectual History* 15, no. 3 (2018): 821–848, and as delineated in Mette Buchardt and Stephanie Fox, “Social

chooses to base itself in the latter approach: a global history approach that addresses the question of religion-state relations as a global challenge with varying local appearances.

As its methodological entry point to the study of Senegalese religious modernists and their multidimensional educational aspiration, the chapter uses the oeuvre of Senghor and Dia as prisms. While most of their religious modernist counterparts in, for instance, metropolitan Europe rather served as meso-state crafters, heading commissions and filling the role as public intellectuals,⁷ Dia and Senghor are particularly interesting since they did this as well, but they also became the main state crafters of the new state. They were both active in Pan-Africanist social and intellectual transnational movements in the decades leading up to formal independence, they had central political and administrative positions in French West Africa and French parliamentary politics in the same decades and they became the heads of state in the Senegalese republic. Here, Dia, while Prime Minister and President of the National Assembly, organized and headed reform commissions while Senghor, as the President of the Republic, became the public intellectual poet president concentrating on intellectual framing and the international scene.

The sources used in this chapter are accordingly the political part of their authorships: political theoretical monographs and more ideologically aiming essays and speeches, many of which were published in Pan-Africanist leaning channels, a text corpus which also includes textbooks for schools. In addition, I draw on pilot studies in the archival collections of Dia and Senghor, stored in the Archives nationales du Sénégal (ANS), Dakar,⁸ which include programs for their domestic and international travels, daily correspondence and the archives after the big institutional and social reform commissions organized by Dia. By means of this source corpus and following the path from drafting an ideological vision for a new society and state to operationalizing it, my aim is to take the first steps in exploring how the case of educational spiritual socialism in early Senegalese state crafting can contribute to the understanding of how religious modernism was part of changing the state-religion relation in the diverse field of political modern-

Histories of ‘Bildung’ between universal and national ambitions and global emergences,” *IJHE. Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 10, no. 2 (2020): 133–137.

⁷ E.g. Mette Buchardt, “The Nordic Model and the Educational Welfare State in a European Light: Social Problem Solving and Secular-Religious Ambitions when Modernizing Sweden and France,” in *The Nordic Education Model in Context: Historical Developments and Current Renegotiations*, eds. Daniel Tröhler et al. (New York: Routledge, 2023), 107–124.

⁸ I want to express my gratitude to Laura Sadjadi who assisted me with the archival studies in Dakar, November 2022, and who has discussed and commented on the work with the source corpus including this text.

ization projects globally and the role of education as a way of crafting a state in this context.

3 In the Anti-Colonial Lab: Pan-Africanist Future State Crafters Between French West Africa and the Metropolitan Terrain

In 1948, Léopold Sédar Senghor, elected for the National Assembly following WWII as one of the representatives from *Afrique-Occidentale française*, AOF – French West Africa, broke with the socialist bloc *Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière* (SFIO), started together with the newly elected Mamadou Dia's *Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais* (BDS) and joined the bloc of independent members elected in the French colonies, which, post-WWII, were defined as “overseas territories”: the *Indépendants d'Outre-Mer* (IOM).⁹ This became the point of departure for a fourteen-year-long teamwork between the two of them culminating with their becoming a governing duo as, respectively, President and Prime Minister of the independent Republic of Senegal. In December 1962, the partnership came to an end when Dia was removed, accused and later sentenced for attempting a coup d'état. Though the circumstances are subject to dispute, scholars point to the fact that Dia, as the main driving force for interior socialist economic reform, had created strong enemies. Among the members of the national assembly, for instance, Dia had made adversaries by passing restrictions on the business involvement of elected politicians. Among the Marabouts, the powerful leaders of the Sufi brotherhoods, the dominating form of Islam in Senegal, agricultural reforms aiming at creating cooperatives as well as development of forms of agricultural production other than peanut production had created tension. As peanuts had become the dominating agricultural product during French colonial rule, this was in the interest of neither the Marabouts, who were also big landowners with a huge interest in peanut production, nor of the former colonial powers with business interests in postcolonial metropolitan France.¹⁰

9 Same year, they started to publish *Condition Humaine*, that functioned as BDS's newspaper, Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa*, 144, 146.

10 Patrick Dramé and Bocar Niang, “Si vous faites l'âne, je recours au bâton!” Mamadou Dia et le projet de décolonisation du Sénégal. Lignes de force, limites et perceptions (1952–2012),” *Outre-Mers* 1, no. 402–403 (2019): 127–150; Janet G. Vaillant, *Black, French, and African. A Life of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 305; Jean-Pierre Langellier, *Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Paris: Perrin, 2021), 257.

While Dia's years in office were thus limited to the independence process years from the late 1950s and to late 1962 – in the beginning, in the Mali Federation, containing present-day Mali and Senegal, and, after the breakdown of the federation in August 1960, in the Republic of Senegal – Senghor continued as president in a combined authoritarian and parliamentary model under the leadership of the Senghor-fronted socialist party under shifting names until he resigned in 1980. With his successor, fellow party member and, since 1970, prime minister, Abdou Diouf (1935–), the socialist one-party fronted rule lasted until 2000 when Diouf lost the election and resigned. Though the ideas, plans and reforms with regard to a model for African socialism and the role of religion, culture and education from the Senghor-Dia period carved out traces for politics in the following decades and up until today,¹¹ this chapter concentrates on the formative years: Dia and Senghor's political collaboration in the BDS and the political parties that emerged from it during the 1950s¹² and later as the duo-heads of state until the devout Muslim and Marxist Dia was removed, when it was left to the socialist humanist and Catholic Senghor to govern a state where the majority were religiously of Muslim denomination.

Collaborating with the later president of the regional council of Martinique, poet, political theorist and politician Aimé Césaire (1913–2008), during the 1930s, Senghor became first as a student and later as an educated linguist and philosopher, teacher and poet a main figure in the Négritude movement. With anti-racist and anti-colonial agendas in the fore, this political and cultural movement gathered politicians, activists, scholars and artists from continental Africa, colonized by Western powers with Ethiopia and Liberia as the only exceptions, and the African diaspora in the Americas, in particular the Caribbeans and the US. The global region of the Atlantic, established through European expansionism, colonial regime and the enslavement of Africans, thus also became a triangle for anti-colonial idea and strategy development, connecting – often continentally traveling – actors in continental Africa with actors in the Americas and thus also connecting the movements in Harlem, New York and Chicago with the movement in the imperial metropolitan capital of Paris. Due especially to students from the colonial terrain, Paris became a hub and anti-colonial lab, where African intellec-

11 Diagne, "Religion and the Public Sphere in Senegal," 111. On the operationalization in family law; e.g. Malick Diagne, *Laïcité. Histoires, theories et pratique* (Dakar: KALA éditions, 2022), 77–86.

12 In 1956, BDS was reorganized as Bloc Populaire Sénégalais (BPS) and in 1958 as Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS), Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), 125–165. In 1976, the party was renamed Parti socialiste du Sénégal (PS).

tuals met with their Vietnamese counterparts to the combined admiration and dismay of the metropolitan French intellectual left. Also, the movements' actors collaborated and conflicted with the party-organized and parliamentarily represented socialists and communists.¹³

Following the end of WWII, with an increased degree of parliamentary representation from French West Africa in the political institutions of metropolitan France and increased parliamentary self-governance in the “overseas territories,” the field of engagement for Senghor moved into parliamentary politics. As a leader in the Grand Council of the AOF starting in 1947, a member of the French senate from 1948 until 1956 and a deputy in the French National Assembly from 1956 until 1958, Dia's political activities took place between Dakar and Paris, whereas Senghor's activities were more concentrated on the arena of Paris as well as extensive international travel. This division of labor continued in their republican ruling years in the formative period of the republic. Both had received a French secular education, giving them access to studying in Parisian higher learning institutions, but both had also received religious schooling: Senghor with The Fathers of the Holy Spirit and Dia in a Quranic school before he continued on to the École William Ponty, the elite school in the AOF, where other future central political actors also attended. Among them was Émile Derlin Zinsou (1918–2016), a medical doctor, member of the French senate and later President of Dahomey (present day Benin); a collaborator of Dia and Senghor in the IOM bloc Joseph Gomis (1907–1984), Mayor of Dakar in the early 1960s and Minister of Youth and Sport, who became part of Dia's reform commission work from the late 1950s on; and Abdoulaye Sadi (1910–1961), a high school teacher, author of fiction as well as educational work, radio journalist, a fellow Négritude activist and collaborator of Senghor on educational work.¹⁴

Whereas Senghor was academically based in the humanities, Dia graduated in Economy, which he in his political theoretical authorship sought to bridge with humanist and sociological knowledge. Like Senghor, he drew on, for instance, inspiration from the Catholic pantheist scientist philosophical work of the Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) and the Indian Muslim national renaissance as it was voiced in the works of Mohammad Iqbal (1877–1938). While working polit-

13 J. Ayo Langley, “Pan-Africanism in Paris, 1924–36,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 1 (1969): 69–94; Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism. A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), especially 54; Reiland Rabaka, *The Négritude Movement. W. E. B. Du Bois, Leon Damas, Aime Césaire, Léopold Senghor, Frantz Fanon, and the Evolution of an Insurgent Idea* (Lanham: Lexington, 2015), 197.

14 Hakim Adi and Marika Sherwood, *Pan-African history. Political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London: Routledge, 2003), e.g. “Léopold Sédar Senghor,” 181–185.

ically for federalism in especially West Africa, both for the sake of African unity and for changing imperial relations with France to a political model on equal terms, much of their efforts in the 1950s dealt with parliamentary politics. Along with this, they engaged in ideological and political theoretical work, increasingly directed toward developing an African socialist—ideally Pan-African—federative model for socialism rooted in African cultural and thereby also religious traditions; a spiritual socialism. This framework was explicitly directed against “the godlessness” of “the Russian model” as one of their US-American collaborators put it,¹⁵ but also against the laïcité-embracing French socialist bloc while denouncing the colonialism and capitalism of the Western Cold War bloc.

This was mirrored in their collaboration and conflicts in metropolitan French parliamentary politics. When Senghor and Dia broke with the anti-clericalist socialist bloc SFIO in 1948, the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP), a post-war party with roots in the early twentieth-century social Christian movement, became one of their supporters as well as vice versa. In September 1951, Dia voted for the Marie et Bârange laws¹⁶ that granted financial support to parents choosing private education and thereby also religious, for example, Catholic, education, thus securing a certain freedom of school choice outside the public school system, where the laïcité model for keeping confessional elements out of education had been ruling since the early 1880s with staunch support from leftist as well as rightist republicans.¹⁷ The question of “educational freedom” versus laïcité pulled the MRP and the SFIO apart, and the African socialists in the BDS took the side of the metropolitan French social Christians against the French metropolitan socialist bloc. With regard to politics in the AOF, Morgenthau points to that “[o]ut of seventeen territorial counselors who originally broke with the SFIO, ten were Catholic” and estimate that “[p]artly because of these proportions the BDS leaders went out of their way to hear specific Muslim demands.”¹⁸ Moreover, her scholarship in the social basis of the West African political parties in the decades post WWII shows that school teachers were the biggest group among the BDS territorial counselors.¹⁹ The focus on and the priority given to the question of education

15 Mercer Cook, “Foreword,” in *The African Nations and World Solidarity*, ed. Mamadou Dia (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962 [1960]), viii.

16 *Lois Marie et Bârange*, the former named after André Marie, the Minister of Education.

17 Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa*, 140, 144. Anthony Trawick Bouscaren, “The MRP in French Governments, 1948–1951,” *The Journal of Politics* 14, no. 1 (1952): 104–131; Bernard E. Brown, “Religious Schools and Politics in France,” *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 2, no. 2 (1958): 160–178; Jacques Louis Hymans, *Léopold Sédar Senghor. An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 149.

18 Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa*, 148.

19 Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa*, 152.

in the years leading up to the foundation of the republic can also be seen in light of this.

Education was, however, a much broader political and ideological concept for the two allied parliamentary politicians and Pan-Africanist activists, namely, a central way of organizing an African socialist state and society. Here, religion and culture were embedded categories, namely, as African civilizatory traditions to be utilized for a new form of polity and society. This was elucidated in speeches and publications, from political theoretical work on economy to educational textbooks, starting not least in the early 1950s.

4 Culture as Spiritual and métissage-Educational State Crafting

Central to Senghor's idea of African socialism was what he in a 1950 speech defined as "the problem of culture." In this context, culture was seen as something to be rehabilitated, learned and reincorporated, emphasizing African religious traditions and practices – and thus spirituality – as a central element. Therefore, culture was also to be understood as action and activity.

The paper "The problem of culture" was originally presented at a seminar together with IOM colleagues in 1950. At the seminar, Dia and Émile Zinsou also gave talks involving education and enlightenment, something that Senghor referred to in his paper that, during the 1960s, became part of "Liberté," his collected works in three volumes, where it features as one of the opening texts of the first volume, something that indicates the central role he ascribed to it.²⁰

The mainline in the speech was that "education is the basis of all historical evolution, hence of all legislation" and was hence to be understood as the whole basis of building a state and a society: When modernizing by merging tradition into the framework of the modern state, educating ("préparés") the people to be governed by law was needed. However, "the problem" – in the sense of political challenge – "of education" was, as Senghor expressed it, "the problem of *culture*" that again "could be defined as civilization in action, or better, the spirit of civilization."²¹ Action and spirit were hence to be understood as almost interchangeable. The spiritual dimension was thus crucial, not as a monolithic learning

²⁰ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Le Problème de la Culture," in *Liberté I. Négritude et Humanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), 93–97, originally presented at Journées d'Etudes des Indépendants d'Outre-Mer, July 1950; Langley, "Pan-Africanism in Paris," 69.

²¹ Senghor, "Le Problème de la Culture," 93.

towards a certain religion but as “métisse”: as synthesis and interweaving and cross-breeding.²² This way of drafting a social imaginary for an African socialist modernity that on the one hand activated religious traditions and on the other hand developed them into a synthesis in a way that understood it as civilization, a concept usually connected to French imperial self-imagining, became one of the mainlines in Senghor and Dia’s blueprint for an African socialism model.

The African socialist civilizing mission was – turning imaginaries in French colonial thought of colonialism as a civilizing mission around – also aiming at enlightening and contributing to the world as a “Panhuman” civilization, as Senghor expressed in his essay on Teilhard de Chardin. Understood this way, *négritude* was Africa’s contribution to the common universal civilization.²³

This element was later to be carried on in international talks and speeches, which Senghor’s 1962 talk at Fordham University, a privately funded Jesuit university in New York City, named after the Fordham neighborhood in the Bronx, illustrates. At the time of Senghor’s visit, the university was a center for civil rights activities, and its department for African and African American Studies was one of the first of its kind in the country.²⁴ Senghor’s speech, later published under the title “The New Africa” in the Catholic philosophical Fordham-based journal *Thought*, served as an academic diplomatic mission for the socialist Senegalese republic and as a message to the African diaspora’s activism while also contributing to US modernist Catholic academia with Senegalese spiritual socialist enlightenment.²⁵

In order to contribute to the common universal civilization, African civilization had to be reactivated, and a means of doing this was education in a formal sense as a governance tool, even before full polity in the African society could be achieved. Teaming up with fellow and forerunning *Négritude* activist, Abdoulaye Sadj, at the time Inspecteur de l’Enseignement Primaire [primary education inspector] and active as a radio journalist who, as opposed to Senghor, had his main base in Senegal, they published the textbook *La Belle Histoire de Leuk-le-Lièvre* in 1953.²⁶ Born in Rufisque, Sadj, again as opposed to Senghor, was “born”

22 Vaillant, *Black, French and African*, 264.

23 Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Pierre Teilhard de Chardin et le politique africaine”, in *Cahiers Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, vol. 3 (Paris: Seuil, 1962), e.g. 63–65.

24 Raymond A. Schroth, *Fordham. A History and Memoir* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

25 Léopold Sédar Senghor, “The New Africa,” *Thought. A review of Culture and Idea. Fordham University Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1962): 5–11.

26 Léopold Sédar Senghor and Abdoulaye Sadj, *La Belle Histoire de Leuk-Le-Lièvre. Cours Élémentaire des Écoles D’Afrique Noire* (Cedex: Edicef, 1953), reprinted 2022, and most likely still used.

into a limited version of French imperial citizenship: from 1848 on, so-called “originaires” from the municipalities of Saint-Louis, Dakar, Gorée and Rufisque, that is, Les Quatre Communes, had been able to vote and run for the French Parliament.²⁷ Though in different ways, Sadjí and Senghor had their approaches to *négritude* – and what Senghor later developed into *africanité* – anchored in claiming the parts of the French imperial project that they found useful for their own project. This was mirrored in the textbook, which was a collection of tales about the clever rabbit *Leuk-le-Lièvre*, a contribution to a mythological canon representing “African culture” but retold in French. While the audience for the book was students in secondary level in “*Afrique Noir*,” the education-political program for the authors was teaching the French language to African high school students by means of African culture. The French language was on the one hand contextualized for students in the AOF, but on the other hand a broader vision arose: to colonize the language of the colonizer. In this sense, the textbook can be seen as an operationalization of the way “African civilization” and “Europe” were understood critically and envisioned to be utilized in future models including contributing civilization to the world.

In Senghor’s work from the 1950s, as is also the case in “The problem of Culture,” what was to be mobilized in African culture was the ability to act and understand each person collectively. Bridging from “tradition” to future socialist models, the African history for seeing community as a means to serve personal development was a critical corrective and alternative to the Western individuality that led to “rust” on “the steel articulations,” as Senghor expressed it in the poem “A New York.”²⁸ However, if African culture could contribute emotions and spirituality, as it was for example to be found in artistic work, be it in myths or modern poetry, the technological rationality of Europe was also to be integrated into the African socialist future. While Europe and the Western bloc meant capitalism and Africa meant (the prospect of) socialism, this also implicated that, although “Europe” in this sense meant “past” and Africa “future,” this future included the integration of industrialization. “*Métissage*” as an education-cultural program for socialism thus entailed the diversity of African cultures and spiritualities but also an assemblage of spiritualities and industrialization, and in this sense the integration of culture and technology.

27 Mamadou Diouf, “The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project,” *Development and change* 29, no. 4 (1998–10): 671–696.

28 Léopold Sédar Senghor, “A New York,” published in e.g. *Éthiopiennes*, 1956, quoted from Vailant, *Black, French and African*, 267.

5 Planning African Socialist Economy and Spiritualist Socialist laïcité

The “métissage” of culture and technology called for a culturally based strategy for the economy, and in this field, Dia was the protagonist in the duo. In his paper “Économie et culture devant les élites africaines,” invited to be presented for the *Congrès des écrivains et artistes noirs* held at the Sorbonne 19–22 September 1956, Dia addressed the same matter, though somehow the other way around: how the economy should be seen as a part of the cultural challenge for “the Pan-Africanist elites” that were to front what Dia imagined as the political project of African socialism.²⁹ Though not at the center of the paper, the spiritual dimension was part of his formulation of this vision. The spiritual was the basis not only for the question of culture, but also for imagining a culturally conscious economic program.

The congress was an important arena specifically for the African elites across continental Africa and the diaspora and as such an important arena for circulating frameworks for African socialism. African American educator and journalist James W. Ivy described the delegates and spectators of the congress as “all sorts of people: Catholics, Protestants, Muslims; students from the Sorbonne, intellectuals of all ages and conditions; anthropologists, ex-colonial officials, priests and nuns” and “equally divided between whites and blacks.”³⁰ The venue, as was frequently the case in the political and intellectual movements of Négritude and Pan-Africanism, also attracted colonial actors from the side of the colonizers. This included white French ultra-left supporters, most likely not only because of more or less patronizing solidarity but also because the arena offered a renewed Marxism. Not only did the intellectual work in the movement connect the analysis of race to the analysis of capitalism, moving Marxist anti-imperialist and anti-colonial analysis further, but it also provided an environment where Marxist and psychoanalytical theory and politics did not exclude but on the contrary utilized religion and spirituality and thus also carved out a space for French religious anti-colonial and leftist actors.

This feature was reflected in the circles that initiated the congress. Being the first in a series of its kind, the congress was organized by the editors of *Présence Africaine*, a French-African Magazine, fronted by the editor-in-chief and professor in Philosophie, Alioune Diop. Since its first issue in 1947, the magazine was a cen-

29 Mamadou Dia, “Économie et culture devant les élites africaines,” *Présence Africaine* no. 14/15 (June-September 1957): 58–72. Originally presented as an invited paper at The First Congress of Black Writers and Artists, The Sorbonne, Paris, 19–22 September 1956.

30 James W. Ivy, “First Negro Congress of Writers and Artists,” *The Crisis* 63, no. 10 (1956): 593.

tral voice for intellectual analyses and perspectives on the cultural and political struggle of the Négritude and Pan-Africanist movements and thoughts. It was founded by Diop together with a broader circle of Pan-Africanist intellectuals, among them key figures from the Négritude movement such as Senghor and Césaire along with, for example, the scholar of Senegalese history and later politician Alioune Sarr (1908–2001). Also, people from the French existentialist left and ultra-left (e.g. Jean-Paul Sartre) were part of the circle, as well as Théodore Monod, a naturalist, unitarian and Christian anarchist. Being the son of Protestant modernist theology professor Wilfred Monod, a collaborator of one of the key figures of Cultural Nordic Protestantism, Nathan Söderblom, on ecumenical work, Monod was – also in a literal sense – a child of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Protestant religious modernism.³¹ In the late 1930s, Monod had been a director of the newly established Institut français d’Afrique noire in Dakar, and in 1946, he became a professor at the Muséum national d’histoire naturelle and shortly after, in 1949, a member of l’Académie des sciences d’outre-mer (formerly, l’Académie des sciences coloniales). Like Senghor and Dia, Monod was also inspired by the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin with regard to the question of the relationship between religion and science. Monod was a pro-religious counterpart to the white existentialist circles of Paris, an actor that could find a political home in the spirituality-inclusive anti-racist African socialism that was only scarcely accessible elsewhere in European leftist circles, not least the laïcité-conservative metropolitan French left.³²

In his talk, Dia framed the economy as a fundamental aspect of culture.³³ Besides a historical analysis of the colonial exploitation of Africa, his errand was not least to show how cultural imperialism, as it took form in, for instance, education, was connected to economic imperialism:

Let’s acknowledge, at the very least, that this economic evolution under the sign of dependence on other economies cannot be favorable to cultural autonomy. In fact, this whole period of economic colonialism coincides with a historical phase of cultural colonialism where the only freedom granted to Africans is that of letting themselves be assimilated. Education, instead of being an education of African civilizations, will be, when not downgraded, a copycat education.³⁴

³¹ Buchardt, “The Nordic Model,” 110–114; Patrick Cabanel, *Ferdinand Buisson. Père de l’école laïque* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2016).

³² About marxist intellectuals investing in religion, see Mette Buchardt, “Renegatmarxismens søgen mod buddhismen” [The search towards Buddhism among renegade-marxists]. In *Den gamle nyreligiøsitet: Vestens glemte kulturarv* [Old new religiousness. The forgotten cultural heritage of the West], (eds. Mette Buchardt, & Pia Rose Bøwadt, Frederiksberg: Anis, 2003), 201–224.

³³ Dia, “Économie et culture,” 58.

³⁴ Dia, “Économie et culture,” 69.

Dia argued that the roots of African socialism were already inherited in precolonial African collectivism, which provided tools for reviving the African economy that excited even the partly useful tools of Marxism, but the goal was also the other way around, namely, to liberate African culture from a capitalist economy:

the African culture will succumb if we delay coming together to its aid, to wrest it from the grip of the capitalist economy. It is therefore to a moral mobilization of all the elites that we call upon you, so that each one, writer or artist, puts their talent to the service of this cause which, beyond the economy, aims at the preservation of the autonomy of culture.³⁵

Though afar on the horizon, it was, however, “unquestionably the glimmers of a new dawn” for the vision of a future African socialist economy where “the black man [is] liberated from so many material worries and free to devote himself to spiritual joys.”³⁶ While religious emblems³⁷ were mentioned as part of the culture that was to be incorporated in a new socialist economy, space for devotion to the “spiritual joys” was part of the outcome. Education was part of the problem, but also part of the solution.

In 1959, when Dia implemented what became Senegal’s first economic development plan, reorganizing education was an institutional and social political task. While rethinking economic models for agricultural production and initiating corporatism, a deep-reaching design of social and institutional reform also took place. This included the operationalization of an enlightened Islam and a sustainable administration, moves that were not always welcomed by dominating actors within and surrounding Senegalese society and politics.

Among Dia’s big efforts in his years in office was the initiation of a range of reform commissions, among them the committee for the study of social problems, in which education was also a prominent area of engagement.³⁸ Among the committee members appointed were, for instance, education director Joseph Gomis who, in 1961, became Mayor of Dakar and Dr. François Dieng, the “ministre de l’Éducation nationale” in Dia’s first Republic of Senegal government in 1960. Also, the philosopher Professor N’Daw Alassane was appointed to and served, for example, in the subcommittee for education. The archive after the committee work

³⁵ Dia, “Économie et culture,” 71.

³⁶ Dia, “Économie et culture,” 70.

³⁷ Dia, “Économie et culture,” 59.

³⁸ E.g. “Déclaration du Président Mamadou Dia, Président du Conseil de Gouvernement du Sénégal à la Séance inaugurale commune des Comités d’études auprès de la Présidence du Conseil, le 10 Octobre 1958”, 00091 – Comité des Études Pour les Problèmes Sociaux, 1958–1959, Réunions; déclaration M Mamadou DIA, activités des groups, du travail; procès-verbaux. Archives nationales du Sénégal (ANS), Dakar.

gives witness to the many organizations that communicated with and came before the committee. Among them were labor unions and movements such as *l'Union culturelle musulmane* (UCM; in Arabic: *Ittihâd ath-Thaqâfi al-Islâmî*, ITI, Islamic Cultural Union), an Islamic reform movement that enjoyed Dia's support. Since the 1950s, the movement had been organizing so-called Écoles Franco-Arabes that included modern subjects such as history and geography and aimed at renewing the teaching methods as opposed to the rote learning used in the traditional religious schools. Among the reform ideas of the movement that Dia supported was the implementation of modernized Islam Education, also in the form of public enlightenment through radio broadcasting and journals in spoken languages such as Wolof and French so that the people did not have to rely solely on the teachings and interpretations of the Marabouts and their education system.³⁹ The Muslim Marxists challenged not only the economic domain of the religious authorities but also their role as the main distributors and educators of religion.

In July 1963, in the aftermath of Dia's removal from power, Senghor gave a speech at the inauguration of the new mosque in Touba, the main seat of one of the most powerful Sufi brotherhoods in Senegal, the Mouride Brotherhood.⁴⁰ In the following decades, the Mourides were to become a strong ally of the semi-authoritarian socialist rule that Senghor and Dia had established and of which Senghor was now the sole leader. In his speech, Senghor invested considerably in creating distance to the removed and imprisoned Dia, praising the alliance and friendship with Serigne Mouhamadou Falilou Mbacké (1888–1968), the second Caliph of the brotherhood and son of its founder, Amadou Bamba Ibn Anta Saly Mbacké (1853–1927). He also praised the support for corporatism of the brotherhood and its efforts with regard to education, all of these being points of dispute between the former prime minister and the brotherhoods.

In the speech, later printed under the title “Laïcité” in *Liberté's* iconic first volume, the African civilizatory traditions that Senghor had sometimes labeled as animism were not at the fore but rather the contributions of Christianity and Islam, not least the Mourides, to the work that was necessary in order to build socialism: a work where “mere discursive reason alone cannot ensure its success. The enterprise requires the support of intuitive reason, which is the spirit of Religion”.⁴¹

39 Roman Loimeier, “L’Islam ne se vend plus: The Islamic Reform Movement and the State in Senegal,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30, no. 2 (May 2000): 174–176.

40 Address at the Inauguration of the Touba Mosque. Response by the President of the Republic to the speech by El Hadj Faliou M’Backé, Khalif of the Mourides, the Magal in Touba, 11 July 1963. Printed as Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Laïcité,” in *Liberté I. Négritude et Humanisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), 422–424.

41 Senghor, “Laïcité,” 423.

What is Socialism if not, essentially, the socio-economic system that gives primacy and priority to labor? Who has done it better than Ahmadou Bamba and his successors, including you, El Hadj [the Caliph/MB]? They will speak to me of rationalized, organized work. And you have always, in this sense, supported the effort of the Party and of the Government.⁴²

Also, the role of *laïcité* in the constitution was directly elaborated, and distance was created not only to the French version and Soviet-style atheism, but also to “*gauchisme infantile*,”⁴³ infantile or naïve leftism:

Laïcité, for us, is neither atheism nor anti-religious propaganda. I offer as evidence the articles of the Constitution that guarantee the autonomy of religious communities. Our fundamental Law goes further, making these communities auxiliaries of the State in its work of education: of culture. Because Religion is an essential aspect of Culture.⁴⁴

Senghor’s speech also marked that the time of the drafting of a vision of a spiritual and educating African socialism had come to an end. The phase of institutionalization and alliance with the power bases had started.

6 Concluding Remarks and Perspectives: Religious Modernist State Crafters in Comparison

Summing up, the educational Senegalese state-religion reform project brings up key questions of what is modernity beyond understandings of “Europe,” or more precisely, of the French Enlightenment as a cradle of modernity – with its separation of state and religion as the jewel of the modernization crown. As the conceptualization of *laïcité* in Senghor’s 1963 speech in Touba shows, the legal work of the Dia government and Senghor presidency drew on the religious modernization in the French *laïcité* project, but in a way that was just as much an exodus from it. *Laïcité* the French way meant the colonialism and capitalism of the past, and at the same time, explicit distance to Soviet-leaning communist models of state atheism as well as an anti-religious leftism was also opposed. Anti-religious leftist approaches also belonged to a lower stage, whereas the more sophisticated model of African socialism and socialist *laïcité* the Senegalese way represented a techno-

⁴² Senghor, “*Laïcité*,” 424.

⁴³ Senghor, “*Laïcité*,” 424.

⁴⁴ Senghor, “*Laïcité*,” 423.

logical and working modernity with a cultural and spiritual dimension to which only the religions could contribute.

Souleymane Bachir Diagne points to this socialist laïcité model as being closer to “the ‘secularism’ of the pluralistic Anglo-Saxon model” (see also Wright, this volume).⁴⁵ The similarities with the Nordic socialisms, the social-democratic models of Denmark and Sweden especially (see also Hellström, this volume), are also apparent: here, too, integration models for state-religion relations were chosen, and also in this context, the common labor of the welfare state populations was spiritualized and religion culturalized.⁴⁶ However, the differences are also significant: the Nordic socialist models and frameworks for state-religion relations were often drafted by meso-level actors of religious modernist public intellectuals, whereas in the case of what became Senegalese republican religious modernism, the framework appears as much more systematically worked through and much more consciously crafted into reform work by socialist modernists themselves. In addition, the geopolitical situation in the decolonization phase made the socialism of the religious modernist state crafters in question more clearly Marxist, though in a systematically renewed way. The question is maybe then: were there concrete transnational exchanges between the African socialists that led to the crafting of the Republic of Senegal and their Nordic counterparts? Dia referred to the work of Gunnar Myrdal,⁴⁷ a social-democratic Swedish economist engaged in “development questions” post decolonization, but so did many others worldwide at the time.⁴⁸ Also, Dia traveled to Scandinavia on state visits while serving as prime minister, but he visited several states, including the USSR.⁴⁹ In the Nordics, Senghor was translated and published, but the question is how much his thought became a part of Nordic social democrat and socialist political discussions.⁵⁰ Maybe a clearer connection is that Paris was an arena for inspiration and dispute for religious modernists of the Nordics in the early twentieth century as well. A point of departure for further exploration that uses a transnational history approach could maybe rather be Paris as the meeting place for global exchange and critical development of socialist modernisms, whether for or against religion. Rather

45 Diagne, “Religion and the Public Sphere in Senegal,” 106.

46 Buchardt, “The Nordic Model,” 118–119.

47 Dia, *The African Nations*, 21.

48 E.g. Nina Trige Andersen, *Labor Pioneers. Economy, Labor, and Migration in Filipino-Danish Relations, 1950–2015* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2019), 69–75.

49 00193 – Voyages Mamadou DIA dans le pays suivant: Gambie, Londres, Yougoslavie, Scandinavie, URSS, Pologne et Tchécoslovaquie. Programme: documentation, 1962; Archives nationales du Sénégal (ANS), Dakar.

50 E.g. Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Mod en ny civilisation* [Towards a new civilization] (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1972).

than France as a cradle of modernity and secularization, Paris could in this sense be seen as an arena for breaking the French monopoly on enlightenment and secularism models, just as the metropolitan capital of the republican empire became the lab for challenging and breaking the empire down.

Altogether, studying the case of the religious modernist socialism that dominated the formative period of the Republic of Senegal offers a methodological exodus from Europeanism; a methodological provincializing of France, to paraphrase the historian of French colonialism and empire Frederick Cooper.⁵¹ Furthermore, the study of the reform efforts in question shows how education and enlightenment became political concepts and tools that included but also exceeded the question of formal education institutions.

Educational Senegalese religious modernist republicanism developed in a geopolitical context of post-WWII marked by decolonialization, the challenge of potential neocolonialization taking place within a new world order where the ideological and political battles between socialism, communism and capitalism took place in the tensions of the Cold War competition between the USSR and the Eastern bloc and the US and the Western bloc. Whether in ideological productions and disputes or in politics that either remained blueprints or were crafted as policy, the Senegalese republican program reinterpreted enlightenment in a socialist and African-centered way with universalist ambitions. In this sense, the case of Senegalese educational republican state crafting is to be understood as religious socialist modernization, and thus entails a potential for enabling deeper understandings of socialist modernities. To further study this – and also revisit well-known sources in order to do this – might potentially bring us closer to understanding the modernity of modern states, of which religious educational modernism forms a – though partly overlooked but nevertheless significant – part. This again points to the question of the connection between religious modernism and educational modernity.

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⁵¹ Cooper, “Provincializing France,” 342–344.

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Ondrej Kaščák, Eszter Neumann and Zuzana Danišková

The Pendulum of Secularization and De-secularization: Nationalism, State-church Relations and Religious Education in Hungary and Slovakia

Abstract: The chapter discusses the intersections of religion, nationalism, and education policy in Hungary and Slovakia by scrutinizing competing conceptions of the role of religious education and catechesis tuition in state-run schools over the last century and the elite struggles and expert debates shaping them. The historical analysis of secularization and de-secularization projects in education sheds light on political projects that seek to reimagine and craft the nation. The comparative discussion focuses specifically on the period since the 1989–90 political transition. In the past three decades, both countries have witnessed a desecularization trend. Not only has religion continued to implicitly shape the grammar of schooling, but as conservative political projects have incorporated religion into their nation-building ambitions, education has become a key site of the desecularization of the public sphere.

1 Introduction

The chapter explores how secularization and desecularization processes have historically affected education in two post-Socialist states, Hungary and Slovakia. We explore the intersections of religion, nationalism, and education policy by scrutinizing competing conceptions of the role of religious education and citizenship education in schools over time and the elite struggles and expert debates shaping them. Our research questions focus on the elite groups advocating for a secularized school curriculum and the groups seeking to make religious education an integral part of the curriculum and thereby de-secularize public schools. We also ask how these secularization and counter-secularization projects have sought to reimagine and craft the nation (see also Muratović, this volume).

Note: The chapter is based on the findings of Eszter Neumann's postdoctoral project, 'The increasing role of religion in education and education politics' (project. no. PD134398), funded by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office, Hungary, and supported by VEGA Agency research projects under Grant 1/0303/22.

We begin with a historical overview starting from the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, but the main discussion compares the desecularization processes since 1989 in the two countries. We argue that the debates over Religious/Faith education have been highly politicized and revolve around political elite and expert group conceptions of public education's mission to produce 'good citizens', members of the nation, and ultimately, good human beings. Public debates over religious education have typically intermingled with proposals for secular alternatives (Ethics, Citizenship education, Social studies, etc.). Nevertheless, they share similar characteristics in that the expert and political groups proposing these subjects have also tended to see them as a means of inculcating ethics, morality, citizenship, and national belonging in students. Therefore, policy work and expertise relating to religious education and its secular alternatives are deeply rooted in state-building projects and political battles over conceptions of national belonging (see also Tröhler, this volume).

The chapter contributes to discussions about secularization in the history of education field and aims to deepen the literature that sees secularization as a broad, multivocal, and complex political project and argues that religion has continued to be a formative force in the languages of education in the 20th and 21st centuries¹ (see also Buchardt, this volume). The two post-socialist countries are an example of societies in which religion has continued to implicitly shape the grammar of schooling alongside a growth in desecularization political projects knitting religion and nation-building closely together after the political transition. Education has thereby become a key site of the desecularization of the public sphere.

Following Buzalka² and Hesová,³ we contend that the desecularization trends in the public sector, including education, taking place in post-socialist countries, correspond to the political success of the conservative-nationalist agenda, which relies on religious discourses as a source of identity politics. While the religious beliefs and daily practices of the population in the two societies are being steadily secularized, the post-peasant integralism of populist politics, legitimized by the

1 Mette Buchardt, "The political project of secularization and modern education reform in provincialized Europe. Historical research in religion and education beyond Secularization R.I.P", *International Journal for the Historiography of Education* 2(2021); Daniel Tröhler, "Languages of education protestant legacies, national identities, and global aspirations", (New York: Routledge, 2011).

2 Juraj Buzalka, "The Post-socialist Integralism and Its Non-religious Origins," *Ethnology*, 4(2022): 475–492.

3 Zora Hesová, "The paradoxes of a return of religion to public debates and political discourses." in: *Traditional and non-traditional religiosity*, ed. Mirko Blagojevic and Dragan Todorovic (Belgrade: Institute for Social Sciences, 2019): 136–155.

strategy of identitarian Christianity,⁴ has gained significant popularity amongst non-religious people as well. Consequently, the political and popular support for moralizing arguments based on religious ideas, desecularization policies, and the sacralization of the nation does not reflect the spread and resurgence of religion and religious identity but is occurring amid the rise of non-religion.⁵

The historical overview draws on a secondary analysis and summary of the existing sociological and education history literature, while the discussion on the post-1989 developments in Hungary is based on an analysis of political speeches and expert interviews. The historical analysis of the situation in Slovakia is grounded in an analysis of political speeches and the professional discourse on education, mainly the work and speeches of curriculum experts. Our research perspective follows what Giudici⁶ has described as the claim-based approach to the study of nationalism and the curriculum. Proponents of this approach argue that nations should be analyzed as claims and that actors may define and understand the nation in various ways depending on their ideas, political goals, and interests. Therefore, empirical analyses of the intersections between nationalism and the curriculum should focus on the actors directly involved in curriculum policy, rather than cultural and political elites.

In the following, we explore the historical trajectories of Hungarian and Slovakian state policy on religious education in state-run schools and how these policies have been embedded in broader state-building projects and political battles to define the boundaries of the nation. Starting with the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, this chapter looks briefly at the political and expert debates on catechesis tuition in Hungarian and Slovak schools. Then, we discuss in greater detail the evolution of these debates after the 1989 regime change. In conclusion, we argue that over the last three decades both countries have witnessed a desecularization trend in the public sphere and we offer a comparative analysis of the converging and diverging patterns in the relationship between nation-building, religion, and education.

4 Rogers Brubaker, “Between nationalism and civilizationism: The European populist moment in comparative perspective”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 8 (2017): 1191–1226.

5 Buzalka, “The Post-socialist”, 475–492.

6 Anja Giudici, “Nationalism and the curriculum: Analytical and methodological considerations”, in *Handbook of Curriculum Theory and Research*, ed. Peter Trifonas and Susan Jagger (Cham: Springer, 2023).

2 A Brief History of Religious/Faith Education in Hungary and Slovakia

Following the education reforms implemented by the government formed during the 1848–49 Hungarian revolution which aimed to secularize state education and the curriculum, as part of the strict retaliatory measures after the crackdown of the revolution, the Austrian empire began a policy of forceful re-Catholicization, attacking schools thought to be hiding the anti-Habsburg teacher-intelligentsia.⁷ However, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 led to a secularizing turn. In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, responsibility for governing education in the Hungarian territories (Transleithania, the Carpathian basin, which includes part of Slovakia today) came under the remit of the Hungarian Parliament and compulsory education was seen as key to shaping citizen identities in the multinational state.⁸ There was no common citizenship; the citizens of the Monarchy were issued either a Hungarian or Austrian passport. Hungarian civic and patriotic education policies reflected the political imperative of reconciling culture-nation (Kulturnation) and state-nation (Staatsnation) conceptions of participating in the national community. According to the state-nation concept embraced by the ruling liberal Hungarian elites, all minorities were to be considered equal individual members of the Hungarian nation. Under the culture-nation framework, the goal of state-run education was to ensure that all pupils were taught the Hungarian language and Hungarian cultural heritage, especially literature, history, and geography. Therefore, in the multinational Hungarian state, patriotic education was aimed at Hungarian culture and fostering loyalty to the Hungarian state, and ensuring that no minority group was excluded from the nation based on confessional or ethnic or regional identity. Given the political goals of unification and linguistic assimilation, confessional Religious/Faith education⁹ ran counter to the goals of patriotic socialization since Religious/Faith education was often the only

7 Péter Tibor Nagy, “Az állam–egyház–oktatás-kapcsolat megváltozása Trianon után (The changing relationship of state-church-education after Trianon),” in: Péter Tibor Nagy *Járszalag és aréna*, (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000): 71–88.

8 Ildikó Szabó, “Nemzetfogalom és nemzeti identitás a dualizmus korában és a Horthy-korszakban [The concept of the nation and national identity during the dual Monarchy and in the Horthy-era],” *Politikatudományi Szemle*, 1 (2005): 201–248.

9 We use the term Religious/Faith education to refer to a subject where the goal is to teach the catechism and the teachings of a particular religion and socialize believers, rather than teach students about multiple religions as social phenomena (as is the case in more pluralist and multiculturalist approaches to religious education found in most parts of secularized Western Europe).

subject taught in minority languages in state-run and denominational schools in the multi-ethnic regions.¹⁰ It was a policy that failed to secure the collective rights of minorities and led to the growing rejection of the concept of Hungarian nationhood, as well as support for linguistic-cultural separation and national independence amongst the minorities. After 1890, clerical political forces, opposed to urban secular lifestyles and the social transformations associated with Jewish assimilation, became increasingly critical of such a broad concept of state-nation membership, and there was a growing conservative political strand that defined “good Hungarians” in association with antiliberalism and antiradicalism¹¹

Following the Versailles Treaty, Hungary and the Czechoslovak Republic became independent states. In 1918, under the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, Religious/Faith education was made optional, but a year later the subject became compulsory again. The Horthy era (1920–1944) was associated with the parallel secularization of society and increasing desecularization of Hungarian politics. In this period, Hungary became an authoritarian democracy led by Miklós Horthy a vice-admiral who became regent, and while it had a functioning multi-party parliament, civil liberties and political pluralism were increasingly curtailed. In the interwar period, consecutive Hungarian governments pursued programs aimed at bolstering the Christian-nationalist foundations of the Hungarian state and fighting the spread of Bolshevism. This revisionist ideology was based on the belief that the borders established under the 1920 Treaty of Trianon were temporary and that the ultimate political goal was to restore the pre-war boundaries of ‘Great Hungary’.¹² The previous compromise and fluidity between the definitions of state-nation and culture-nation came to an end since the very core of the state ideology was that the boundaries of the Hungarian nation were exclusively defined by the culturally, linguistically, and historically integrated community of Magyars – which excluded Jews too. Good Hungarians were defined by Christian origin and behaved according to certain norms. Antisemitism, which fed into increasingly exclusionary state policies from the early 1920s, was a cornerstone of this ideology, and expected of those exhibiting truly national sentiment and patriotic behavior.¹³

While other postwar European societies and politics underwent a process of rapid secularization and the separation of state and church. In Hungary, the conservative-nationalist governments took a radically different path through ever

10 Nagy, “Az állam”, 71–88.; Szabó, “Nemzetfogalom”, 201–248.

11 Nagy, “Az állam”, 71–88.; Szabó, “Nemzetfogalom”, 201–248.

12 Ildikó Szabó, “Nemzeti szocializáció a két világháború között Magyarországon [Nationalist socialization in Hungary in the interwar era],” *Iskolakultúra*, 27(2007): 50–70.

13 Szabó, “Nemzeti”, 50–70.

closer state-church relations and by crafting a “Christian education policy” and national identity founded in political Christianity.¹⁴ In 1920, daily worship, the so called “Magyar hiszekegy”, a verse recited at the start of the school day that explicitly lent teleological justification to the irredentist national ideal, Sunday church attendance, and Religious/Faith education were compulsory in state-run schools. Forging a past-centered, resentful national identity, the government sought allies in the Protestant and Catholic churches. Catholic and Calvinist church leaders took a leading role in crafting the official ‘Christian national’ ideology of the Horthy regime and its antisemitic political discourse. Under the steady secularization of society, religious elites were dependent on the national ideology to maintain their influence over the education system, which pushed them to emphasize the shared elements of nationalism and Christianity and downplay universal religious values and the commitment to social issues in their politics and rhetoric.¹⁵

The main goal of Hungarian education policy, founded on the idea of ‘cultural superiority’ and making Hungary the most educated and prosperous nation in the region, was the pursuit of Christian and patriotic education.¹⁶ It took an anti-liberal turn, justified by the rhetorical denunciation of the anti-clericalism of the 1919 Soviet Republic, and patriotic education was attributed a central role in Religious/Faith education.¹⁷ This novel alliance between patriotic and Religious/Faith education was made possible because in the wake of the Trianon treaty the churches were no longer perceived as supporters of the independence ambitions of ethnic groups (Serbian, Romanian, Slovak).

In the interwar period, the desecularization of education deepened: references to the Christian nation became increasingly dominant in school ceremonies and the humanities curriculum and textbooks. By the 1930s, new subjects and other regulative tools pushed teachers toward patriotic and Christian loyalty, and model behavior. In sum, in the interwar period, education policy underwent a nationalist turn and a process of desecularization. Religious/Faith education played a key role in reshaping the boundaries of the nation; it helped reframe Christianity by associating it with political Conservatism and its political forces, provided legitimacy to political anti-Semitism; and – under the threat of symbolic punishment – forced students to participate in institutionalized religious socialization.¹⁸

14 Nagy, “Az állam”, 71–88.

15 Nagy, “Az állam”, 71–88.

16 Magdolna Rébay, “Az autonómia határai(n) [On the borders of autonomy],” *Iskolakultúra*, 20-(2010): 74–86.

17 Nagy, “Az állam”, 71–88.

18 Nagy, “Az állam”, 71–88.

In the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1939) education was secularized and modernized, and in contrast to the “conservative Hungarian empire . . . left-wing ideas prevailed, particularly during the early years”.¹⁹ The first draft of the constitution even envisaged the division of church and state, although this proposal would later be omitted from the final version. Ultimately, ‘National Schools’, a mixture of state-run (municipal) and non-state (private, denominational) establishments, were founded. One of the goals was to nationalize education and limit the church’s influence over education.²⁰ Nonetheless, religious education remained a mandatory subject, while a new subject, Civic Studies, was introduced. Modeled on the French curriculum, it was an alternative subject whose purpose was to forge the new Czechoslovak statehood and identity. Religious/Faith education became an optional subject, and religious practices and rituals were abolished in state schools. However, there were noticeable cultural and regional differences in religious education provision: for instance, in Bohemia and Moravia religious education was not compulsory in upper secondary school, while in the Slovak territories, religion was taught throughout secondary school. After the Hungarian teachers had departed from the Slovak territories, the gap was filled by Czech teachers pursuing the agenda of creating a new Czechoslovak nation. However, this agenda clashed with the Slovak religious traditions in schools. Unlike in the Czech Lands, most Slovak schools continued to be maintained by the church.

On 14 March 1939, Slovak independence was announced amid great pressure from Nazi Germany. Jozef Tiso, a Catholic priest, became the prime minister and six months later was appointed president. He was a key figure in the Hlinka Slovak People’s Party, which fought for Slovak independence throughout the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1939) and pursued a program rooted in strong nationalism and Catholicism. It was most heavily promoted through education policy and reform. The folk school law, ratified in 1940, represented a major departure from the secularized Czechoslovak education tradition. The education minister, Jozef Sivák (in office from 1939 until 1944), stated in a speech on the bill, that the intention was for these schools to be church schools, while state schools had been founded in the Czechoslovak Republic for “state political reasons”. He declared that “religious moral and national education” required “a unitary type of compulsory church folk

19 Soňa Gabzdilová, *Školský systém na Slovensku v medzivojnovnej Československej republike 1918–1938* [Education system in Slovakia in the interwar Czechoslovak Republic 1918–1938.] (Košice: UPJŠ, 2014): 4.

20 Igor Marks and Daniel Lajčín, “Anton Štefánek a slovenské školstvo v medzivojnovnom období – vybrané problémy [Anton Štefánek and Slovak education in the interwar period – selected issues],” (Brno: Tribun EU, 2017).

school”.²¹ Although some sort of “neutral municipal folk school” was allowed, it had a marginal role in the education system. The ideological dimension of education policy is evident in the way Sivák distanced himself from liberal social politics, claiming that in the Slovak State “we have eliminated the liberal view of the state in economic and social life”.²² Although the independent Slovak Republic, which collaborated with the Nazis, only lasted until the end of the Second World War, its discourse on national identity, underpinned by collective ideas about Slovak sovereignty was reignited later when the issues of Slovak autonomy and independence came to the fore once again. In this period, the education system underwent intense desecularization, while educational modernization was almost completely stalled.

Following the Communist takeover, in both Hungary and the common socialist state of Czechoslovakia, the schools – including almost all the church-run ones – were nationalized in 1948. Under Communist rule, the full-scale secularization of education was aimed not at creating national subjects but at promoting the universal Communist ideology and the notion of ‘socialist patriotism’ in schools. To create Socialist subjects, Jozef Mátej (1923–1987), a prominent Communist and lecturer in pedagogy, included scientific socialism (also known as scientific atheism) among the basic principles of Czechoslovak Communist education policy (1981) (see also Kyselov, this volume).

With scientific socialism and thus also atheism as the official ideology in state schools, all religious thinking and content was eliminated from the curriculum. The teaching of scientific socialism/atheism was part of a ‘worldview education’ based on “Marxist-Leninist ideology as a coherent system of philosophical, economic and social-political ideas”²³ and was introduced in the late fifties in Czechoslovakia and gradually from the early sixties in Hungary. Worldview education, defined as a counterforce to religious education, was not taught as a separate school subject but formed the basis of the educational content of all subjects in Czechoslovakia. However, In Hungary, reflecting the easing of ideological pressure on religious practices as well as on the everyday lives of schools by the late

21 Snem Slovenskej republiky, *Tesnopisecká zpráva o 51. zasadnutí Snemu Slovenskej republiky v Bratislave v utork 26, novembra 1940* [Stenographic report of the 51st session of the Parliament of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava on Tuesday 26 November 1940]. (Bratislava: Parliament, 1940): 11.

22 “Snem Slovenskej republiky”, 11.

23 Matej Beňo, “Světónázorová regulácia ako základná podmienka optimalizácie výchovno-vzdelávacej práce v škole [Ideological regulation as the basis for optimizing education in schools],” *Pedagogika*, 32(1983): 8.

sixties and seventies, it was introduced as a distinct secondary school subject.²⁴ In Czechoslovakia, this explicit political socialization, sometimes referred to as worldview ‘regulation’, waned during the Prague Spring (1968) but was pursued with greater vehemence from the early seventies until the fall of the Iron Curtain. Hence, Hann’s²⁵ claims that “the chief feature of socialist secularization . . . was the state’s aggressive propagation of scientific atheism. . . . the transmission of religion was confined to the domestic sphere”. In 1978, in Hungary, a subject called citizenship studies was introduced as part of primary education.

3 From a Consensus on Worldview Neutrality in Schools to the Politics of Christian Upbringing: Hungarian Policies and Expert Debates after the Political Transition

Following the political transition, relations between church and state – the initiative to reintroduce Religious/Faith education and allow churches to re-establish schools – were at the forefront of the public debates about education in Hungary. The new government elected in 1990 self-identified as a Christian-national government and – after the forced secularization of education during state socialism – promised “spiritual and moral revival” in the schools.²⁶ The new educational administration proposed to reintroduce Religious/Faith education and integrate it into the curriculum. However, two intellectual camps formed quickly and a heated debate and cultural war broke out concerning the issue. Conservative elite groups continued to lobby for making Religious/Faith education an integral part of the curriculum, yet church leaders remained relatively passive in the debate. The other side, mostly left-wing liberal experts and policy-makers, opposed the idea of making ‘compulsory Religious/Faith education’ an integral part of the curriculum, and

24 Péter Tibor Nagy, “Az iskolai hittanoktatás visszaszorulása [The decline of faith education in schools],” *Iskolakultúra*, 11(2001): 36–45.

25 Chris Hann, “Broken chains and moral lazarets: The politicization, juridification and commodification of religion after socialism,” in *Religion, identity, postsocialism*, ed. Chris Hann (Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, 2010): 12.

26 Péter Tibor Nagy, “Hittan-oktatás [Faith-education],” *Educatio*, 4(1994): 89–105.

argued in favor of ‘worldview neutrality’ in public education.²⁷ They stated that making parents choose between the two options would force them to express their worldviews in public and that would lead schools to place political pressure on families. That was deemed incompatible with democratic norms and the separation of church and state. They suggested instead that Religious/Faith education should be optional and that students should be able to choose an alternative subject, either one offering a pluralist view of the history of religion or Moral studies (“Erkölcsstan”).

In the end, seeking compromise, the educational administration abandoned the idea of integrating Religious/Faith education into the curriculum. Under the Fourth Act of 1990, schools could offer optional Religious/Faith education in public schools as an after-school subject) and organized by the churches. School principals were told they should offer “protected time” for Religious/Faith education at times when there were no other extracurricular activities so there were no timetable clashes with Religious/Faith education lessons, and school leaders were forbidden from recording attendance in faith education. Experts at the Ministry of Education began designing a subject called Moral studies, but the most traditional and influential churches opposed the idea and, by 1991, policymakers had backed away from the initiative.²⁸

The early 1990s were dominated by the debate on worldview neutrality, which was essentially driven by the underlying question of whether it is possible to define the difference between public and church-run education systems.²⁹ While left-wing liberal experts argued that public schools should teach worldview-neutral knowledge (in contrast to church-run education), conservative experts and Catholic intellectuals contended that it was an impossible goal since some kind of worldview was taught in all education and that public schools should offer moral education instead. In 1993, the constitutional court ruled that public schools should be committed to worldview neutrality, and the 1993 Education Act stated that Religious/Faith education could only be taught as an after-school subject in state-run educational institutions.

While Religious/Faith education remained an after-school option until 2012, the debates over which alternative subject should become part of the curriculum reflected political and professional positions on how schools should teach pupils to

27 Curricular experts associated with the leftwing-liberal political bloc argued that social or citizenship studies should become part of the curriculum, but were only able to introduce it into the history curriculum. In the early nineties, teaching materials for social studies (“Társadalomismeret”) were created by adapting US textbooks and activity books for the Hungarian education system (rather than following the European citizenship studies approach).

28 Nagy, “Hittan-oktatás”, 89–105.

29 Nagy, “Hittan-oktatás”, 89–105.

become citizens. A subject called “Human studies” (“Emberismeret”) was created in the late eighties. The primary author and developer, István Kamarás, repeatedly called it a unique ‘Hungarian pedagogic innovation’ with the pedagogical aim of teaching social values and norms within a broad anthropological framework.³⁰ Its creators would describe it as “integrating the descriptive (psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, political studies, ecology) and normative human sciences (ethics, philosophical anthropology)”.³¹ As a result of the advocacy work of an expert group working on Human studies, Human studies were incorporated into the “People and Society” knowledge area for pupils in first to tenth grade under the 1995 revision of the national curriculum. However, proponents of the subject were never satisfied with assurances that it would be implemented in schools.

Looking at this from a political and sociological perspective, although Human studies was a third-way compromise between the bipolar politicization of the debates over the status of Religious/Faith education (propagated by conservative nationalist elites) and Civic education/Social studies (propagated by Western-oriented liberal elite groups), it never became a full part of the curriculum. When the national curriculum was revised in 1998 under a conservative government, the time allocation was reduced by two thirds to one lesson per week in grades 7 and 11 as part of humanities. Throughout the following decade, church leaders remained suspicious of the subject seeing in it a rival to faith education.

The Social-Liberal coalition regained political power in 2002, and a new expert group, mostly associated with the liberal education administration, became involved in shaping the social studies subjects. Following the pedagogy of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, they advocated for a so-called ‘value-articulation pedagogic model’, prioritizing debate and consensus-seeking in lessons. These ‘liberal’ experts had very clear ideas about the methodology for teaching these subjects. Social studies subjects were introduced in schools as part of the broader methodological turn of the early 2000s, when liberal education policy-makers sought to Europeanize schools and introduce child-centered and child-led teaching methods. “Social studies” was conceived of as a site for modeling the liberal view of democratic socialization and critiquing the traditional knowledge-centered and teacher-led lessons characteristic of Hungarian schools.³² They adapted the work of Robert Fischer and Matthew Lipman’s “Philosophy for Education” for the new teaching materials.

30 Enikő Gönczöl and Jakab György, “Az iskolai erkölcsstanoktatás dilemmái [The dilemmas of teaching ethics in schools], *Új Pedagógiai Szemle*, 6(2012): 52–55.

31 István Kamarás, Emberismeret és etika nálunk és más nemzeteknél [Human studies and ethics at us and at other nations], *Iskolakultúra*, 10(2009): 125–132.

32 Gönczöl and Jakab, “Az iskolai”, 52–55.

Since 2010, Hungary has been governed by the Christian conservative coalition of Fidesz and the Christian Democratic People's Party and has witnessed a significant desecularization and nationalist turn in education policy. The new education secretary (in office between 2010–14), a prominent member of the Christian Democratic People's Party, advocated Christian teaching as the main goal of Hungarian education.³³ In 2011 with no adequate preparation or negotiation, the education minister proposed that first to eighth grade pupils would have to choose between “Faith/Religious education” and “Ethics”. Parliament ratified the proposal and “Faith education” became part of the curriculum and since then it has been taught once a week in state-run schools. This move was criticized by the Roman Catholic elite who were worried that if children attended Religious/Faith education in school, they would be less likely to attend the catechism courses held by the church.

The 2012 national curriculum was revised to include “People and Society”, a subject area comprising ethics, country and nation studies/cultural heritage, social, citizenship, and economic studies taught in first to twelfth grade, and philosophy taught in secondary school. Two new subject areas were introduced in first to fourth grade, Ethics and Media studies – teaching values and norms as well as reflecting on the social experiences of students.³⁴ “Social studies” was removed from the secondary school curriculum. As a result of the continued lobbying by liberal expert groups that had previously created the humanities and social studies modules, the new subject of Ethics was incorporated into what had previously been humanities studies, while more extensive religious education modules were added.³⁵

Using EU funds for professional development, these liberal experts hijacked and appropriated the Ethics subject and, continuing their earlier agenda of changing teaching methods, engaged in developing written and audiovisual learning materials for Ethics lessons and organized teacher training and knowledge exchange for Ethics teachers between 2012 and 2015. They developed interactive materials which, following a constructivist pedagogic approach and narrative psychology, centered on active learning based on the students' own experiences and concentrated on debating and discussions. After 2015, the influence of this expert group faded and the books they created were censored along with the political views, and certain modules and topics, such as migration, were omitted. During the 2010s, the

33 Eszter Neumann, “Education for a Christian nation: Religion and nationalism in the Hungarian education policy discourse,” *European Educational Research Journal*, 22(2023): 646–665.

34 György Jakab, “Erkölcstan és médiaismeret a gyermekfilozófia tükrében [Ethics and media studies in the light of Children's philosophy],” *Új Pedagógiai Szemle*, 6(2012): 99–110.

35 István Kamarás, “Tanítható-e az erkölcs? [Can Ethics be taught?],” *Neveléstudomány*, 4(2013): 6–20.

two expert circles involved in creating the Ethics and Religious/Faith education curriculum did not collaborate and the content, goals, and expectations of the two subjects were not harmonized.³⁶

Attempts to desecularize Hungarian education culminated in the 2020 amendment to Base Law (the Constitution) which states,

Every child has the right to the necessary care and protection appropriate to his or her physical, cognitive, and moral development. Hungary protects children's right to identity according to their birth sex, and their right to education according to our country's constitutional identity and value system based on Christian culture.

The situation in Hungary is a clear case of what Marzouki and colleagues³⁷ describe as a right-wing populist political strategy to hi-jack and co-opt religion and sacralize politics to gain political legitimacy. But unlike in Slovakia and Poland, the Catholic and Calvinist church elites have not taken the initiative in setting the political agenda or shaping the political discourse. Instead, they publicly approve of the government's Christian identity politics and utilize the generous state subsidies and resources so they can build their own, denominational institutional systems. Similarly, to in other countries with influential extreme-right and populist forces, a transnational morality politics agenda (e.g. banning gender studies departments, anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and the moral panic around protecting children) has dominated the education policy agenda since 2018;³⁸ however, it is driven by the political rhetoric of populist politicians and not church actors.

4 Towards New Alliances with the Church – Post-socialist Slovakia

At the beginning of the 1990s, questions arose over the future of the common Czechoslovak state. The frenetic debates concluded in a political agreement that the two nations should part ways, and so in 1993 the Slovak Republic was founded. With it came the need for national self-definition, which usually draws on the 'collective memory', consisting of short-term communicative memory and long-term or

³⁶ Andrea Alexandrov, Andrea Fenyődi and Jakab György, "Az erkölcsstan tantárgy útkeresése [The path-seeking of the ethics subject]," *Iskolakultúra*, 9(2015): 56–74.

³⁷ Nadia Marzouki, Duncan McDonnell and Oliver Roy, eds. *Saving the People: How Populists Hijack Religion*, (London: Hurst and Company, 2016).

³⁸ Zora Hesová, "New politics of morality in Central and Eastern Europe," *Intersections*, 1(2021): 59–77.

historical cultural memory.³⁹ The ‘living’ communicative memory stretched back to the first independent state – the fascist Slovak Republic – and the historical-cultural memory to the first Slavonic empire – the Great Moravian Empire and the arrival of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 863. The narratives of political and church leaders drew on these two components of collective memory in the 1990s. Furthermore, they emphasized “an exclusive interpretation of Christianity” (413) that was typically found among Slovaks (and not Czechs). Given the fall of Communism, the ongoing democratization, and national identity-building, it comes as no surprise that an extensive shift towards desecularization was occurring in education. Legislation passed in 1991 put church schools on an equal footing. “Religious/Faith education” was offered as an optional subject supported by church funding. It attracted great interest and a curriculum was created for it in 1992.⁴⁰ Since 1993 lower secondary pupils can choose between either “Religious/Faith education” (in which catechism typically plays a strong role) or “Ethics education”. And so religion became part of state education as well. According to Rothgangel⁴¹ this desecularization shift and the “recourse to established conservative Christian traditions, which corresponds to a catechetical orientation of religious education, has met the need to secure identity”.

The desecularization trend in education continued in the new millennium. An important milestone was the ratification of the Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See on Catholic Upbringing and Education (2004), which drew on the Basic Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See. Around the same time the Slovak Republic signed an agreement with the Registered Churches and Religious Societies on Religious Upbringing and Education (2004), according to which Religious/Faith education was made an ‘elective mandatory subject’ starting from the first grade of primary school. That meant that all pupils had to choose between “Religious/Faith education” and “Ethics education”, both of which came under the “People and Values” education area.⁴² At first glance it would appear that Religious/Faith education and Ethics education are aimed at different audiences – the former to religious pupils and the latter to non-religious

39 Martin Rothgangel, “The RE-puzzle of the visegrád-group and the answer of “collective memory”, *Religion & Education*, 48(2021): 397–416.

40 Tibor Reimer, “Religious education at schools in Slovakia, in: *Religious education at schools in Europe. Part 1: Central Europe*”, ed. Martin. Rothgangel, Martin Jäggle and Thomas Schlag (Goettingen: V&R Unipress, 2015): 223–248.

41 Rothgangel, “The RE-puzzle”, 412.

42 Ondrej Kaščák and Zuzana Danišková, “For God and for nation! The ideologisation of schools and education under the changing relationship between church and state in Slovakia,” *Human Affairs*, 2(2022): 169.

pupils. Our analysis⁴³ however, shows that the concepts underpinning “Ethics education” were based on Christian foundations and thus were compatible in terms of values (see also respectively Hellström, this volume). “Ethics education” therefore avoided sensitive topics that might upset conservatives (discussing ethical dilemmas, topics based on the philosophy of children, etc.). This supports our hypothesis that the secularist tendency in the Slovak school curriculum was weakening at that time.

Since the early 2000s, the Catholic church has become a powerful stakeholder in education policy issues and has been very active in pedagogical debates, several of which have had curricular consequences. In 2001 the Slovak Episcopal Conference strongly protested against yoga in schools, and since 2009 it has repeatedly instigated anti-abortion wars, and since 2018 anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ ones,⁴⁴ using the language of the conservative battle against liberalism. This tension has also influenced discussions on the education reform, proposed as part of Slovakia’s Recovery and Resilience Plan (2021).

According to the latest reform plan, primary school teaching will follow a three-cycle system. The first two cycles correspond to the initial five years of primary education and the third cycle to the four years of lower secondary education. Concerning social sciences and humanities, the curriculum has undergone considerable alteration, continuing and resuscitating the legacy of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

Social sciences and the humanities used to come under the education area of “People and Society”. Up until fifth grade, it is now a single subject with the same name, and in lower secondary education, schools can opt to keep it as one subject or to offer two separate subjects. The new name of the primary level subject is a major change. It was formerly, since 1930–33, known as “Vlastiveda”, based on the Prussian conception of “Heimatkunde”.⁴⁵ The content of the new subject, called “People and Society”, is intended to produce citizens who engage actively in events around them. And, as has been the case in Hungary since 2012, media studies has been introduced within the subject as a new theme/module at the primary level.

As the “People and Society” education area used to comprise other subjects – Ethics and Religious/Faith education – the name refers to the new subject only

⁴³ Kaščák and Danišková, “For God”, 162–179.

⁴⁴ Marián Sekerák, “The spectre of liberalism is haunting Europe: Political interventions of the Slovak Catholic hierarchy and its struggle for ‘traditional values’,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 23 (2022): 424–443.

⁴⁵ Dominik Dvořák and Michaela Dvořáková, Společenskovědní vzdělávání [Social Studies] in: *Proměny primárního vzdělávání v ČR* [Changes in Primary Education], ed. Vladimíra Spilková et al. (Praha: Portál, 2005): 209–223.

and it is not an education area. Initially, there were fears that the new structure would lead to the marginalization of these other subjects;⁴⁶ however, the curriculum authors⁴⁷ reassured skeptics that the decision to move these subjects to a different education area was not just a formality but was intended to benefit both subjects.

“Religious education” and “Ethics education” will now be part of a designated [education] area that will include civic education, history, and geography. There will therefore be greater opportunity for them to become part of education as a whole, rather than being relegated to the periphery and the ‘leisure pursuits’ zone. It will now be possible to maximize the potential of both religious studies and ethics’.⁴⁸

As we noted, “Religious/Faith education” and “Ethics education” are selective subjects, with pupils choosing one or the other. The authors of an older conceptual document, “Učíace sa Slovensko”⁴⁹ outlining the direction of Slovak education in the coming years, recommended abolishing its selective status and making Ethics compulsory for all students. They argued that the historical reasons for the two subjects being selective no longer applied and so there was no reason for them to be offered as alternatives. However, that scenario was unlikely for both practical and conceptual reasons, as under the Treaty, “Religious/Faith” education has to be offered as a selective subject. The expert debates also led to the following change: both religious education and ethics remained selective subjects, with pupils choosing one or the other, and a model was created whereby many ethical issues could be taught outside ethics. To some extent, ethics teaching is aimed at all pupils: the “People and Society” education area consists of four components (geographical, historical, civic and ethical and personal development). The existence of the ethical and personal development component ensures that ethical issues are a mandatory part of the school curriculum. When stating that the current changes are reshaping the post-communist rules of the game, the changes we have in mind relate to the ethics paradigm. Neither the optional subject of

46 Tibor Reimer, “Vnímam snahy dostať náboženskú výchovu v školách na vedľajšiu koľaj [I am aware of attempts to sideline religious education],” *Denník Postoj*, February 1, 2022, accessed July 15, 2023 <https://svetkrestanstva.postoj.sk/98054/vnimam-snahy-dostat-nabozensku-vychovu-v-skolach-na-vedlajsiu-kolaj>.

47 Branislav Pupala, “Na matematike veľa meniť netreba, vyrovnať sa musíme s občianskou náukou [Mathematics doesn’t need changing much, we need to tackle civics],” *Denník Postoj*, March 8, 2022, accessed July 15, 2023 <https://www.postoj.sk/100973/na-matematike-vela-menit-ne-treba-vysporiadat-sa-musime-s-obcianskou-naukou>.

48 Pupala, “Na matematike”.

49 Vladimír Burjan et al. *Učíace sa Slovensko [Slovakia is Learning]*. (Bratislava: Ministry of Education, 2017): 59.

ethics nor the ethical and personal development component come under the former ‘pro-social teaching’ paradigm, which has the effect of negating some of the objections outlined in our previous analysis.⁵⁰ Ethics and the ethical and personal development components were based on “Character education”⁵¹ and, like the subject content of “People and Society” or “Civic Education” (an optional subject offered in cycle three), contain new, more up-to-date topics. On the one hand, the subject content now includes topics that have greater relevance to pupils’ lives (e.g. defending one’s dignity when confronted with manipulative or violent behavior; attempted abuse; responding appropriately to bullying; sexual abuse), applied ethics (healthy lifestyles, ethics in economics, environmental and ethical awareness and religiosity (inter-religious dialogue, dialogue between religious and non-religious people), as well as the possibility of entering into philosophical dialogue with pupils on ethics topics and resolving moral dilemmas (war, animal rights, genetic interventions).⁵²

Right from the start, the State Pedagogical Institute in charge of creating the new curriculum adopted an open and transparent approach, creating teams for each education area convening both academics and other stakeholders. Members included not just teachers and primary school heads but also those working in the third sector and professional organizations (*Slovak Mathematics Society, Slovak Geographical Society*). The range of opinions inevitably led to disagreements on pedagogy, but also on values relating to ethically sensitive topics.

Another way in which ethical and personal development has been bolstered in the absence of religious value formation is through so-called thematic days. Schools have to hold at least four thematic days of six lessons in the first half of the school year in the second and third education cycles.⁵³ The focus of these thematic days is on developing cross-curricular literacy.

For each cross-cutting literacy area, a team of experts created a set of standards and then incorporated the relevant cross-cutting literacy standards into the education area standards. One of the traditional cross-cutting themes was “Marriage and parenting”, and initially, the plan was to rename it “Relationships and sex education”, but in the end, it was added to “Social and emotional literacy”. This was a political decision, made by the education ministry along with various

50 Kaščák and Danišková, “For God”, 162–179.

51 Marwin W. Berkowitz, Melinda C. Bier and Brian McCauley, “Toward a science of character education: Frameworks for Identifying and Implementing Effective Practices,” *Journal of Character Education*, 1(2017): 33–51.

52 *Štátny vzdelávací program pre základné vzdelávanie* [Stage education programme for primary education]. (Bratislava: ŠPU, 2023): 514–563.

53 “Štátny vzdelávací program”, 8–9.

changes to the wording of issues relating to intimacy, sexuality, and the family.⁵⁴ The ministry's decision was met by a media debate about the teaching of sex education. Schools can offer their own such subject, based on the cross-cutting literacies and using unallocated teaching hours, but there has never been any suggestion of it becoming a compulsory subject. Moreover, in this climate, the decision by a non-state publishing house to produce a textbook on sex education inflamed the debate. The decision to offer ethics to a wider group of pupils was further complicated by a member of parliament proposing that parents would have to be informed as to who would be teaching the lessons and the nature of the content and materials used, parental consent would also have to be obtained and if the lessons were not in line with the parent's philosophical or religious beliefs then the child could be withdrawn.⁵⁵

Regarding Religious/Faith education, one of the authors involved in creating the Roman Catholic curriculum⁵⁶ declared that even pupils with no religious background should be instructed into the faith. However, religious education aims to develop pupil's religious faith and religious competencies and make pupils aware of their religious faith and that of others in all its complexity. It should not be seen as a means of converting pupils but as part of the general knowledge taught in schools. In that sense, religious teaching may play a more specific role in church schools, where the instruction may differ from that in state schools, as is the case in other school systems.⁵⁷ Thus, for the first time after 1993, the secularization of religious education in public education was also discussed.

54 Minister školstva vysvetľoval, ako to bolo s jeho zásahom do učiva o vzťahoch a sexualite [Education minister explains how he intervened in the syllabus on relationships and sexuality]. TV Markíza, broadcast February 19, 2023 https://tvnoviny.sk/domace/clanok/646983-minister-skolstva-vysvetloval-ako-to-bolo-s-jeho-zasahom-do-uciva-o-vztahoch-a-sexualite?campaignsrc=tn_clipboardRTVS.

55 Sexuálna výchova len so súhlasom rodiča vyvolala zmiešané reakcie. Podľa pedagóga ide v zahraničí o bežnú prax [Sex education with parental consent provokes a mixed reaction. Pedagogues say it is normal practice abroad]. RTVS, broadcast May 22, 2023 <https://spravy.rtvsk.sk/2023/05/sexualna-vychova-len-so-suhlasom-rodica-by-rozdelila-deti-na-dva-tabory-nie-je-to-stastne-roz-hodnutie-tvrdi-psychologicka/>.

56 Reimer, "Vnímam".

57 Pupala, "Na matematike".

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The comparative analysis explored how secularization and counter-secularization projects are reflected in education and policies concerning Religious/Faith education in particular. We argued that the expert debates on Religious/Faith education have been highly politicized and offer an insight into the political projects of socializing national subjects in different periods of nation-building in Central-Eastern Europe. The historical comparison highlighted that initiatives related to teaching ethics and morality in schools are deeply intertwined with the broader education policy and nation-building projects. In the Slovak case, the political support for secularized and de-secularized content and areas of education is directly linked to the attainment of national independence. Educational secularization processes prevailed during periods when Slovakia was part of a multi-ethnic state formation, for example, the Czechoslovak Republics (1918–1939, 1945–1960) and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (1960–1990). Conversely, when Slovakia was an independent state with no direct ties to the Czechs and Moravians (Slovak Republic 1939–1945; Slovak Republic 1993–present day), de-secularization tendencies strengthened and the Catholic Church in particular wielded great influence over the formation of the curriculum and the education system itself. In the political discourse, Catholicism has been presented as a key element of Slovak national identity in an attempt to distinguish it from other nations and ethnicities. This discourse was most vocal during the transitional periods between the common states and the emerging independent Slovak states (namely in 1939 and 1993).

In the case of Hungary, the idea of the Christian nation and correspondingly the amalgamation of Christian and patriotic education have been key elements of the identity politics of right-wing conservative political forces since the interwar era. In both countries, this alliance was disrupted during communism, when the explicit goal of teaching the universalist ideology of “socialist patriotism”, accompanied by a direct policy of secularizing education, was to suppress national sentiments and Christian identifications. After the fall of communism, education reform, and discussions on the position of Religious/Faith education, ethics, morality, and citizenship specifically, played a central role in political projects calling for a return to traditional national identifications. Therefore, the historical overview highlighted that secularization and de-secularization projects alternated like a pendulum. However, the pendulum never returns in the same way; secularization and de-secularization processes respond to new sentiments of educational realities, discourses, and ideologies shaped by unique actors.

In Hungary, the building of the post-socialist national identity has not led to the strong desecularization of the education sector. Instead, for two decades it resulted in a compromise between the political left and right, based on the principle

of separating church and state and, correspondingly, a consensus about the “world-view neutrality” of education. The humanities curriculum never allowed much space for curricular content relating to social studies and citizenship education; nevertheless, what did appear in the curriculum mostly reflected the preferences of liberal expert groups, and Religious/Faith education was excluded from the compulsory national curriculum. In the case of Slovakia, Religious/Faith education was integrated into the public education curriculum as early as 1993 as an alternative to Ethics. Moreover, the Catholic church yields greater influence on education policies as well as on the formation of post-socialist national identity. Unlike in Slovakia (and Poland), where the churches and conservative elites had formed a strong alliance after the signing of the Vatican treaties, the churches have not taken an initiating role in Hungarian policy-making.

The claim-based approach proved to be illuminating in the study of the post-socialist pathways of (de)secularization. It highlighted the differences between ‘big’ policies and internal debates by shifting the focus to the mundane policy work and turning the gaze away from the elites to the producers of knowledge. Hence it allowed us to identify “how and when” a phenomenon – in our case, (de)secularization – affects the curriculum, “but also how and when it does not”.⁵⁸ In Hungary, for two decades after the political transition, the consensus-seeking nature of professional debates informed by prevailing imageries of democracy and the principle of the separation of church and state allowed for the coexistence of several forms of secular curricular models in the national curriculum. In Slovakia, even the model of Ethics education (and its professional promoters) has purposefully drawn on religion-based premises.

Developments after 2010, however, saw the pendulum swing different ways in the two countries. The political Christianity and anti-liberalism of the Hungarian conservative government gradually led to the marginalization of multiple understandings of citizenship education in the curriculum. Reflecting the reinforced walls between the political camps, the expert groups working on the curriculum and teaching materials for Religious/Faith education and Ethics did not discuss their purposes and expectations. In Slovakia, following years of isolated work, a debate on systemic and curricular reform has slowly started to develop, bringing Religious/Faith education and ethics actors into a common discursive field, whilst making it politically possible for other experts from schools, NGOs, and academia to enter the field. This opportunity came in the form of the Recovery and Resilience Plan. In this case, the claim-based approach is an appropriate approach to critical policy analysis which seeks “to understand policy processes not only in terms of apparent inputs

⁵⁸ Giudici, “Nationalism”, 17.

and outputs but more importantly in terms of the interests, values and normative assumptions—political and social—that shape and inform these processes”.⁵⁹

However, the difference between the current developments in Hungary and Slovakia is mainly found in the field of action of actors at the lower levels of policy-making. In both countries, the education sector has been governed by conservative political elites. This can be seen very clearly in the way the Hungarian education political agenda is being shaped by the identitarian Christianity and morality politics of populist politicians and in the ‘case’ of sex education in Slovakia and the subsequent parliamentary initiatives. In Hungary, the anti-liberalism of these conservative interventions, endorsing anti-liberal rhetoric, gradually marginalized curricular alternatives that were deemed liberal; in Slovakia’s case, they set the boundaries within which curricular alternatives emerge. Hence there are limits to perceiving education policies in terms of ideological struggle, as highlighted by the claim-based approach. In Slovakia, for example, while the church is intensely engaged in public activity against progressivism,⁶⁰ reproduced by conservative elites, and even some education ministers, a diverse range of actors has coalesced over specific curricular issues. The desecularization rhetoric does not necessarily impose its attendant measures.

At the same time, the conservative turn in these countries should not be ignored. While political actors benefit from the legitimacy provided by the church, this turn is not simply a religious one, which is partly why Religious/Faith education occupies such an ambiguous position in the national curricula in Hungary and Slovakia. Buzalka⁶¹ speaks of post-socialist integralism, which represents the romantic nationalism of post-socialist countries coupled with the idealization of the countryside and the lifestyles associated with it. This type of conservatism may have non-religious components as well so may not reflect popular demand for desecularization tendencies. Conversely, the populist political projects of post-peasant integralism have been extremely successful in increasingly secularized settings and so may not reflect the conflict between the secular and non-secular, religion and non-religion.

The discussion takes inspiration from the main questions found in historical research that regards secularization “as a broad and complex political project with many contradicting voices and – sometimes surprising – alliances”.⁶² Post-

59 Fischer, Frank, Torgerson, Doug, Durnová, Anna P. and Michael Orsini, “Introduction to critical policy studies,” in *Cheltenham handbook of critical policy studies* edited by Frank Fischer, Doug Torgerson, Anna P. Durnová and Michael Orsini, 1–24, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015.

60 Sekerák, “The spectre”, 209–223.

61 Buzalka, “The Post-socialist”, 475–492.

62 Buchardt, “The political”, 164.

socialist integralism is an example of such an alliance. For instance, while the current curriculum reforms in Slovakia have raised concerns about the “disappearance” of religion in state schools, the inclusion of religious education in a new education area has paved the way for religious content to spread to other curricular areas. What can be perceived as secularization of religious education can also (in a claim-based approach) be perceived as an opportunity for the desecularization of the secular. As Buchard⁶³ puts it, “Religion seems to have been transformed and spread out.” The Christian identity politics of religious populism in Hungary reveals that the church is not necessarily the initiator of this reform process. Here, Christianity is invoked as part of a complex, conservative nation-building project, as a proxy for defining those with traditionalist values. Exploring the specific “processes through which the sacred was transferred to the state institutions”⁶⁴ in two post-socialist countries, we found that in different eras of modernity, these processes have been more visible at times and less visible at others. Moreover, desecularization need not take the form of separatism and ideologization but may be tied up with inclusive and deliberative educational policies. These policies may appear to be secularization tools, but they can also be much more than that. Therefore, analytically, it is important to ensure the concept of secularization is as broad as possible, comprehensive, and not bipolar in nature.

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⁶³ Buchardt, “The political”, 165.

⁶⁴ Bruno-Jofré Rosa and Carlos Martínez Valle, “Church, religious institutions, the state, and schooling”, in: *Handbook of Historical Studies in Education*, ed. Tanya Fitzgerald (Springer International Handbooks of Education, 2019): 1–17.

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