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Religiosity and Its Current Educational Context in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic

Abstract The aim of this study is to present some aspects of the intersection of *religiosity* and *education* predominantly in Slovakia, but also in the Czech Republic (due to the long common history). In the introduction the current concept of religiosity in Czech and Slovak educational context is introduced. The study then consists of three parts. Its first part introduces the religious structure of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, showing the shifts of numbers between census in 1991, 2001 and 2011. The second part will focus on the overview of research studies published after 2008 on religiosity in Slovakia. Lastly, several research studies by the Department of Theology and Catechetics in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia are introduced. The author's personal project on researching the attitudes towards *good* and *evil* as religious construct introduces an alternative methodological way of developing religiosity in European context.

Keywords: religiosity, education, schools, Slovakia, research

Introduction: The concept of religiosity in Czech and Slovak educational context

A thorough analysis of religiosity and its educational context would obviously need more space than one study can obtain. Religiosity itself is a complex term and so even after sociologist, psychologists, theologians and religious educators have tackled it from various sides, there still remains a lot of unexplored mystery as religiosity is an issue *sui generis*. It is possible to recognise church religiosity which is the bond between the believers and their church institutions, and the outside-of-church religiosity or selective religiosity (people believing only some of the church doctrines). According to J. Bunčák (2001), the current Slovak religiosity can be characterised as selective and individualized. According to Bunčák's religious-social typology based on faith and the concept of God there exists a whole scale of religiosity connected with church (believing God cares about each person), traditional religious type (less persuaded about God's care for each person) to liberal religiosity, indifferent religiosity, and finally non-religiosity. Several dimensions of research of religiosity based on the analytical discrimination of religious self-declaration from emotional, cognitive or behaviour elements, have been traced, such as: (1) self-declaration of a person (I am/am not a believer – subjective level of faith – aspect of identity); (2) religious knowledge (knowledge of church doctrines – cognitive aspects); (3) religious ideology (faith in religious doctrines – persuasion); (4) religious practice (conative aspect), religious

community (sense of belonging, participation – social aspect); (5) religious ethics (consequences).

Regarding the role of education in developing religiosity, it is necessary to state that in Slovakia it takes place predominantly matrilineally (Beňušková, 2004), via family education, mostly by grandparents teaching their grandchildren religious doctrines, telling Bible stories, admonitions, taking them to the church and thus forming their concept of God. On the other side, it has been proved that religiosity prompted by sheer commands and orders often leads to more moral and legalistic religiosity with less personal emotional relationship with the faith. Another influential platform for developing religiosity since the early age, are media and school religious education. Both Slovakia and the Czech Republic allow founding and maintaining denominational kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and even universities, but also to design an elective religious education in the state-maintained schools (a compulsory choice between religious education and ethical education in Slovakia). In the Czech Republic religious education is introducing a wider concept of religiosity than in Slovakia. As the research results showed already in 2001 (Suríková & Šlomińska), only 13.8% of respondents expect developing the faith of their children as the highest educational goal of religious education. There is a shift from emphasising the traditional mandatory standards to emphasising the individuality of a child; 71.7% of respondents did not consider religious education to be among the most important educational elements. But 71% of them desire their children to become believers. It has been so till 2013 that the parents do not want their children to experience the same style of religious education as they might have experienced in their childhood. There is a tendency to lower the participation of the family in the religious development for religious education after the child starts school and to put more responsibility for it upon the shoulders of either the church or school religious education. These authors suggest that religious education should focus more on moral aims not just the religious ones and to stress the importance of observing the moral principles both to students with intrinsic faith or those who are indifferent.

Numbers of denominational schools

Since 1993, the education in denominational schools in Slovakia is subsidised by the state budget. They are under the same rules and the same State Educational Programme (SVP). If there is a collision with SVP or if the number of students is higher than the number stated by the Ministry or if the professionalism of teaching in the denominational school is under 70%, the school budget can be reduced by 15%. The number of all kinds of denominational kindergartens, similarly to all other types, has been growing. They presented 1.61% in 2009, 1.69% in 2010 and

1.98% in 2011 out of all kindergartens. The number of primary schools in Slovakia generally has been declining since the 1990s by about 14.000 each year (in 2011 only 40% from the number in the early 1990s). But the number of denominational schools has been growing from 4.89% of schools in 2008 to 5.1% in 2011. From 2008 to 2011 their number grew from 113 to 115 denominational schools and back to 2012 in June 2013. The number of students in denominational grammar schools culminated in 2008 (15,723), then it dropped and in 2011 it was about 13,623 (similar to stagnation in numbers in private grammar schools and decline in state grammar schools).

In the Czech Republic the number of denominational schools per capita is smaller in comparison with Slovakia. In 2008 there were 0.99% denominational kindergartens and 0.6% denominational primary schools (grades 1–9). The number of students at various denominational secondary schools was 1.6% out of the whole population of secondary students. In 2012/13 the numbers in denominational schools were slightly higher: 0.78% of all kindergartens and 0.8% of all primary schools. Secondary students studying at denominational schools formed 2% of the whole group of secondary students.

The question is if there are any differences between state and denominational schools in the climate and the overall impact of religious and especially moral education on the development of children. Though very little scientific research has been accomplished in this area, according to Zacharová, Herich, and Kvassay (2012), and others (e.g. Hanesová, 2005) the following positive sides of denominational schools have been found: 75.8% of students from non-state schools – both denominational and private – like school more than the state schools (59.8%). All students in secondary denominational schools confirmed that they have only positive relationships with their classmates: very good relationships 58.6% of students, good ones – 41.4%. On the other hand, in private and state schools the number of bad relationships was about 4.5% in state schools (in private schools 7.5% – bad relationships and 3% – very bad relationships). The freedom to express their opinion freely was stated by 25.5% of students of secondary denominational schools, 20.9% of private and 18.6% of state schools. The agreement with the statement that the teachers are fair seemed highest at private schools (13.6%), then 10.1% at denominational schools, and 8.4% at state schools. No official statistics brought data about the amount of drinking alcohol or taking drugs by students from these various kinds of schools.

In 2012/13 seven state universities and one denominational one were offering the teaching programme for religious education in Slovakia: Comenius University

in Bratislava: Faculty of Education¹; Roman Catholic Faculty of Theology of Cyril and Methodius²; Evangelical Theological Faculty³; University of Presov in Presov: Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology and Faculty of Orthodox Theology⁴; University of Trnava: Faculty of Education in cooperation with the Faculty of Theology⁵; Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra: Faculty of Arts⁶; University of Zilina in Zilina: Faculty of Humanities⁷; Catholic University in Ruzomberok: Faculty of Theology in cooperation with Faculty of Education⁸; Selye János University in Komarno, Faculty of Reformed Theology and Faculty of Education⁹; University of Matej Bel in Banska Bystrica, Faculty of Education¹⁰.

In the Czech Republic teachers of religious education were prepared at the following faculties at state universities in 2012/2013: Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové in Hradec Králové; Theological Faculty, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice; Hussite Theological Faculty, Charles University; Theological Faculty of Cyril and Metod in cooperation with the Faculty of Education, University of Palacký in Olomouc¹¹. Religious education was also an optional course for students of primary education at the Faculty of Education and Arts, Technical University in Liberec.

Religious structure of population

The state of religiosity of any country's population including the general attitudes toward Christian church has to be seen in a wider context of the country's history and local culture (Valčova, 2012, p. 179). To contextualise religiosity, it has to be viewed from both a diachronic (comparative) and synchronic (historical) view. The

¹ Religious education in combination with English, History, German, Education Science, Psychology, Slovak language.

² Catholic religious education in combination with teaching Ethics.

³ Lutheran religious education in cooperation with the Faculty of Education.

⁴ Greek-Catholic religious education in combination with Slovak, English, German, French, History, Biology, Physical Education.

⁵ Catholic religious education in combination with Slovak, German, Mathematics, Informatics.

⁶ religious education in combination with English, French, German, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Italian, Ethical Education, Citizenship, History, Aesthetics.

⁷ Religious education in combination with English, Mathematics.

⁸ R E. in combination with Russian, Italian, Music and Arts, Geography, Biology, Mathematics, Informatics, Chemistry, Faculty of Arts – religious education in combination with Slovak, English, Philosophy and History.

⁹ Catechetics in combination with Slovak, Hungarian, English, German, Informatics, Mathematics, Biology, History.

¹⁰ Religious education in combination with education science, psychology, Music, Arts at the Department of theology and catechetics.

¹¹ Religious education in combination with Ethics, Catechetics, German, Czech, Mathematics, Biology, Health Education

emphasis of this study is on the current situation. But it is necessary to at least remind that the history, including Nazism, Communism – coexistence with the Czechs in the common Czechoslovakia, “deeply impacted the soul of the nation” (Valčo, 2012, p. 185). Twenty years after creating the democratic Slovak state, the historical influences can still be felt “not only on the level of secular society, but also in the arena of church life and the church’s theological reflection in its doctrinal, ethical and public aspects”. In 2008, according to measurements of religiosity of people from 143 countries, accomplished by Gallup Institution for Research of Public Opinion, Slovakia was placed into the category of ‘countries with comparable religiosity’ (rank 47) and the Czech Republic in the group of ‘countries with lowest religiosity’ (rank 21).

Let us now look at the changes in religious structure according to the census in Slovakia. Since 1989 there have been three searches: in 1991, 2001 and 2011. In 1991 up to 73% inhabitants considered Christianity their own faith, 9.8% were without confession and 17% did not respond. It was interesting that in 2001 there were less undecided/non-responding respondents, there were 84% Christians, 13% without confession and 3% confessing other faiths. The comparison between 2001 and 2011 showed 8% decrease of the number of Christians and 10.6% increase of population with no religious affiliation (raised from 9.8% in 1991 to 13.4% in 2011). In 2011, similarly to previous censuses, the biggest number of people were Catholics and then Lutherans. In 2011, 62% of the inhabitants of Slovakia were Roman Catholics, another 3.8% were Greek Catholics; 5.9% were Lutherans. The Russian Orthodox church represents 0.9% of the population. Altogether 76% of the population in Slovakia belong to a church or denomination. As in Slovakia there are 16 state registered churches, denominations and religious communities, there is a small part of those, too. The Jews form 0.1% of the population, the numbers of other religions are very small (less than 0.4%). The new spirituality is presented mostly by various sects and charismatic movements. The non-church citizens form 13.4% of the population.

It seems that the number of devout believers in Slovakia is higher than the European average. (Kusá, Zeman, Tížik et al., 2008) Up to 33% prayed every day, 72% prayed at least once a week apart from worship services which were attended by more than 54% of the inhabitants. On the other hand, the majority of Slovak Christians did not think that the church should be connected with politics or provide solutions to social problems. As in 2012 Bomba and Kacián gave evidence for, nowadays there is an evident shift from confessing Christianity to cultural Christianity. It can be traced in only 42.2% of active attendants of various rituals believing in Christian dogmas, such as the faith in God as a person. That means that “almost 60% of Slovak population is not sure about God as a person”. The second

major shift that results from the reaction to previous communist persecution is the shift from public to private which is evident in dualism – disconnecting secular and profane sides of life. Bomba and Kacián call this “secularisation with a socialist face” (78–79). But though the Christian church lost a great deal of its authority in various areas of life, the moral attitudes and values of people still reflect the Christian teaching.

The 2011 census in the Czech Republic showed a very strong secularisation trend. Comparing to census in 1991 when 43.9% of the population claimed to be affiliated to some faith this group decreased to 32.1% in 2001 and even only to 13.9% in 2011. About 10.26% of the population are Roman Catholics, there are small numbers of other denominations. One third of the population are without any specific religious worldview. Almost half of the population did not fill in any affiliation/worldview. Interestingly enough up to 15,070 Czech inhabitants affiliate with the moral values of the Jedi knights (represented in the popular Star Wars), predominantly people from Prague (0.31% of Prague population).

Recent research on religiosity

To give a short overview of the various studies on the topic of religiosity and its educational context, logically it would be expected to concern educational sciences, catechetics and religionistics. But as a matter of fact, it is a complex societal issue set in the context of national history and culture, and as such it can be looked at as an interdisciplinary issue. It has been in the focus not only of some educationalists, but also theologians and missiologists, historians, sociologists, and psychologists. Though their main focus is not education, their findings contribute to getting an overall view of religiosity – especially the new emerging generation in Slovakia – and reflecting them in the educational system. A very good example of religiosity research based on the specific educational perspectives is a Czech project by Bravená (2012b). Investigating the transcendence of children from the perspective of religious education Bravena points out that a child under 13 has a specific approach to transcendence and divine revelation. This issue is based on currently rediscovered inclination of the child’s thinking. The concept of transcendence also appears in the Czech educational science and psychology as overlapping with personal qualities and abilities of the individual. It introduces a new branch of children theology (theology with children, for children and theology presented children). It reveals new perceptions and methodological possibilities of children to interpret God’s revelation. In 2012 a newly approved project in progress under the title “Culture and religious differences, migration and human rights” N1/0507/12 VEGA lead by D. Krošlák (2012) aimed to investigate the freedom of religious

confession and its application by parents in connection with the religious education of their children. It also included religious education in state schools.

Recent psychological research studies on religiosity in our countries are based on the foundational studies by several researchers and prolific writers, e.g. P. Říčan in the Czech Republic. He reflected on the statement, “I am not religious, but I am spiritual”, and he described the connection between religiosity and spirituality. He supported the idea of considering adding religiosity and spirituality to the five basic factors of personality. In his research reports from the last decade Říčan mentions the lowering number of Christian believers and of attendants of the traditional churches, the rise of new faith communities, the growing interest in Oriental religiosity, meditation, sects, cults; in other words, he states the growth of non-religious spirituality separated from traditional Christian religion (2005, 2006, 2007).

In Slovakia several fundamental research studies were published by M. Stríženec and other members of the Institution of experimental psychology, Slovak Academy of Sciences (2004 – 2006). Their study “Religiosity, spirituality, personality” has become the stepping stone for the following research studies, e.g. on religiosity in connection with attachment of a person (Halama 2006) which is an important issue for the educational aims. The religious identity from the point of view of psychology of religion was researched by M. Hatoková (2006). In 2010 another study was set to assess the association between a wide range of adolescent’s health-related behaviours and religiosity as well as gender differences in these associations (Pitel Madarasova, Gečková & Kolarčík, 2012). The research results among 3,674 Slovak adolescents with mean age of 14.9 years showed, that they have a significant meaning for considering the positive effect of a high quality religious education in school. Religiosity was inversely associated with health risk behaviour in smoking, drunkenness, cannabis use, having breakfast, soft drinks consumption, screen-based activities and sexual intercourse among both genders, and in truancy among girls only. This association was significantly stronger among girls. Religiosity was unrelated to physical inactivity, fighting and bullying others in both genders.

Recent sociological research studies take the European Values study (EVS) in 2008 into special consideration. The analysis of The European *Values study* (2008) indicated a mild decline of the number of undecided respondents in Slovakia. It confirmed that the most religious groups are still the older people who are – together with the least educated people – also the most exclusive believers. There were significant differences between the faith of men and women. In Slovakia it opened the door to the follow-up research, e.g. by the Slovak Academy of Sciences (2008), in the Czech Republic by, e.g. Hamplova (2011). Hamplova

(2011) evaluated an important research done by the Christian Academy of Youth (Kresťanská akadémia mladých – KAM) executed by the Focus Agency. It was a research project of religiosity of teenagers in various types of secondary schools (grammar schools, secondary vocational schools and apprentice schools) in 30 cities in the Czech Republic. In 2011 the same research was accomplished by the Tréningové Centrum Kompas (TCK), Josiah Venture and The Maclellan Foundation under the auspices of the Ministry of Education of Slovakia in 10 Slovak cities. The main question of the research was the nature of the emerging generation in Slovakia.

No correlation was found between religion and the type of school. Here are some of the correlations: Up to 30% of young people in the Czech Republic and 27% in Slovakia do not have bad conscience, other 23-24% do not usually have it. But if they have it, 75% of Slovak youth and almost 50% of Czech respondents want to solve it. Only 9% of Czech and 30% of Slovak students are helped with this by God, most often they are helped by friends, families and their own apologising. Only 13% of Czech teenagers and 15% of Slovak ones say that the Church is a trustworthy institution. Up to 58% of Czech and 70% of Slovak respondents believe in the existence of a non-material world. Most of them think that Jesus Christ was an important personality in the world history, 21% of Czech and 54% of Slovak respondents believe Jesus is the Son of God. More than half of the respondents think people go to church to find God and salvation. Only one third of Czech and half of Slovak respondents have positive attitude towards the Bible. Only one fifth of Czech respondents and 10% of Slovak ones rejected the existence of God. Most of them (45%) were sure “there is something above us, but I do not know what to call it”. An explicit faith in God and interest in him was expressed by about 11% Czechs and 42% Slovaks. Only 17% Czechs and 6% of Slovak young people said they were not interested in God and they did not think about those things. Both atheism and Christianity showed to be minorities in the Czech Republic. But more than half of the respondents can be designed as spiritual – searching. Almost 56% of them confirmed having a previous spiritual experience not explainable by natural laws. In Slovakia most students were Christians and 61% of them had a transcendent experience. According to Hamplova, the faith in a non-material world is widely spread among Czech youth, though the Christian faith is in minority. The negative view of young people on churches is usually due to the unwillingness of youth to subdue to extrinsic moral rules. The second reason for not accepting the church is the sense of its incompetence to solve problems and hypocrisy. The sexual scandals, attitude towards property, the fight for power played a smaller role. Unfulfilled happiness is the highest sensed need of students, followed by the need for autonomy, acceptance and love. J. Unger from the Czech

evangelical Academy inferred that current teenagers “do not have either positive or negative experience with the church and Christianity, they are less interested in it. Their relationship towards Christianity is marked by ignorance and indifference” (according to Hamplová, 2011).

Another Slovak research (in 2012/13) among 150 teenagers that is still in the processing stage has explored what the nature of the emerging generation in Slovakia is. It has shown that the respondents were either too busy (working, studying) or too bored students (passive), with tendencies to addictions, a need to be attached (computers), with the aim of a successful life. They want others to speak about them after their death that they were willing to help. On the other hand, when answering the question about their idea of their 30-40 years of age, most of them answered they would like to have a good family, a job, a car. Most of them did not have any dreams or passions, they were afraid of dreaming so as not to get disappointed. Regarding respect/tolerance, again the minimalist tendency showed up: they did not expect to be understood. What they wanted was to be respected, tolerated, not understood so much, they are realistic, minimalists. Their desire is to belong. Similar results came out of a denominational research project about the state of churches in Slovakia. In his survey, Shattuck (2004) found out that good relationships are the highest priority for young people, especially openness, sincerity, love, and trust. Young people are striving to find these features in people and institutions which they are involved with, including schools. They want to experience mutual respect from schoolmates and teachers. They want to be accepted regardless of what they believe and to be enabled to express their opinions.

A theological-sociological study of religiosity in Slovakia was published by J. Žuffa (2012). It was based on complex data and research methodology implemented in the survey *Aufbruch*¹², realized by Pastoral forum in Vienna in the years 1997 and 2007, as well as on data from other researchers of the Trnava University, e.g., L. Csontos, L. Matulnik. Researchers of Pastoral forum divide religiosity into three dimensions: personal religiosity, the contents of faith, and relationship with religion. Comparison of the percentage in the three groups in Slovak population and Czech population was as follows: orthodoxly religious 34/12, culturally religious 28/15, secular 37/74. Ančič and Zrinščak in their research in 2012 found out that the majority of people in the four Central European countries thought that religion should be engaged in various social issues. The Church can be publicly present by establishing different social institutions, such as media, *educational*, social or health service institutions. This seems to indicate a transition from communism to democracy and market economy, even if a slow and painful

¹² The survey was conducted in 14 post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

one. The Czech case is of particular interest here, as, despite the comparatively very low level of religiosity, the majority of people think there are too few Church-owned social institutions.

Religious values were also studied by another international social research titled “International Social Survey Programme” by Džambazovič and Tižik (2008), processed by the Slovak Archives of Social Data (SASD). Specific features of religiosity of Roma people who form a significant minority on Slovakia were studied, e.g. by Podolinská and Hruštič (2010) from the Institution of Ethnology, Slovak Academy of Sciences or by Šoltésová and Hanes from the University of Matej Bel (2009).

A comparative study of correlations between religiosity and well-being of Slovaks and Hungarians was accomplished by Halama, Martos and Adamovová in 2010. Positive relationships were proved, though the patterns of correlations differed. In the Hungarian sample religiosity positively correlated with the sense of meaning, and the well-being. In the Slovak sample satisfaction with life, and happiness were not present. Both samples gave evidence of a similar pattern of correlations between religiosity and meaningfulness. The Slovak sample also confirmed the relationship of religiosity with personal agreeableness and conscientiousness.

New Religiosity is an outcome of another research about the current religious situation in several countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Spain, Italy, Russia, United States, Great Britain). The research showed the basic tendency that traditional monotheistic religions often witness arguments, confrontations with new religions, inculturation of Christianity, liberalisation of theological content and shifts in practical expressions of religiosity. There has been a strong shift growing towards secularisation in the 20th century. According to Barker (2011), nowadays the key dominating word is *diversity* which expects to solve conflicts caused by diversity on various levels, including international agreements about human rights, change of governmental legislative and non-governmental (including World Council of Churches). The aim is to provide enough objective information on religions and religiosity.

Research of religiosity in the educational context at the Faculty of Education in Banská Bystrica

The Department of Theology and Catechetics (DTC) – one of the departments of the Faculty of Education, University of Matej Bel – has also studied some aspects of moral and religious development of children and youth in the educational context. Brádňanská Ondrášek (2012), accomplished several studies of the differences between generations. Applying American sociological approach to defining

generations, Brádňanská studied specific features of Gen Y and Gen Z in Slovakia, including their ethics and religiosity in the educational context. The ethics of Gen Y is post-modern, situational, pragmatic and compartmentalised (“I will decide what to do according to what I feel about it, how to make people happy...”). They might have various ethics in various context (family, church, school, work). In 2011 Brádňanská interviewed parents of the youngest Gen Z which enabled her to observe the main features of religiosity of children in different developmental stages. The parents confirmed that their pre-school children were capable of genuine faith in God, of praying to Him trustfully and of philosophising about complex theological issues.

Maďarová (2012) strived to contribute to the moral development of primary and lower secondary school pupils. She applied her own intensive course on prosocial behaviour to several classes in state schools. She found that a more intensive and properly designed emphasis on the moral development during school instruction would bring a measurable added value. By the means of moral dilemmas she also compared the stages of the moral development of children in state and in denominational schools. The result was that both groups fall into the classical Piagetian categories (heteronomous/autonomous morality). V. Šoltéssová (2013) studied correlations between religiosity and axiological orientation of Roma children, comparing children participating in catechetical religious education and those who did not. She focused especially on the issue of forgiveness. She found out positive correlation between the faith in God and the prosocial emotions reflected in an effort to do everything possible to reduce humans’ suffering and to lead to their well-being. Respondents with a high level of trust in God were able to forgive others and themselves because they had the faith in God’s forgiveness due to the catechetical influence. Šoltéssová suggested that religious education in schools should be more focused on the education of values than it used to do in the past. Certainly, a whole new dimension was involved by studying specific religious features of Roma people in the process of religious education in Slovakia.

D. Hanesová has been doing research of the religious, spiritual and moral development of younger children since 2009 (the report in print). Similarly to Bravená (2012a, 2012b), she is observing children’s ability to philosophise and theologise. She has prepared her own course of religious education, and applied it in the school practice in a denominational school with almost two thirds of non-catechesised children. The data are in the processing stage right now. The research in its first stage was focused on the notions of *good* and *evil* from children’s viewpoints. The topic of good and evil was in the focus of the IFES international questionnaires already in 2008, but it was in context of university students. When asked, *Is there such a thing as good and evil?*, the students in every country were

significantly more relativist. The definition of *good* and *evil* was also one of the questions in the study of EVS in 2008. How does the religiosity of people influence their discernment on *good* and *bad*? Those who were active attendants of church worship had a strict definition of *good* and *bad*. Almost one third of regular worshippers, however, had a vague idea of moral rules and according to them it depended on circumstances. For such contradiction a phrase by Polish sociologist Bauman (2000) ‘liquid modernity’ may be used. The traditional church dogmas are no longer a natural part of people’s faith. Almost 45% of all Slovaks believe in heaven, less than 20% of those believing in afterlife do not seem to believe in hell. It can be seen in the “infusion of current non-Christian elements like telepathy or reincarnation into traditional faith”.

According to Řičan (2007), religions are characteristic with their effort to solve the problem of evil: its existence, where it is from, if there are any beings responsible for it (devil, demons). Or in Judeo-Christian tradition basically evil is defined as human fault, going away and being rebellious against God. The *Law* – being at first holy – distinguishes between good and evil – bases this polarity. “The fact that we are concerned about evil and condemn injustice, and rejoice in the manifestation of selfless love, is credited to the gift of religion” (p. 106). Where the influence of religion is diminishing, e.g. good and evil are explained rather psychologically (e.g. reduced to the instincts plus mechanisms of learning that result in specific human good and evil), the evil is degenerated to a technical problem – as some fault in operating the world, and good is trivialised to be something pleasant and useful.

In the EVS survey in Slovakia in 2008 (Bomba & Kacián, 2012, p. 85–86), the respondents had to answer the question: Is it possible to make a clear dividing line between them? One third of the respondents answered positively. They reflected the traditional Christian belief that – by the words of C. S. Lewis, “right and wrong are the clue to the meaning of the universe”. “There is a Law or Rule about Right and Wrong, which used to be called the Law of Nature: First that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in.” The biggest group (43.1%) said that the distinction between *good* and *bad* depends on the situation and circumstances. The last third group with about 24.8% respondents considered this question too difficult to answer (Bomba & Kacián, 2012, p. 85).

Hanesova (2013) investigated children’s responses to the questions of what good/evil is and how good good is and how evil evil is basically as practical

dimension of human behaviour and experiencing in connection to good and evil – the norm that commands us to support good and to resist evil. The research methodology she used was the teaching tool itself. It was the alternative religious education method of theologizing with children, from children and for children. The data are going to be processed in connection with Christian religiosity and morality (that is the religious and partially psychological side of good and evil). As the experiences show, a spiritual experience leads a person either to good or to evil. In Christianity (Ričan, 2007, p. 106) the spiritual experience is very closely connected with ethics. At the same time, with young children, teachers often find discrepancy between the moral consciousness and moral behaviour of children. They realise what is wrong, they can even define it, but they cannot change their behaviour in a satisfactory way. Children create their own images of good and evil at a very young age. Their first value judgements seem unstable and can be very easily influenced by adult evaluation. They have not yet created and internalised the basics of moral conviction, their morality is from outside.” Their moral judgements are without a precise shape, situational. Their moral opinion is often based on one specific fact. That is why they need moral education, both in the family and at school.

Hanesová compared children views expressed in the form of statements or pictures based on the typology of K. Čižmáriková, a researcher of moral development of children from the department of ethic education at the same university. Čižmáriková (2013) prepared her own course for developing morality of children as she strongly believes – and she also proved – that education can influence the pragmatic understanding of the concepts of good and evil. She classified children’s images into categories of non-living objects, supernatural beings and phenomena, bad characteristics of humans, and somebody’s good/bad deeds. In the beginning of her course children were happy with the good things about themselves (“I tidied up my toys, I made my bed.”). After some weeks of more intensive moral development course their emphasis was more on helping the parents, “I washed the dishes. I helped my mother. I promised her I will be good“. Later they did not speak about their own good deeds but about the good deeds of their schoolmates”.

Analysing the data from her research, Hanesová suggested that the ethical component has to be a complementary part to the theological content of religious education. Having just the theological part, children would blame e.g. devil for the evil things in the world, however, there are a lot of things which people can decide about themselves and thus influence the social group they live in (e.g. decision to forgive/ask forgiveness, not to bully, steal, slander, etc.). Also the natural moral development of these children, though studying in a denominational school, has to

be respected (compare with Čižmáriková, 2009). All of the youngest pupils (6-7 years old) started with a very clear idea what bad/good behaviour towards other children was. Older children (10-12 years old) discussed the dilemma of suffering and pain as good/bad things.

Conclusion

In our study we focused on several aspects of religiosity in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The primary aim of the author was to present updated data on religious structure in both countries, on the scope of the religious education in the school system (compared with the last reports (Hanesová, 2008) as well as on various types of research done in the area of religiosity and its educational context. Most investigations were accomplished from a sociological point of view and from a psychological one, only few from educational and catechetical angles. Here the active approach of the Department of Theology and Catechetics as well as other researchers (e.g. K. Čižmáriková) from the University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, was appropriate to mention.

Even though Czechs and Slovaks coexisted in one state in the 20th century, the current religious structure and the religious values differ significantly. Although this study did not investigate its reasons, they obviously depend on wider historical and cultural context of both nations. For giving a glimpse into this comparison the author mentioned several research studies on religiosity that have been accomplished in both countries. The population in the Czech Republic seems less religious (meaning religious activities, such as going to church, reading the Bible), yet it does not mean they are not spiritual. But the decline of external religiosity was traced in Slovakia. It is important to ask how the newest generation perceives religious matters and if there is any platform where they can face religious issues and construct their religious concepts. In several parts of the study the reference to religious education in schools was mentioned. The author considers it to be still one of the legitimate means for religious development of children. If taken seriously enough and taught methodologically properly, it could be a very strong factor in forming the moral behaviour and judgments of children. One of the ways how to teach religious concepts, e.g. good and evil, is by letting the children think and express their theological ideas and thus cooperate with the teachers in their own religious development.

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