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### Religious culture as a school subject

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## Religious culture as a school subject

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In Russia a new school subject has been introduced in order to facilitate educators in shaping the enculturation process of the autonomous student into the cumulative tradition. In this article the Russian societal and educational context is described and the concepts ‘religion’ and ‘culture’ are clarified. Together they build the concentric structural model in which a distinction is drawn between different layers representing various influential factors related to RE, not only in Russia but also in the western world. In our view this concentric structural model is constitutive for the new school subject of religious culture. The presentation of the model and its application is central in this article.

**Keywords:** *Religious education; Religious culture; Russia; Cumulative tradition; Faith*

The concept of ‘culture’ is a very broad concept. Various definitions are used to describe what is meant by this concept, stressing either what people share (e.g. common values) or what binds people in spite of differences between them due to the uniqueness of each individual and the fundamental otherness of the other. In order to grasp every single aspect of ‘culture’ in one definition not even a whole paragraph would meet the scientific criteria. Such a wide definition that aims at completeness runs the risk of vagueness. Vagueness is already at stake with the concept of ‘culture’; even more so is this the case when we try to arrive at a clear and accurate definition of ‘religious culture’. The two concepts ‘religion’ and ‘culture’ are both so wide and so resistant to definition that they could discourage any desire to put them together in one title, as we do in the title of this article. Notwithstanding the complexity of each of the concepts and the combination of these two concepts, in this article we will describe religious culture in the context of education in the Russian society. In this article we present our concentric structural model to clarify the role of religion, tradition and culture in religious education in Russia, in the school subject called Orthodox culture.

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In order to arrive at a comprehensible concept of ‘religious culture’ we start with a description of the debate on religious education in the Russian educational context in the post-Communist era. In Russia, as in the rest of the world, as a consequence of secularisation, educators are burdened with the paradox of the autonomous person and the cumulative tradition to which the student has to be introduced. This is what we focus upon in the second section. Then, in the third section we will explore the phenomenon of religion. A concentric structural model for religious education that serves not only religious education in the Russian context, but in our view is helpful in the western context as well, is presented in the fourth section. In the fifth section religious culture is central, in particular faith and tradition as aspects of religious culture. We elaborate on our proposed concentric model and its applications in the sixth section. We argue that in the secularised Russian society the combination of the concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ is necessary, being foundational concepts in value-oriented education—as part of civic education. We thereupon focus on the content of the school subject concerned. In the last section we elaborate upon the different layers of the cumulative (religious) tradition, and advance the thesis of *introspective teaching* as the necessary attitude of teachers in ‘scaffolding’ their students in religious culture as a school subject.

### **Culture and religion as Orthodox culture in the Russian context**

In the Russian context, culture has, for a long time, been opposed to ideology and state. For the last two centuries, due to the close cooperation of church and state, more than being associated with social service or religious activity individual freedom and autonomy have been related to the realm of culture. As a result liberal theorists of education often used the concept of *culture* to label the dimension of social relationships in which personal growth and maturity was paid the greatest attention. In the Russian empire it was as an aspect of secular culture, with intelligentsia as its leading force, that spiritual independence was nurtured as an opposition to a pressure from the state power. Many representatives of the intelligentsia tried to play the same role during Soviet times. Today again the culturological approach is opposite to the ideological one. The culturological approach opposes the use of religion as a tool of fostering loyalty to the state and to the church. In other words the orientation of school education towards the purpose of initiating young people into the culture remains a kind of manifestation of loyalty to humanistic values.

Halfway through the year 2003 all those in Russia concerned with education were severely disturbed by a proposal of the Ministry of Education (2002) to introduce a new subject into the school curriculum, called Orthodox culture. Today these plans are outlined step by step and the future of religious education in Russia greatly depends on how the idea of Orthodox culture will crystallise as a school subject. Will Orthodox culture be confined to church canon and tradition or will it be broader? The question is about the inclusiveness of the subject, for example, will it include the ideas of Lev Tolstoy, the man who was officially set aside by the church but who, as Zenkovsky (1991) wrote, expressed most consistently one of the main dimensions of

*Russian spirituality?* Or is this new school subject rather going to reflect on the theme of *totalitarianism of mind* in Berdyaev's (1992) words, the *theurgical pathos* in Zenkovsky's (1991) words. Will, in other words, such corollaries that might be called 'fruits' of Russian spirituality, like revolution, military communism and church devastation, be part and parcel of the school subject Orthodox culture? Or shall we consider these movements in spirituality as completely alien to the religious culture of the Russian nation? It all depends on the answer to these and other questions whether religious education in Russia is going to facilitate personal religious development or whether this new school subject will appear to become a new form of ideological pressure. The above-mentioned questions are not only of vital importance to Russian educators. These issues are of great importance in all the parts of the world where secularisation takes place and force scholars to look for new approaches of enculturation in religious traditions, less connected with traditional forms of religious practice than previously.

This article emphasises the following: If a key aim of education is an integration of an individual into the culture, an important question needs to be answered—in what way and to what extent do we aspire to fulfil this integration? In fact this question leads us to the basic pedagogical problem. This is the problem of Truth and Freedom. Zenkovsky (1996) fairly stated that the ultimate aim is to bring together in pupils' lives their competence to do (the supreme) good and their proficiency to be free. In the next section we will elaborate on this theme and clarify the relationship.

### **Autonomy and relationship**

The history of European pedagogy is the history of a struggle between two paradigms. The first is the one of commitment and solidarity with 'thy neighbour'. The other paradigm is the freedom of the autonomous and self-defining person. According to the first paradigm the focus is on commitment to the Truth at the expense of personal freedom. The second paradigm focuses on the autonomous person. In that case the development of personal autonomy becomes the priority of education.

During the Middle Ages indoctrination, in an authoritarian way of teaching, presenting truth as a set of fixed ideas and standards, was seen as the best way of initiating pupils into the world in which they were born. The Enlightenment pursued the aim of developing the skill of critical evaluation of knowledge. In France it was Rousseau who relied totally upon personal freedom and natural creativity. The change in educational strategy developed by his adherents put forward a new humanistic (or liberal) ideal of an independent, open-minded and highly intellectual person. The opposition of these two paradigms is still the most serious argument referred to in pedagogical controversies. One and a half centuries ago the founder of Russian pedagogy, Konstantin Ushinsky, wrote:

We wholly agree that a tutor must not impose his own beliefs on students, that this is the greatest violence we can imagine: the violence of a mature intellect, to impose his ideas over an intellect which is weak and helpless. Nevertheless, we are wholly aware of the impossibility to develop a child's soul without fostering the child with some kind of

devotion. Hence the most difficult problem of education brings us to the most complex ethical problem: What would be the substance of the devotion, which does not destroy an essential prerequisite of any true devotion, that is—personal freedom? (Ushinsky, 1988, p. 417)

Ushinsky's question has been transformed since that time, but remains still the same in principle, and contemporary polemics on compatibility of teaching for commitment, with critical education, follows the same pattern.

Most interesting in this case is the existence of an obvious projection of this pedagogical problem, rooted in the relations of individual and society, into the field of religious education. Religion, as the Canadian comparative religion scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1963) fairly showed in his works, is an artificial conceptual construction, consisting of two greatly different elements: personal faith and cumulative tradition. Matured religious life involves both of these elements. It is a deeply personal event, manifested in a mystical experience of communion with God, but at the same time it is a public or social event (in Russian we would call it *sobornost*), that is the participation in a religious community life, in the experience of liturgical unity. In religious education two different sciences—psychology and sociology of religion—deal accordingly with these two elements of religious life. In theology these two correspond to an area of mystical contemplation, personal piety and religious creativity on the one hand and dogmatic systems, canonical law and communal worship on the other. In religious education this dualism of religious life becomes explicit through the struggle of the two paradigms mentioned above.

We hope it will not be too big a simplification to associate one of the basic ideas of liberal modern pedagogy with the switch of the main emphasis in educational strategies from the social to the personal dimension. In Zenkovsky's view, the idea of secularism itself is a consequence of a *reconception*, in the course of which 'the theocratic idea of Church is definitely realized as an idea of transfiguration through the internal renovation of a person' (1991, p. 64). The student as an individual, rather than the teacher as a representative of a tradition, becomes the main character in the educational process. Religion tends more and more to be seen as a personal enterprise, including religious experience and faith. This personal commitment is appraised not in terms of confessional (cumulative) tradition, religious culture and subordination to the church, but in terms of the *walk with God* (Gen. 5.22). Using words of Fichte, 'the old education ... set on the premises of fundamental, inborn corrosion of human nature ... Religion of the new education must be a religion of spending our lives with God' (Modzalevsky, 2000, p. 194). The post-modern 'radical pluralism' in religious matters is a direct and consequent outcome of this reconception.

The task of *enculturing* religious education in school correlates with the understanding of the place and the role of religious culture in religious life, in particular with the association of religious culture with the two dimensions in religious life, those of faith and tradition. What is the root of religion: revelation or experience; psychology or social life? What will be emphasised in the teaching of the phenomenon of religion: historical, social and cultural factors shaping religious tradition, cognitive quality of religious consciousness or personal religious experience? Where can we put the

boundary, separating religion from culture in the spiritual activity of a human being? In the next section these questions are elaborated.

### **Describing the phenomenon of religion**

The wide diversity of theories offered by the phenomenology of religion seems to prevent any chance for explanation of the origin of religion in a way acceptable for all scholars. Many theoretical concepts form stable opposites: faith and tradition, sacred and profane, grace and merit, nurture and nature, transcendent and immanent, religious experience and revelation. Durkheimian theory, for example, is focused on the social aspects of the religious phenomenon. But it does not mean that personal religious experience is pressed out to the periphery. Rather his theory puts the social within the personal while developing the idea of *collective perceptions* as a higher form of psychic life. Freud's theory, on the other hand, is focused on the depths of the individual *unconscious*. But it does not diminish at all the role of *collective perceptions* in the origin of beliefs. Dialectical elements are characteristic for any theoretical framework: a theory exists by the grace of opposites! This, however, does not mean that we should not be eager to look for some description of the religious phenomenon that would appear to be acceptable from standpoints of different phenomenological theories. We feel obliged to perform this task, and we do hope to be successful. In the following section we present a *concentric structural model* as a modest attempt to clarify the different aspects which religious education encircles. It does not pretend to be complete but it is hoped that this model will, for teaching purposes, cast light on the specifically religious elements of this new school subject, to be known as Orthodox culture.

### **A concentric structural model**

As shown in Figure 1, in our concentric structural model it is *Numen* that we place in the centre. This term has already received its honourable place in the professional vocabulary following C. G. Jung (1954). The meaning of the concept implies, at the cognitive level, some kind of *transcensus*, transcendence or a 'leap of consciousness' into the sphere that usually lies beyond experience and mind. From an atheistic standpoint it might be considered as psychic pathology or as an expansion of consciousness for the perception of certain extrapersonal forms of experience and knowledge (collective, biological and so on). From a theistic view the *Numen* is usually considered as a meeting with God. The following quotation from Sergey Bulgakov gives us an illustration of such a theistic standpoint: 'Meeting with God experienced in personal life forms the base of religion and constitutes the only source of its autonomy' (Bulgakov, 1994, p.16). In other words, religious *Numen* is an entity given to us in religious experience. That is all we can say about it. It means that, quoting Bulgakov again, 'religion can be characterized by the highest degree of inherent significance of realism...My religion is not my creation, otherwise it is not religion at all' (p.19).

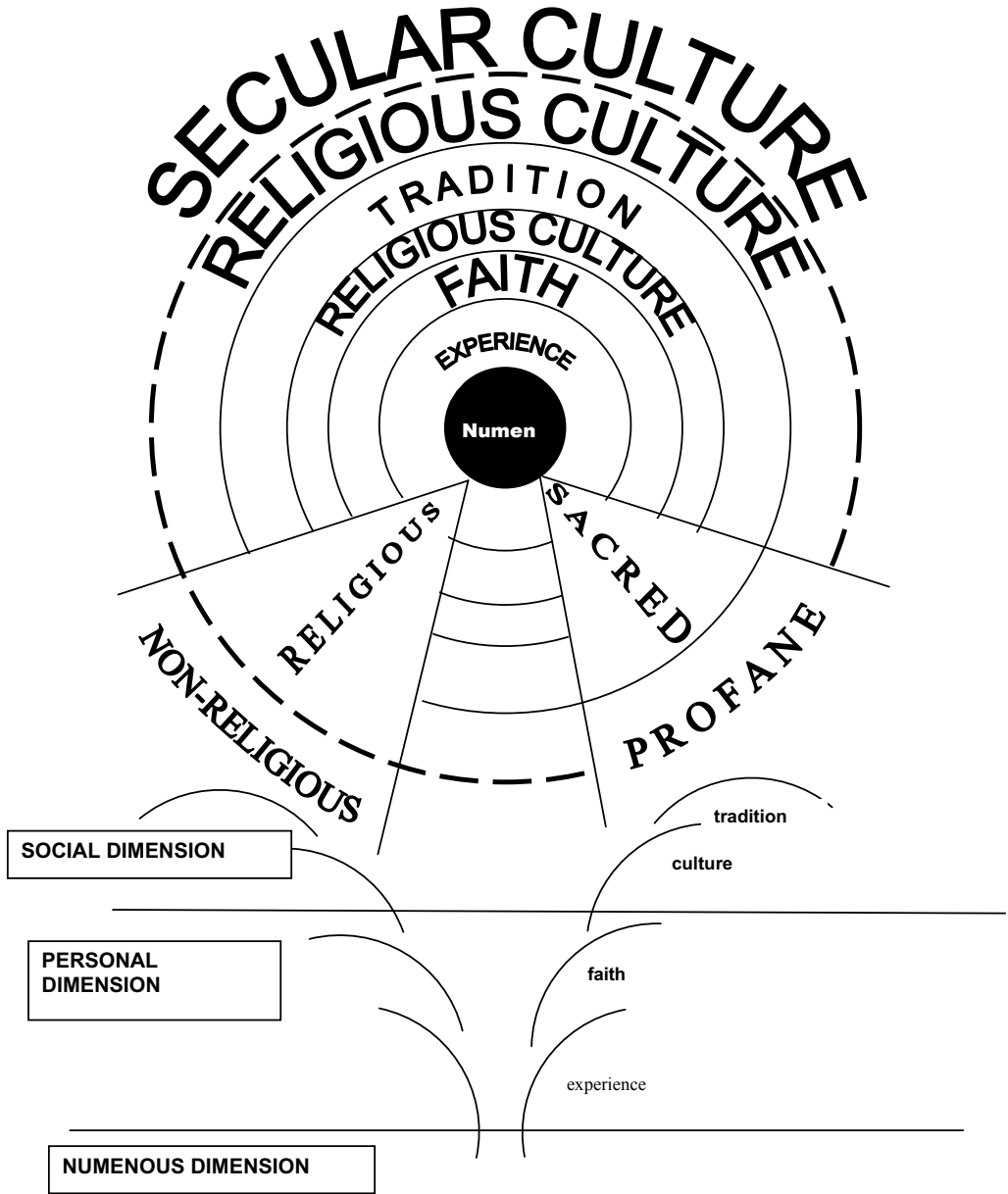


Figure 1. Concentric structural model

Since, according to Bulgakov, religious experience is the only evident form of contact with the *Numen*, it forms the deep dimension of the religious phenomenon and is situated in the centre of our model, also known as the ‘gentle core’ of tradition, as is pursued below.

Religious experience can be felt as a direct sensual contact with the Other, or the Supernatural, but it is often given also as an indivisible and non-objective personal

sense of alternative-way-of-being, revealed in the context of everyday life as a fullness of existence (*pleroma* in Christian tradition), or as a reality of non-existence (*nirvana* in Buddhism). What is common for any type of religious experience is its a-logic, its paradoxical quality, what James (1961) has called 'the reality of the unseen' (p. 59), originating in the simultaneously transcendent and immanent nature of the experienced entity. Bulgakov is accurate in claiming that the idea of Deity in general is something like hot ice, round square, bitter honey. Religious experience is a bridge, connecting an individual with the transcendent *Numen* of his or her religion. Another shore always remains invisible if seen from this side, but through religious experience one gets a chance to move along the bridge and to obtain a vivid indication of its existence.

The concept of religious experience links with the concept of revelation. The latter concept is important in the Abrahamic traditions, which are often identified as 'religions of revelation'. What is the correlation between the two concepts: 'religious experience' and 'revelation'? It is hardly possible to give a strict answer. Bulgakov uses the expression 'experiencing God' as one synonym for 'God's revelation'. Karl Barth emphasises the crucial difference between these two (see McGath, 1997, p. 529); Paul Tillich (1964) speaks about their complex and dialectical interrelationship. Evidently the concept of revelation is as contradictory and paradoxical as the concept of religious experience itself! Actually when we speak about revelation we mean the same bridge to the numinous entity as we mentioned before. The difference is in the way of description. The concept of revelation assumes a theistic doctrine of a transcendental and personal God. The miraculous encounter with the *Numen* is described as an event arranged or designed deliberately from the 'other side of the bridge'. However, in our description, encounter with the *Numen* is not derived from everyday experiences, though it does take common experiences as a starting point for an uncommon encounter. In contrast with the previously mentioned description of the concept of revelation, we start at 'this side' and prefer to use in our description the term 'religious experience', stressing the personal, extraordinary sensitiveness and unusual perception leading to a unique encounter. It presupposes 'the Other' but does not include any hypothesis about its (His/Her?) nature. It is more open for interpretation. Consequently the concept of revelation turns out to be more tight and exclusive than the concept of religious experience. Revelation has no autonomous position from the standpoint of atheism, as it has in the world of religious traditions. It brings nothing essentially new into our model. So we choose the term 'religious education' as a preferable one and instead of talking more about revelation or the *Numen* in our structural concentric model, we turn to the concepts of faith and tradition.

### **Faith and tradition as aspects of religious culture**

The second layer in our concentric structural model of the religious phenomenon consists of faith. Faith will be defined by us as a state of spirit, in which the Transcendent (Divine, Supernatural, Absolute, or God), gets the quality of a deep-down



embedded reality. As a state but not an event, faith is essentially different from an experience. It is at the same time a requirement and a result of religious experience. There are solid reasons to affirm primacy of experience regarding faith.

The initial religious experience does not require faith. The clearest, well-known one is the conversion of St Paul. On the contrary, faith as ‘the evidence of things not seen’ (Heb. 11.1) always comes out of experience—as a fulfilment of unfulfilled longing for the invisible Deity. The experience of God is a momentary experience, faith is a state of mind. So religious experience acquires its quality of continuity in faith, as time goes by. In Christianity faith has become an ethical imperative, a necessity and a sufficient ground for salvation (John 6.28–29; Heb. 11.6), an equivalent alternative to intellectual knowledge and the essential meaning of life. Beginning with St Paul (Gal. 2, 3; Heb. 1, etc.). Christian apologists always accentuated an opposition of the Old Testament Law to the New Testament Faith and Grace. However this particularity of Christianity is not a reason to deny the universal interreligious value of faith. A wide range of evidence can be brought to confirm the high position of faith in other traditions. The German theologian Buber, for instance, speaks about the early Israelites as the people of faith, ‘a community of faith, which emerged as a nation, and a nation which emerged as a community of faith’ (Buber, 1995, p. 234). In the Qu’ran the belief in Allah (*imam*) is the first and main dogma.

Abrahamic traditions differ greatly from the religious traditions of India and China in their perception of faith. Nevertheless, W. C. Smith in his *Faith and Belief* (1979), comes by means of an etymological analysis of the Indian concept of *sraddha* to a conclusion that this concept is similar to the Latin ‘*credo*’ and the Jewish ‘*aman*’. Its central meaning refers to an attitude of cordial devotion (compare ‘*credo*’ and ‘*cordia*’). ‘It means, almost without equivocation, ‘to set one’s heart on’ (Smith, 1979, pp. 71–76). So the word ‘faith’ turns out to be the most accurate expression of that particular quality of human life which emerges as a result of the experienced interaction with the transcendental entity and becomes, in turn, the base of the social phenomena called beliefs and religions.

In the next layer of our structural model, external to faith, we find what Smith has called the cumulative tradition: ‘By cumulative tradition’, Smith writes in *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1963, p. 156),

I mean the entire mass of overt objective data that constitute the historical deposit, as it were, of the past religious life of the community in question like temples, scriptures, theological systems and legal and other social institutions, ... anything that can be and is transmitted from one person, one generation to another, and that an historian can observe.

In other words, cumulative tradition is a soil of religious life. But, as a matter of fact, tradition is also dynamic and subject to change. Tradition can either grow, or fade away, and it is only within another time-scale that transformation processes can be noticed and an impression gained of its stagnation, if compared to individual faith.

The relationship of tradition and faith is complex and dramatic and the main reason for that is one very important boundary separating the two concepts. This

border divides religious life into two areas: one is the area of personal and heart-to-heart attitudes and insights, and the other is the field of social and public activity and awareness. The two fields meet in the living personality of the believer. It is in this arena that the burden of the interaction of the personal and the social in religion is felt (see also James, 1961; Taylor, 2002). It is through traditions that personal faith surpasses itself to become a part of the faith of a religious community. Vladimir Lossky as well as some other Russian theologians of the twentieth century paid special attention to disclosing essential characteristics of tradition and faith explicitly in the interaction of the mystic and the dogmatic (Lossky, 1976). The relationship between tradition and faith is one of unity as well as of struggle. This struggle goes through the world history of religions and through the history of each religion, in particular arising as a keen and often tragic opposition of religious gatekeepers and charismatic leaders with one another, of 'priests' and 'prophets', of conservatives and reformers of faith. Many objective factors are responsible for that struggle but all these factors have a common root in the active properties of tradition, since cumulative tradition is not only a passive storage of personal faith, but is capable of active resistance against change. It has buffer characteristics in chemists' terms, or inertia in physicists' terms. Thus it functions as a protector or guardian of faith.

A useful analogy on this kind of structure can be found in the area of philosophy of science. Imre Lakatos has developed a concept of scientific research programmes whose consequent change ensures the development of science. A research programme consists of, in Lakatos' terms, a 'hard core' and a 'protective belt' of statements. The first is not open to negotiation but is defended at all cost by the second. In Lakatos' view the protection of the 'hard core', rather than the acquiring of new knowledge, is a predominant concern of each scientific community. Religion is convergent with science in this respect and similar processes takes place in the history of religions. A 'hard core' (which in this case can better be called a 'gentle' core), can be associated with the inner, deep-down dimensions of religion including faith and religious experience, accompanied by a 'protective belt' consisting of a really 'hard' tradition, using doctrines, canonic law and other means to defend the 'hard' and 'gentle' core. It is in theological and scientific revolutions that new religions and communities originate. The struggle of the two specified structural elements is a main motivating power in the historical development of religion.

In the culture of people, faith and tradition form an area of the sacred as opposed to the profane, surrounding it. This contraposition is widely used after Durkheim in religious studies. It is quite constructive but it can often be found going hand in hand with a misleading notion identifying the area of the sacred with the area of the religious, and respectively that of the profane with the secular word. In reality, however, religious phenomena spread far off the limits of confessional traditions and embrace what we have called religious culture. This inequality of the sacred and the religious means that religious culture always includes some profane element. And it is this element that ensures the interpenetration of the sacred and the profane in our life, providing a necessary prerequisite for what we have called religious culture.

## Religious culture

It is not easy to draw a border between the sacred and the profane in any culture. The border turns out to be quite ephemeral sometimes: within more developed religious cultures, a real system of levels of ‘the sacred’ may exist, making irrelevant any strict dichotomy. This kind of order is noticed for instance in the hierarchy of the Christian ‘temple space’, inherited from Judaism: that of an altar—an inner space of the temple and a temple yard. There is an order of different degrees of sanctity, exemplified in Catholic tradition of beatification prior to sanctification. There is a great variety of other examples. However, this sequence of levels and this absence of strict borders are not arguments against the fact of polarity present in religious culture.

As with the other bordering elements of our developed structural model, in the interaction between profane and sacred parts of the religious culture tensions and break-ups may occur. Discords, concerning matters of sanctification, for example, function as a powerful factor of schisms in the history of Christianity and other religious traditions. Russian history gives a vivid example of that kind in the great church schism of the seventeenth century. Another even more demonstrative example can be taken from a story of the Bible translation from church Slavonic into the Russian language. It is a well-known fact that in 1824, owing to the efforts of the archimandrite Foty and Admiral Shishkov, the first Russian Bible editions were burnt in the stoves of Alexander-Nevsky Monastery in St Petersburg (Florovsky, 1937, p. 166). This reaction was justified because the translation itself was considered a profanation of God’s Revelation.

In our proposed model, religious culture forms an outer circle of the religious phenomenon. An area of secular non-religious culture lies beyond. However, it is important to mention that a border here is vague again. Secular culture is penetrated all through by religious ideas. Thus the religious phenomenon proves to be a complex system, open at both ends—one as a touching sensation of transcendent existence, and the other a contact between individual and public consciousness insensitive to that kind of experience. Besides being an area relating the profane to the sacred, religious culture is also a space where faith faces tradition and transcends the personal dimension to enter into social and historical life. We must not overlook the fact that all products of religious activity and religious inspiration have already been a part of a certain religious culture. Theological concepts and doctrines, which are considered nowadays as part of the tradition, were, at some time in the past, innovative ideas, frequently taken by traditionalists as something strange or alien. St Athanasius the Great, John Chrysostom, Maxim the Confessor and many other pillars of tradition were persecuted for much of their lives and treated as heretics. Their works certainly were not part of the tradition in their lifetime, but they have become a part of the religious culture since their appearance. Religious culture, as we see, envelops tradition while surrounding it from the side of faith and from the side of the profane world. It surrounds tradition from the third side as well, for religion forms, according to Tillich (1964), a dimension of depth in every culture. What we mean by cumulative tradition is in fact the tip of an iceberg. It is merely a visible result of that mysterious entrance

of divine grace into our world, which refracts in the 'varieties of religious experience' and engraves culture. Tradition is but a hardened crust covering the breathing lava of culture. This statement is highly important since the denial or ignoring of this vigorous tectonic activity taking place beneath traditions produces the most crucial pedagogical mistake in teaching religion.

In conclusion, we can state that religious culture consists of at least five different components. First of all, as we propose in our structural model, religious culture includes confessional traditions. The second component consists of the same elements as confessional traditions but taken in their profane aspects. The Bible, for example, is at the same time the first and the second component of Christian religious culture. It is a sacred text and a literary masterpiece, two significantly different subjects, requiring different methodical discussion. The third component consists of what is not yet part of a tradition, but might have a chance to become part of it. Contemporary theological reflections and essays, cinema and theatre performances concerning religious affairs, life histories of not-yet sanctified persons, all these things are relevant to this layer of our model. This layer is what James (1956) called 'the zone of formative processes ... where past and future meet' (p. 259). The fourth component comprehends aspects that could have become part of the tradition but were rejected. A great number of apocryphal Gospels definitely can be regarded as this kind of component of the Christian culture. Origen's teaching, condemned by the 6th Ecumenical Council, cannot be considered as a part of the Orthodox dogmatic system, but it will be always kept as a part of Orthodox culture. Almost all the works of the so-called 'Russian Renaissance', including the theologies of Solovyov, Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Florensky and many others who opposed the official theology in many points, fall into this category. Finally, the fifth component of religious culture consists of things not subjected to sanctification in principle and having no ambition for that. If some elements of architecture or interior design are used equally for temples and dwellings it puts these elements outside the sacred. Nevertheless, they belong to religious culture as they can bear important historical information on the habits, rules and characters of religious communities.

### **Applications of our concentric structural model**

The above-mentioned five elements probably do not complete the list of components of religious culture. This very preliminary draft is enough to evaluate the significance of studying religious culture at school.

The study of religious culture as part of religious education offers a very helpful perspective for a phenomenological approach because it allows seeing the multidimensional and the dynamic nature of religion. It shows the whole world of religious phenomena with contrapositions and conflicts arising out of the border contacts presented in the layers of the model. An outstanding Russian theorist of education, Sergey Gessen (1995), claimed: 'There is an exact equivalence of education and culture. Education is nothing but the culture of an individual' (p. 35). Indeed, from one perspective culture is made of elements which living human beings brought from

the depths of their hearts. Therefore, the exposure of young people to religious culture is the most existential approach to religion. On the other hand, using Aylward Shorter's words, 'Church's history is a history of inculturation' (1995, p. 64). Leaving aside a highly disputable issue of autonomy of Christian culture, we have to admit a crucial role of Church interaction with a Hellenistic cultural substratum in shaping European history. Through learning religious culture as a result of this interaction, pupils reach a deeper understanding of history and culture as well as of the role that religion played in the past and will continue to play in shaping all aspects of social identity. That is, how the study of religious culture contributes to socialisation and prevents isolationism of both the secular and the sectarian types. The desirable way forward really seems to be to balance the two problems of education mentioned above: that of educating for living within society and that of educating for freedom and independence.

In addition we illustrate our structural model with the metaphor of the water flower. Imagine that the stem going down to dark depths is faith, the root is religious experience and the flower we see on the surface of the water is the tradition as it appears in the arena of public life. Many parts of the flower are under the water and remain invisible for those who treat religion from above. Among these parts we find leaves which provide the plant with food, young buds not flowering yet, seeds developing and so on. The whole life of the flower takes place underneath and it is certainly impossible to understand it properly if only looking from above. Unfortunately, catechism with its intention of giving clear criteria for confessional identity often fosters this 'look-from-above' approach in indicating features of different religious traditions, and only promoting learning about their explicit teaching and values. This way of teaching remains outside the real environment of religious life and, therefore, produces a narrow and superficial vision. This approach resembles what has been called 'teaching about' religion. The main advantage of enculturation is the change of this perspective into one that allows us to look at religious life from its inner and deeper perspective. This is perhaps closer to what Grimmitt calls 'teaching from religion' (Grimmitt, 1981).

### **Introspective teaching**

One important practical consequence of this change of perspective is related to the concept of introspective teaching. In the Russian context there is a common habit of identifying introspective religious education with the confessional approach. But 'where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (Matt. 6.21). If the real treasure of religion lies 'underneath' tradition in the inspiration it has given and may bring in the future, the gate-keepers of tradition are no longer the best introspective interpreters. That is why the very unpromising idea of selecting teachers of religion by means of approval by religious officials is a mistake. Introspective study and teaching religion in the case of a non-confessional enculturating approach does not require confessional identification on the part of the teacher or the students. It does require, instead, a teacher to be rooted in the religious culture being taught, and able to speak the language

of religion. The teacher in the new subject 'religious culture' cannot be 'religiously illiterate'. He or she should be a good teacher, what we call a 'normative professional'—normative in the sense of being aware of the values and regulations of the religious tradition in which he or she is set, and being equipped to communicate about religion (Ter Avest & Bakker, in press). The reorientation of the catechetical approach into enculturation should nurture the identity development of students in a new way that is more adequate to the reality of the post-modern world. Ushinsky claims that a teacher who is not sensitive to religious affairs cannot have a position in education (Vasilevskaya, 1993). He also stated that he would prefer a normative atheistic professional teaching religion, to a hypocrite and pious unbeliever. It is hoped that the concentric structural model of religious phenomena, explored and elaborated in this article, will help in showing that there is no contradiction in these two claims.

G. K. Chesterton, in the preface of his famous *Orthodoxy* (1909), compares himself with an English yachtsman who 'slightly miscalculated his course and discovered England under the impression that it was a new island in the South Seas'. That was the way of Chesterton to his own credo:

I am the man who with the utmost daring discovered what had been discovered before ... for ... I fancied I was the first to set foot on Brighton and then found I was the last ... I did strain my voice with a painfully juvenile exaggeration in uttering my truths. And I was punished in the fittest and funniest way, for I have kept my truths: but I have discovered, not that they were not truths, but simply that they were not mine ... I did try to found a heresy of my own; and when I had put the last touches to it, I discovered that it was orthodoxy. (Chesterton, 1909, p. 16)

This story shows how difficult it can be sometimes for a believer, rooted in his well-known religious culture, to find or reveal an authentic religious identity. It is a good warning not to mix up careful continuing religious affiliation with the intensity of religious life.

World history offers stories of looking for one's own religious identity with a less happy ending. Lev Tolstoy was a person whose religious quest forced him to separate from his home tradition. One of his spiritual followers, Vasily Rozanov (1990), wrote that it should have been a crowd of angry peasants who might have had an exclusive right to set Tolstoy out of the Church. 'It is only with blood that one can tear away such a person from the nation's breast. But we did not see blood. What we saw was an official paper with a stamp on it' (p. 621). This 'paper with a stamp' is the image of clericalism and the bureaucratisation of spiritual life, against which the study of religious culture, as described in the foregoing paragraphs, should be an effective vaccine.

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