

MA Ninoslav Kačarić

Serbian Orthodox Eparchy of Banat¹

Vršac

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SERBIAN ORTHODOX RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SERBIA – HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND ITS PERSPECTIVES

Resume: At the beginning of the 21st century the Orthodox Church in Serbia has faced with huge challenges. After the period of half-century restrictions under the communist regime in former Yugoslavia, the time of change has come and it brings with itself respectfulness of religious freedom to Serbian people and freedom to practice their religion and express their religious notions publicly. Serbian society strives towards modernization and democratization; it has been trying to make its own new identity among the European Nations. Baring in mind the importance of traditional values and institutions of Serbian people, the Government of the Serbia Republic adopted The Law on Churches and religious communities in 2006 (“Official News SR”, no. 36/2006). Article no. 40 of this Law says that the right of religious education in public and private elementary and secondary schools guaranteed by the Serbian State. Although religious education has been implemented since 2001 as the alternative curriculum in primary and secondary schools by the rules of the Serbian Government (“Official News SR”, no. 46/2001.), religious education is still an issue that provokes great controversial attitudes on the political and social scene of Serbian society until now. By this act, the Government of the Serbia Republic is found itself under pressure of many factors of the civil society, who wants to obstruct the implementation of religious education with the excuse that it harms mentioned democratic processes and that religion is not a part of public sector. The Church over religious education has nowadays very difficult and serious tusk and only time will tell if we are going to overcome all the challenges and to respond to all the questions and needs of pupils, overcoming the temptations in mutual living and working, education and upbringing in accordance with the evangelical enlightenment, change of mind and the deification by introducing students in the life of the Church. A religious teacher alone certainly is not in a position to cooperate with the student's environment and to accomplish the mission, and it is therefore necessary to create a collective atmosphere, including in the exercise missions also the students who do not attend religious education, and family and youth overall environment. Here I mean that in the case of the professors whose subjects have scientific basis different from the religious, but the common curious and open attitude it is certainly possible to overcome seemingly irreconcilable differences of scientific and religious education.

Key words: religious education, the Church, School, education.

¹ninoslav.kacaric@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 21st century the Orthodox Church in Serbia has faced with enormous - challenges. After the period of half-century restrictions under the communist regime in the former Yugoslavia, the time of change has come and it brings with itself respectfulness of religious freedom to Serbian people and freedom to practice their religion and express their religious notions publicly. Serbian society strives toward modernization and democratization; it has been trying to make its own new identity among the European Nations. Baring in mind the importance of traditional values and institutions of Serbian people, the Government of the Serbia Republic adopted The Law on Churches and religious communities in 2006 (“Official News SR”, no. 36/2006). Article no. 40 of this Law says that the right of religious education in public and private elementary and secondary schools guaranteed by the Serbian State. Although religious education has been implemented since 2001 as the alternative curriculum in primary and secondary schools by the rules of the Serbian Government (“Official News SR”, no. 46/2001.), religious education is still an issue that provokes great controversial attitudes on the political and social scene of Serbian society until now. By this act, the Government of the Serbia Republic is found itself under pressure of many factors of the civil society, who wants to obstruct the implementation of religious education with the excuse that it harms mentioned democratic processes and that religion is not a part of public sector. The Church over religious education has nowadays very difficult and serious task and only time will tell if we are going to overcome all the challenges and to respond to all the questions and needs of pupils, overcoming the temptations in both areas; living and working, education and upbringing in accordance with the evangelical enlightenment, change of mind and the deification by introducing students to the life of the Church. A religious teacher alone certainly is not in a position to cooperate with the student's environment and to accomplish the mission, and it is therefore necessary to create a collective atmosphere, including in the exercise missions also the students who do not attend religious education, and family and youth overall environment. Here I mean that the professors whose subjects have scientific basis different from the religious, but the common curious and open attitude is certainly possible to overcome seemingly irreconcilable differences of scientific and religious education.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE RELATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The educational system in Serbia began to develop during the gradual liberation from Turkish domination. Centuries of slavery destroyed almost completely the achievements of Serbian medieval educational and cultural tradition. Before The First Serbian Uprising, the population in Serbia was almost completely illiterate, “in liberated Serbia under Karađorđe’s regain the schools were started to expand and there were schools in almost all towns; particularly they were spread in Belgrade for learning purposes of the new baptized Turks. Then the well – known Grand School was opened in Belgrade and it was one of a kind that the Serbs have never had before.” (Đorđević, T. 1946, 91) The opening of the High School in 1808 represented the earliest attempt of organizing secondary and higher education in Serbia. These organizational efforts to establish the school system and the expansion of education are linked to the name of Dositej Obradović, who came

back to Serbia in 1808. He took part in the opening of the High School and was the first Minister of Education (Popečitelj) in Serbia. In Serbia the names of Dositej Obradović and Vuk Karadžić are also related to the adoption of the ideas of Enlightenment age that arising from the Western culture and tradition of the time. On that basis, there is a conflict between the Church and the School, which began to separate from the Church. In the first place spirit of the Enlightenment age influenced the choice of the subjects that were thought in schools. Religious education was not taught in schools, but only the church singing.

The Seminary was founded in 1810 in Belgrade and” a few facts about this school can be found in story telling of Lazar Arsenijević Batalke. The first professor in the Seminary was Vićentije Rakić from Trieste. The Seminary lasted two years. In 1812 four students graduated at this school and they were ordained as deacons.” (Ilić, A. 2002, 111)

At the time of the first government in the reign of Prince Miloš Obrenović, the foundation of school system was established in Serbia. When Mihail Jovanović enthroned Metropolitan, religious educational system has come one step further so that in religious educational curriculum and pedagogical – philosophical group of subjects has been introduced in the Seminary in order to increase the intellectual level and quality of the priests, and also thanks to his support and initiative in 1863 the first published copy of Theologian has emerged which has been published by the Belgrade Seminary youth and which we could assume the first issue of ecclesia periodicals in Serbian Orthodox Church, since in the call for subscription was announced that the Seminary youth would published a copy under this title every year.” (Sando, D. 2010, 255 – 256)

Tremendous merits of Metropolitan Mihail are that in 1873 another department of Belgrade Seminary was opened and it was called ”foreign Seminary” or ”missionary institute” where were received children from non-liberated Serbian regions and a large number of graduated theologians came out from it. His pedagogical efforts are reflected also in his further effort to open Seminary in Banja Luka in 1866 and in Prizren in 1871, wherein his great experience gained in educating spiritual centres abroad he tried to convey to our religious educational area. Then he tried to rearrange our spiritual nursery according to good results he liked in Russia: “joined together in a new draft of the law Russian spirit and Russian six-grade Seminary in nine – grade Seminary, which was named after Saint Sava. Such nine – grade Seminary was established by a special law on the Seminary, which was made public on 11th January in 1896. This reform was applied in practice only in 1899. Unfortunately he couldn’t see the new Seminary started working because the first class of the Seminary enrolled in 1900, and Metropolitan died two years before that.” (Sando, D., 2010, 256)

According to the new law primary schools are defined as basic public schools in which the main subjects are: Christian doctrine, reading, writing, arithmetic, and singing, and “the improvement of their social and educational functions was influenced significantly by numerous calls, especially from 1868, when Dimitrije Matić became the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs.” (Tešić V., 1983, 326) We can see that in this curriculum of the subjects in the first place was the Christian doctrine, and that education and religious affairs were in the responsibility of one ministry.

By the Law on Organization of the Seminary, this school was included in the general reorganization of the school system in 1863. It was anticipated that it should prepare future priests and teachers and last four years, it was boarding type of school and enrolment for this school starts at the end of the fourth year of high school. Students who came from non-liberated regions of Serbia would learn under the special program and a condition for their enrolment was different, so they could finish primary school only. In the Seminary since the beginning of 1863 besides the priests the laity can teach also. Superintendence exercised by the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, and all decisions were made with the approval of the Orthodox Church's Holy Synod of Serbia.

Then in 1873 curriculum was prescribed by the Ministry, and instructional programs collegiums. And for the students, School Law was adopted in 1864, which was amended and tightened in 1871. It was a similar concept as the law school to secondary school students and high schools.

At the initiative of Dečani teachers and cadets of the Belgrade Seminary Timotija Andrijić, Sima Igumanov and his associates Ilija Stavrić and Milan Novičić founded the Seminary in Prizren on October 1st in 1871 (Sando, D., 2010, 259) In Macedonia, there were four lower and one secondary theological school in the period before the Second World War. The first Seminary was established in Bitola in 1882, and then from 1897 there was (exarchate) eparchy school for priests, while the spiritual schools existed in Skoplje, Prilep and Jedrine.

As regards religious schools and education of priests, it should be noted that the gathering some parts of the Church into a united organization, were imposed the needs of a single school system. By The Regulation Act of the Serbian Orthodox Seminary issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1921, fifth-grade Seminary were planned, as state boarding schools, but „the Seminary should be in Belgrade, Sremski Karlovci, Prizren, Sarajevo, Mostar, Zagreb, and in Cetinje. Then in 1928 the Seminary continued to work as a six-grade.“ (Radić R., 1995, 25) The seminaries were in the range of complete secondary schools and were organized in 1928. Ordinance of seminaries and Guidelines was adopted in 1932.

Monastery School in Rakovica, which was opened in 1906, after the discontinuance during the Balkan Wars and the First World War, continued to work in 1922. Ten years later it was moved to the Dečani's monastery, where it worked until the beginning of World War II. Great School in Belgrade was turned 1905, in The University, and by the Law of University of Belgrade, Article 4 it was planned the establishment of the Faculty of Theology. Due to the lack of qualified teachers and the wars that followed, legal decisions on the opening of the Orthodox Theological Faculty were made at the end of 1920. The Orthodox Faculty was opened on 6th of September in 1920.

Also, “it should be noted that by the Vidovdan's Constitution, Article 16, religious education is set to optional basis, but already in 1929, by the law on public schools, religious education was introduced as a compulsory subject, even in high schools, under the control of the Church.” (Radic, V., 1995, 26)

Religious education (religious doctrine) before the war in Yugoslavia was taught in the regular classes, called religious and Christian doctrine ... It was taught to primary and secondary schools, and its content was the Bible. In teacher training schools religious education had among other things, the task that the teacher candidates prepare for teaching this subject. Catechist is a teacher who taught religious education, but "before the war in Yugoslavia priests were selected for religious teachers in primary and secondary schools with more classes or especially prepared people (graduates theologians), while in the smaller rural schools religious classes were held by teachers in the beginning, later were taught by the priests." (Dictionary of Education, 1967, 124)

The Patriarchy of Serbian Orthodox Church was established in 1919, soon after a new state was created, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (KSCS) and it also united the six church organizations of various roots and history. The Church didn't consider Patriarchy as a new institution, but renew as a direct successor to the medieval Serbian Patriarchy, but its different parts existed independently for centuries and there was a lot of work to be done for achieving their full cohesion. For the first time, the established church in Serbia, the Serbian Orthodox Church, is amongst equal religious communities in the Kingdom of SCS. By the Vidovdan's Constitution in 1921, was adopted the principle of full freedom of religion and conscience (Article 12) and ensured full equality of all legally recognized confessions. It was a new reality, which has created uncertainty and heightened sensitivity to everything that could be regarding to the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

1918-1941. was one of the most important periods in the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Although under the patronage of the state, it possessed considerable privileges and material resources and tried to recover all that in the previous period was lost. It worked intensively on education of priests, rising and restoration of temples and monasteries, spreading the faith among the people ... After many years of struggle, the Law on the Serbian Orthodox Church was adopted in 1929, and on that foundation the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church would be adopted in 1931. According to this Constitution, the Serbian Patriarchy was recognized as one, indivisible and autocephalous Church with the highest rank that could have an autocephalous Church.

"Immediately after the war, the office of the Ministerial Council of Yugoslavia on 21 October in 1945, was adopted a *Decree on the Establishment of the State Commission for Religious Affairs*. By this Decree was established the Republic Commission and the State Commission." (Official News of DFJ, 1945, 21) The Republican Commissions for their work was responsible to the State Commission and it to the Federal Executive Council. Commissions had broad authority and over them the work of all religious communities were closely followed and most attention is paid to the Serbian Orthodox Church. Commission amends section 278 of the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church, in which the relationship between the state and the Church represented by the Ministry of Justice. The first article of the decree states: "The State Commission for Religious Affairs study all issues related to the external life of religious communities, their relationships and the position of the Church to the state and national governments, as well as the preparation of materials for a legislative solution to the relationship between religious communities and the state." (Bulletin of the SOC, 1946, 3, 47)

In the second article it was stated that the Commission will maintain the “most closely related to the organs of religious communities. The bodies of the religious community and the national authorities are obliged to the Commission at its request to submit the necessary information and data.” (Bulletin of the SOC, 1946, 3, 47) In parallel with the establishment of the Committee for Religious Affairs, the *Act on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial and religious hatred and strife*, which was a broad set almost everything could be subsumed under, so that it is possible that many were tried and convicted according to it. Its next statement has been of special importance: “Scientific criticism of religion and criticism of religious leaders and church officials and their improper operations could not be considered a provocation and incitement to religious hatred. It will be considered an aggravating circumstance if the provocation and incitement to religious hatred is performed by church representatives.” (Bulletin of the SOC, 1946, 3, 48)

Communist Party wanted gentle and cooperative church that will be in opposition, but will help the party and government policy. The Patriarch was willing to cooperate with the state, but not to be used by it.

After the World War II, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was created, and by its Constitution in 1946, was regulated the relationship between the state and the Church. The school was separated from the Church, which means the end of religious education in our school system. Then began the time of persecution all educational content that had anything to do with religion, and “separation of state and confessional communities means only that the state is no longer a collective believer”, and that it in no way gives the label a factor atheism. After all, the assumption that enable statehood are the same ones on which and from which rises a religion, at least as a social fact ... Separation of the Church and the State means the constitution of the state school, which was separated from the Church, but the Church was in subordinated position.” (Ćimić, E., 1984, 162) There was a period in which the process of separation of church and state should have social significance of religion and the church reduced to the level of worthless and marginal.

At the end of 1944, made a temporal decision:

- 1) that religious education in public schools is no longer part of the curriculum;
- 2) that religious teachers can maintain optional classes of religious education, for students of public schools whose parents and guardians statement that they want to, and that
- 3) religious teachers remain civil servants, and their appointments are still performed at the proposal of the ecclesiastical authorities. Material costs of heating, lighting and servants were supposed to be on the cost of the interested parents (Radić, R., 2002).

“Then the Holy Synod of Orthodox Church asked the Ministry of Education that in terms of religious education in schools establish a state that existed before the war; However, this proposal was rejected by a regulation of the Ministry of Education DFJ no. 842/45, and then, in March 1946, made another decision: religious education can take place outside of regular school hours, the school buildings, and religious education as a subject should not be brought into school certificates or evaluate students. It was also decided that the religious teachers from the first of May 1946, were no longer at the payroll of the Ministry of Education.” (Kuburić, Z., 2010, 19-20)

Because authority thought that one of the main obstacles to the formation of a scientific world view religious education in schools, and the influence of the clergy - the percentage of children who attended religious classes climbed to 90% - the school authorities were ordered to control the work of the priests. As a result of all this religious education is constantly retreating, until 1952, although it was officially prohibited by the adoption of the Law on public school in December in 1951. Jankovic (1952) notes that the teacher may not be religious person because the school has to educate the youth that will be totally free of all religious bonds and faith in God will be strange notion to them so they will be fighting atheists.

After 1952, religious education was permitted only in churches. However, SOC clergy have never been overly active in the maintenance of religious education in parishes, in contrast to the Catholic and Protestant clergy. During 1953, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church have repeatedly appealed to the State Commission for Religious Affairs stating that teachers forbid children to go to church and the priests punished for holding religious classes. Problems in relation between the school and the church became more and more numerous. For irregularities that occurred in practice, the central authorities often blame passing the local authorities, and these were limited to existing decisions and solutions. In this game of the powerful, the representatives of different religious communities often wrote letters and personally visited Josip Broz Tito, protesting and trying to exercise their rights, and about that “then-Minister of Education, the famous Mitra Mitrović, recorded how the last visit of the Adventist church representatives to Marshal Tito was and that he promised that the children will be exempt from teaching in schools on Saturday, stressing that any difficulties arising in the everyday life. Later they had the meeting with Mitra Mitrović, to coordinate this solution. However, said has stated that it was impossible to children to get rid of school on Saturdays because it would be precedent case and all other religious communities could ask for similar concessions. The consequence of such attitudes was that the believers personally pay the price of going to church and attending religious education that they had in it: financially, imprisonment, marginalization.” (Kuburić, Z., 2010, 21) in the request of religious freedom some left the country and most of them gave up the belief practice. So at the beginning of the sixties the number of children attending religious education in Serbia dropped to about 3% of the total number of school children (Radić, 2002).

“The Law on the Legal Status of Religious Communities (Law on the Legal Status of Religious Communities, 1953, 22) was adopted in 1953 in order to resolve the status of religious communities. The law had 24 articles in total. The purpose of the Act was to provide a precise legal definition of the relevant regulations of the Constitution. Each republic is then published its own law on religious communities, but after considerable delay; Serbia, for example, was adopted such a law only in 1962. This law is basically regulated the relations between the state and religious communities, but 'it was regulated only some of the rights enjoyed by religious communities and believers and outlined measures that countries can apply in the case of religious communities and believers cross the Constitution and legal frameworks, and limits of action.’ (Radić R., 1995, 315) the law remained in force until 1965, when it enacted the Basic Law on the Legal status of Religious Communities. This law only tightened penalties for exceeding the prescribed work of religious communities and believers, while all other terms remained the same as in the law of 1953.

“We can say that this relationship, the relationship of the perfidious and open terrorizing the church by the state authorities, lasted until around 1955.” (Radulovic, M., 2007, 2) However, realizing that the faith of the people cannot quickly or easily exterminate as expected, taking into account the recommendations and requirements of the "free world" that religious communities must not only tolerated but respected as an important social factor, the communists decided to control church from inside when they cannot completely break it. “Cooperation with Religious Communities was reduced to illegal and inadmissible intelligence control whose purpose was to determine which of the priests and the faithful continue to persist in the old historical, social and moral views, and who accepted the new socialist ideology as the only desirable and advanced, and therefore it can rely on them in the internal controlling church life. The ultimate goal of this control was to isolate the Church in the port, to its spiritual radiation, as well as cultural and social effects are reduced only to the liturgical rite, while in the public life of priests and priestly people useful to unconditionally accept and support communists' utopia. Those who fail to do so should be pressed, threatened, isolated, broken inside, so that their beliefs should not recite the others, nor must connect to the relatedness based on historical consciousness, the shared spiritual experience and based on respect, love and responsibility towards Serbian national and cultural tradition.” (Radulovic, M., 2007, 3)

According to professor Puzović “after the war in difficult circumstances Theological Faculty of the Belgrade University continued with work and since the authorities discontinued the Faculty of Theology as a state institution on February 15 in 1952, the Church has taken care of the Faculty, although it was in a difficult financial position. The Seminary in Prizren was restored in 1947, while the Seminary St. Save in the monastery Rakovica near Belgrade in 1949. Thanks to merits of Patriarch German Theological Seminary St. Arsenical in Sremskim Karlovcima was opened in 1964, initially as a department of the Belgrade Seminary St. Save, and later as an independent school. That same year he opened a two-year seminary in Krka Monastery; school year 1966/67 and five-year grade. Renovated work Monastic School in Ovčarsko-kablarski Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord and Monastic School in Ostrog Monastery was opened in 1967. In 1986 Theological Faculty of the Serbian Orthodox Church started working in Libertyville, Illinois, USA, a division of the Theological Faculty in Belgrade, and since 1988, as an

independent theological and educational institution. At the Theological Faculty in Belgrade was founded in 1990 / 91st Theological Institute, where training takes two years (four semesters)". (Puzovic P., Serbian Orthodox Church from 1941 until today, http://www.iskon.co.yu/6/puzovic_c.html)

INTRODUCING THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TO EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA SINCE 2001 UNTIL TODAY

Anyone who was professionally involved, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the study of social relations and education, did not need a special scientific foresight to detect the proximity of the momentum when the religious content would be restored in the school curriculum and became a reality. During these years when changes started rapidly to take place in many areas of our society, and it was inevitable that the goals and tasks of education and modernization of educational facilities at all levels of education should be reconsider. Bearing all this in mind, the Union of Pedagogical Societies of Serbia organized a symposium on "Religion and school" in 1992. It was an interdisciplinary conference and a specific attempt that the complex subject such as - the relationship between religion and education, churches and schools – should be approach from a variety of professional and scientific perspectives. At the meeting the views and arguments were expressed which should be actualized when the introduction of religious education in schools has become certain. On the basis of published papers from the symposium (Teaching and Education, 1992, No.4-5), we can get the impression that the teaching content related to religion are needed to be introduced to the school or within existing courses or introducing special cases, but that these facilities should be the part of general education, not confessional determined. Towards the end of the twentieth century, it seems that the interest in the relationship between church and school, educational and religious contents was increasing.

In 1997 in Podgorica a round table was organized by Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, where a number of issues were placed on which the experts tried to respond, and "on this occasion presented research showing that there is a great interest in religion, which is interpreted as need to introduce religious education in schools." (Kuburić, Z., 2002, 119) Significant political changes that have occurred in Serbia at the end of 2000 brought many novelties to Serbian society. The question of introduction the religious education in primary and secondary schools was in focus again. A variety of arguments pro and contra such as subject in school regularly filled the pages of newspapers. In addition, new scientific meetings that are trying from different perspectives to talk about the place of religious education in primary and secondary schools were held in many places, and the „results of the a fore mentioned studies, especially those from the early nineties onwards, mostly on the changes within the religious value orientations of young people from predominantly atheistic orientation towards acceptance and strengthening of religion as a system of beliefs.“ (Kuburić, Z., 2010, 25) The period mentioned above was characterized by the beginning of changes in many areas of life, from which our school system wasn't excluded, too. It started by a critical review of the objectives and tasks of education, as well as the modernization of the teaching content and methods of education at all levels. Then it became clear that, given the increasing interest of young people for religious content and an increase in the

importance of religion and faith in a growing number of people working on reforming the educational system needs to thoroughly examine the possibility of re-introduction of religious content in the school curriculum.

Serbian Orthodox Church requests introduction of the confessional religious education in public schools. Request for a confessional character of religious education explained the former federal Minister of Religion Bogoljub Šijaković who said that there is no a general concept of religion and even less a common religion - that we can have the experience of religion only in a particular faith and confession, and "the introduction of religious education required under law on education, the right choice of worldview, the right to practice religion and the right of parents to educate their children according to their religious beliefs, which are recognized by international conventions." (Aleksov, B., 2004, 7) Proponents of confessional religious education pointed to the acceptance of religious education in many European democratic countries such as Ireland, Austria, Germany, Greece, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, Italy, Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In the UK and Denmark's confessional religious education was replaced by religious culture, while in the United States and France, religious education non-existed. There were also opinions of individual believers and clergy that the Church should not rely on the secular state and its education system for its own spiritual mission instead of pastoral work, but that the priests and monks should be activated through the missionary work of the Church itself, as the pious parents should make sure about the Christian education of their children. Numerous non-governmental organizations and education experts have pointed out that the method of introduction of religious education in state schools was in conflict with the Constitution of the country and established procedures and standards in the introduction of new subjects in curriculum after a two-year experimental implementation and its expertise. „The campaign against the introduction of religion education in public schools led by the Committee for the right to education without religious or political indoctrination, Association teaching staff and researchers at the University of Novi Sad, whose actions and pronouncements joined ninety NGOs. Against the introduction of religious education in state schools were Chamber of the Belgrade University, all rectors and many professors of Universities in Serbia, Education Forum, the Union of Pedagogical Societies of Yugoslavia and other expert organizations dealing with education.“ (Aleksov, B., 2004, 10)

Regulation on the organization and implementation of religious education - alternative subject in primary and secondary schools, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted pursuant to Article 90, item 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, in conjunction with the Law on Primary Education (“Official News of RS”, no. 50/92, 53/93, 67/93 and 48/94) and the Law on Secondary Education (“Official News of RS”, no. 50/92, 53/93, 67/93, 48/94 and 24/96) , July 24, in 2001 was, and the same decree is published in the “Official News of RS”, no. 46/2001. After the adoption of these regulations religious education in schools emerged in September in the 2001 / 2002nd year.

Article 22 of the Law on Primary Education says that a parent declares each year in the choice of religious education or civic education, however, Article 69 and 86 of the basics of the education system to regulate differently, or - declaration happens to education cycle (I - IV, V - VIII class) and not to any particular school year or cycle from the first to the

eighth grade, and as for his operation of law on the basis of educational system stronger, apply this solution.

Cherishing the human person and respect for his personal integrity must be the highest value and goal of catechist's theory and practice. Catechist all of your messages and lessons should be put at the service of the development of what the Church believes divine qualities, and it is the most divine personality. Catechist that way teaches man not only to imitate his Creator in the moral sense, but more than that, by emphasizing the value of personality, he's young will be prepared to enter the time of participation in the Christian and then the divine life, and his life, behavior and evidence what they preach and what they teach.

As we have said, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted on 27 July in 2001. The Regulation on the organization and implementation of religious education and an alternative subject in primary and secondary schools (Official News of the Republic of Serbia - Education Journal, 2001a). It presents the details of the organization and realization of the religious education of the traditional churches and religious communities in primary and secondary schools. Included are: the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Community, the Catholic Church, the Slovak Evangelical Church, the Jewish community, the Christian Reformed Church and the Evangelical Christian Church. This choice, it was clear that religious education in our educational system is introduced as a strictly confessional set, not as a general education subject. Its aim, in such hypothetically and regulated by law organization, is the creation and nurturing of the faith of believers, and general religious education oriented students. Regulation has determined the status of religious education and alternative items that are organized as an optional, and also "The Decree stipulates that the evaluation of these subjects is descriptive and does not affect the overall success of students." (Dačić, S., 2002)

Based on the previously adopted the Regulation on the organization and implementation of religious education and an alternative subject in primary and secondary schools, was enacted on October 20 in 2001. Rulebook on curriculum subjects, religious education in the first grade of primary school (Official News of the Republic of Serbia - Educational Journal, 2001b). This Ordinance "elective" is definitely called civics and religious education has remained under the same name. In the Education Gazette gives the Ordinance on the type of qualification of teachers who teaches religious education in the first grade of secondary and primary school, as well as the criteria and method of assessing students attending religious education. The criteria for evaluation are: regularity of attendance, interest and active involvement in the learning process. Student achievement is evaluated descriptively: outstanding, good and satisfactory.

According to the Regulations, the goals of religious education in primary and secondary schools are to be verified, it the content of faith and spiritual experience of traditional churches and religious communities that live and work in our living space, to provide students with a comprehensive religious view of the world and life and to allow them free adoption of spiritual values of the Church or community which historically they belong to, and preserving and fostering their own religious and cultural identity. Introducing students to the faith and spiritual experiences of their own, the historical date of the

religious community needs to be realized in an open and tolerant dialogue, taking into account the experiences of other religious and philosophical views, as well as scientific knowledge and all the positive experiences and achievements of humanity. Further, the Regulations contain a curriculum of seven traditional churches and religious communities can be organized religion originated in the school.

The Holy Synod of Serbian Orthodox Church appointed Grace Bishop Ignjatija Braničevskog for cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sports, as well as for the design, organization and inclusion of religious education in our school system. Hence, it is important to follow the interpretation and explanation of Grace Bishop Ignjatija, as necessary for an understanding of the curriculum catechetical Orthodox, which says that “the aim of introducing religious education in schools lies in the fact that people enter into liturgical community. In this, the method should also be liturgical, that is, to find all humans experience in it, therefore, common to all men, and to be interpreted as corresponding with the liturgical experience of the living relationship between man and God. It is, in fact, a method that would be less harm to the Church than any other, and that would not allow that religious education and knowledge of God replace the Church since replacing is the real danger that lies in the fact ... that children know that there is a God, to know all of God, and that they have no personal experience of the liturgical relationship by entering into the Church as a liturgical community, in fact, not salvation.” (Sabornost, 3-4)

In this way, religious education has its responsible place in the community, as it represents evangelical path in the pedagogical development of personality, and therefore the entire Serbian society. Developing awareness of the liturgical ethos of the people develops its knowledge of the iconic indication in the Kingdom of Heaven, and the healthy development of the Christian family, where again religious education constitutes inseparable element of proper education and upbringing.

Blessed professor Radovan Bigović in his book “Church and Society” says that religious education in schools should involve the intertwining of didactic and methodological pluralism, artistic communication (which includes icons, ecclesiastical singing and music, architecture of temples, etc.) and personal examples and communication. By explaining the use of the term didactic and methodological pluralism in practice, above mentioned author points out that the teaching process of religion in schools should use different sources of information, different teaching tools and methods, as well as various forms of teaching. “The educational process at protégés to engage and activate all of their mental and spiritual predispositions and processes: perception, presentation, thinking, concentration, self-observation, curiosity, emotion, imagination ... Teaching should always be dialogic and communicative, honest and opened in both ways the horizontal and the vertical. The educational process should be seen as a joy, play, communication, entertainment, hard work and achievement.” (Bigović, R., 2000, 113)

CONCLUSION

If we wanted to assess the effects of religious education in relation to the objectives of the curriculum, we would need much more than the period analyzed in this paper, as the

goals and objectives of such a nature that link, as well as the concept of religion, earthly and heavenly, past and future, mortal and immortal. Accordingly, „The goal of course Religious Education - Orthodox catechism (religious education or religious doctrine) is to give a complete orthodox view of the world and life, taking into account two dimensions: historical Christian life (the historical reality of the Church) and eschatological (future) life (the ideal dimensions)“ (Official News RS - Education Journal, 2001). To expand the perspective of the „here and now“ to observe yourself from the perspective of eternity is expressed through religious teaching assignments.

It is definitely required to give children the possibility to develop themselves into a complete and healthy person by the knowledge and study of religious doctrine and spiritual presence in our schools in the form of the subject of religious education. Physical, emotional and mental development of a child is as important as spiritual development, and especially at the age when this process occurs naturally, and to skip any stages of the development will be an obstacle in some stage of life. Religious education in schools and preschools allows children in the right time to form complex fields of human beings. Many of us are just now going through a spiritual puberty because our current system of education is not given in time to hear that part of the story. According to Professor Stojanovic „catechist should convince them to know and believe that this exam takes my whole life, and not a numerical score, but still descriptive, in order to read as follows: serves good! The success of the above will be checked for many years, and will be visible when they grow the first generation of assuming positions of responsibility. Many of our religious teachers to know and to have a good way to reach the goal, and our joy is yet to come.“ (Stojanovic, Lj., 2009, 71) According to Nada Sekulic, „it is not important what are the symbols and the facilities that are offered to children within religious education (cross, crescent, or something else), but how children acquire these symbols, what they mean to them and how much they contribute informing some fundamental and universal values such as love, tolerance, tranquillity of mind, the ability to carry on the enlightened way difficulties and openness to what is divine.“ (Sekulic N., 2002, 83) Fostering the human person and respect for his personality and integrity of his personality must be the highest value and goal for catechist, in his theory and practice. Catechist all of your messages and lessons should be put at the service of the development of what the Church believes divine qualities, and it is the most divine personality. Catechist in that way teaches man not only to imitate his Creator in the moral sense, but more than that, by emphasizing the value of personality on the young will be prepared to enter the time of participation in the Christian and then the divine life, and his life, behavior and evidence that he preaches and what he teaches.

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Biographical note:

Ninoslav Kačarić was born in Zrenjanin on December 13, 1977. After he had finished Grammar school in Zrenjanin, he graduated from Theological faculty of Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade in 2002. In 2014 he obtained a degree of Master of Arts at Orthodox Theological Faculty „St. Vasilije Ostroški“ in Foča, University of Istočno Sarajevo. Since 2002 he has worked as Secretary of Bishop in Eparchial administrative committee, as coordinator for religious education in Eparchy of Banat, as well as editor of magazine „Banatski Vesnik“. He has worked as a priest at church of „St. Theodore of Vršac“ in Vršac. He published several books and many professional papers in the field of pedagogy, psychology and theology, and took part in several international scientific meetings.