

Teaching Religion, Teaching Truth

Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

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Preface

World events at the dawn of the twenty-first century have clearly laid to rest some of the overblown claims of the secularization theorists of the 1960s. Belief in God is not dead, and religion has not retreated to the personal domain and given over the public square to the exclusive claim of secular voices. Rather, the importance of religion is again recognized as a matter of public significance and social concern.

In this context the role of religious educators has also grown in public significance. Today religious educators are called upon to enable young people to develop as fully-rounded human beings in a world, and often in a nation or local society, that is thoroughly multicultural and thoroughly multifaith. No longer is it sufficient to teach about the history of religions: religion is not relegated to the past. No longer is it sufficient to teach about the observable outward phenomena of religions: religion is not restricted to practices, artefacts, and buildings observable in the outside world. In this context it is also necessary to take seriously what it is that religions believe about themselves, and what religions believe about other religions. The theology of religions is what ultimately matters in understanding and interpreting the re-emergence of religion in the twenty-first century as a matter of public significance and social concern.

Seen from the inside religions deal in the currency of truth. For the religions themselves truth matters. Truth-claims can lead to harmony and to peace, but they may also engender discord and violence. What ultimately counts is how one set of truth-claims confronts or embraces the truths claimed by other, different voices. Therefore those who teach religion cannot avoid dealing with matters of truth.

In this collection of original essays, religious educators shaped by both Christian and Islamic worldviews discuss the problems and opportunities that now face educators and believers alike, as they are confronted by the challenge of *teaching religion* and *teaching truth*. The arguments presented

and the discussion nurtured among the participants attending the sixteenth conference of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values, hosted by the University of Ankara, Turkey, are here developed further. We now offer these reflections to stimulate a wider debate, in the hope that this may shape good local practice and ultimately build a better global future for us all.

As editors we wish to express our thanks to the University of Ankara for hosting our Seminar and initiating these debates; to the other contributors for developing their papers for publication; and to the North of England Institute for Christian Education, Durham, UK and especially its Secretary, Evelyn Jackson, for preparing the manuscript.

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The International Seminar on Religious Education and Values is an association of over 200 religious education scholars and researchers from over thirty-five countries, representing various religious traditions as well as secular standpoints. It meets biennially to discuss topics of mutual interest in the fields of religious and moral education, whether theoretical, empirical, contextual, or practical. For further details, see <<http://www.isrev.org>>.