

Editorial Note

The role of religion education (RE) in school – if and how the subject should be taught, to what extent, and according to which principles – are questions of continuous relevance which have been widely debated in the Nordic countries. These discussions take place in the public media as well as in academic circles, and in the daily contact between parents, pupils and teachers. Many similarities are to be found in the religious landscapes of these countries: the prevailing religious engagement is characterised by what Grace Davie has called “belonging without believing”, and is described as “moderate agnosticism” by Phil Zuckerman. Historically, this has reflected the strong position of the national Evangelical-Lutheran churches, but today indifference towards the church is gaining ground, and with it an estrangement from organised religion in general.

The processes of secularisation and increasing multiculturalism pose challenges for the Nordic societies in general and for the educational institutions offering religious and ethical education in particular. This special issue of *Temenos* maps the historical processes and contemporary situation of religious education in the Nordic countries, describing the current challenges, pointing out some of the difficulties as well as opportunities, and suggesting points of development. Despite their shared characteristics described above, the Nordic countries have relied on different models in developing religious education in their schools. Over the last century, similar questions have been answered in different ways: Should religion be taught in school? Should each pupil be taught her or his own religion or worldview, or should all pupils be educated together in a common class? What role should Christianity be allowed to play in this education, and what kind of attention should be given to other traditions? An additional question, of specific interest for the readers of *Temenos* is: what is the role of comparative religion in developing the religion education in our schools?

Tim Jensen and Wanda Alberts have acted as guest editors for this special issue on religion education in the Nordic countries, and we are deeply thankful for their professional and diligent work in engaging authors, editing the articles and advancing the analyses presented in this issue.

The issue closes with an article written by James R. Lewis offering a characterization of movement milieus, using Free Zone Scientology as an example. This article broadens the existing theoretical field by suggesting new perspectives on how the ideas and dynamics of certain religious movements are challenged and developed. The article deals with a subject of immediate

relevance for the overall understanding of changes and challenges within the new religions today, which has nevertheless attracted rather modest interest among researchers until now. The comparative approach adds to the relevance of the article.

Editors-in-Chief

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