

RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA WITHIN THE TEXTBOOKS AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL CYCLE

MEDITERRANEAN AREA AND COMPARISONS OUTSIDE

Université du Maine (Le Mans, France), 2-4 December 2015

The comparative study of how religious phenomena are taught has been the issue of a number of national or international conferences since the end of the 1990's. For this purpose, the book titled *Le Défi de l'enseignement des faits religieux à l'école. Réponses européennes et québécoises*, Paris, Riveneuve éditions, Coll. « Actes académiques », 2014, edited by Jean-Paul Willaime, was an important milestone. Other projects have been elaborated, but none of them was focused on the field of history with the whole Mediterranean area as the space of reference, with relevant comparisons to other areas.

There are a number of controversies about the content of scholastic programs in history: accusations of attempts to undermine one religion or to promote another one; overt or covert messages of rejection if not hatred; acceptance or rejection of the fruits of Orientalist and Post-Colonial studies; use of discourse without any basis in the historical method. Debates are situated within various national polities, but supranational organizations (religious or not) are also involved. Lobbies are active in this field.

Before as well as after the composition of those textbooks, one may recognize a conflict of competence about the topic. Departments and Institutes, whether they be Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Sunni (in the North-African universities or coming from North America as the International Institute of the Islamic Thought), Shia, Hindu, or about the "Jewish People" (official name of one Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem), all of them produce knowledge which is not without consequence for the teaching of history and the way it is received by the students.

The first Conference of the Institute for Religious Pluralism and Atheism (IPRA), with the cooperation of the European Institute of Religious Sciences (IESR), will make an inventory of how the history of religious phenomena is taught and will examine the complex processes of elaboration and reception of those discourses. Because of the amplitude of the corpus, only printed textbooks for students before the three years before their A-Level (or high-school diploma) will be taken into account.

Communications sharing a comparative dimension will be privileged. The conference will be based on three pillars:

- 1- Elaboration of programs and textbooks in relation with religious history: tensions and cooperation between historians and specialists from confessional Institutes or Departments.
- 2- Variety of approaches about a same religious object, depending on the society (European, Arab, or other).
- 3- Analysis of the teaching methods on the history of religious phenomena.

Anyone who wishes to participate should send a proposal for a 20-minute paper: name, affiliation, e-mail address, title of the proposed paper, and an abstract of 600 words or less to Nicolas Stefanni : nicolas.stefanni@univ-nantes.fr before 15 April 2015.

Dominique Avon

Université du Maine

John Tolan

Université de Nantes

