Editorial
The Challenge of Religious Education for the History of Religions

In many countries, religious education is no longer confined to religious instruction organised by religious communities, but *education about religion, religions and religious diversity* has become part of school curricula. If for the right reasons or not, the importance of knowledge about different religions is now generally acknowledged and there are political efforts to implement school education about religions at national and international levels.

Even though this regards the very subject matter of the History of Religions (or: Study of Religions), only few scholars from this discipline have contributed to the debate about education about religions in school contexts. Therefore, this field has largely been left to people with a religious rather than scholarly interest in school education about religions, such as representatives of religious communities or religiously motivated politicians. However, there are important exceptions, individual scholars in the study of religions who have developed concepts for school education about religions and have taken part in the related political and educational debates. This theme issue of *Numen* comprises articles by scholars who, each in his or her own context, have been involved in this topic for years. Not only have they used their expertise in the study of religions for the analysis of models of education about religions, but they have helped to shape education about religions in their countries and elsewhere, be it with respect to general academic concepts, curriculum development, syllabuses or teaching material.

Rather than relying on the initiative of individual scholars, I think, the discipline of the study of religions needs to develop a didactic branch. Otherwise, the important field of education about religions (in school and other educational contexts) will continue to be left mainly
to other interest groups, possibly with religious or anti-religious agendas, while the knowledge produced by the study of religions is ignored. However, as recent political and public debates about religion, religions and religious diversity have shown, the expertise of the academic study of religions is needed also beyond academic contexts. The articles in this theme issue may serve to broaden the discussion within the study of religions about its relation to education about religion/s in various contexts.

Wanda Alberts