

## **Abstract**

### **Individuality and the Community in the Development of K. E. Nipkow's Theory of Religious Education from 1960 to 1990**

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The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the development occurred between 1960 and 1990 of the theory of religious education as proposed by K. E. Nipkow, the German Religious Education specialist, from the point of view of individuality and the community. Nipkow's methodological approach of dialectic convergence theory resulted in a dialogue between theological and educational factors, which supported the thirty-year development of Nipkow's models, theoretical foundations, and theory of religious education.

Nipkow's doctoral dissertation, published in 1960, deals with individuality in the thinking of Pestalozzi, Humboldt and Schleiermacher. Nipkow regarded individuality as one of the basic concepts of education, which were to be interpreted anew as social and historical situations changed. In the late 1960s Nipkow developed the so-called experiential hermeneutically oriented context model for the needs of religious education. In this model, individuality is expressed in the attention paid to pupils' life situations and the educational reality.

The multi-dimensional theoretical framework of religious education in 1975 emphasized supporting identity as a fundamental task of religious education. The concept of individuality was thus given a new form, in accordance with contemporary theories of developmental psychology. Other fundamental tasks, such as the socio-ethical task, the task of critical religious thinking, and that of ecumenical learning, meant a more specific emphasis on the community. It was an outline of a liberating education, which faced the individualistic-existential and social-ecclesiastical challenges of the time with a critical attitude.

The further development of the theoretical outline in 1982 continued to uphold the perspectives of both individuality and the community, as Nipkow combined a historical-social dimension with theories of developmental psychology, especially that of life-span research. According to him, the development of the individual and communal life-reality belonged together. The fundamental task of religious education came to be learning to live and believe together. Nipkow transferred the idea of dialogue into inter-generational learning and developed elementarization as a methodology of Religious Education, which takes into account the point of departure of each age group. His theory of educational responsibility in the church (1990) contained the tasks of walking alongside the individual and the renewal of church communities as prerequisites of communicating the Christian faith in an era characterized by multifaceted Christianity.

The “*geisteswissenschaftliche*” school and its concepts (Ger. *Individualität; Bildung*) were found to be the explanatory factor of the concepts of individuality and the community in the development of Nipkow’s theory of religious education. The concept of education employed by Nipkow (Ger. *Bildung*) implies, on one hand, the individuality, autonomy, freedom and personal responsibility of people of different ages, and on the other hand, the dialogical nature of education in the community facilitated by this concept. Theologically, Nipkow associates himself in his views on individuality and the community with Schleiermacher’s understanding of faith, of which openness towards the world was characteristic. The significance of individuality and the community in Nipkow’s thinking was, furthermore, deepened by his participation, as a member of working parties, in the educational discussions of the World Council of Churches.