

# Religious Education in Georgia

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*Georgia is a multicultural and multiethnic country where people of many faiths have co-existed since ancient times. Despite living under the officially atheist Soviet regime for most of the last century, for the Georgian people Orthodox Christianity was always the main institution that preserved national identity. To teach religion in schools was an important question after the independence was achieved. Due to great effort, in 1988 the “history of Christian religion” was introduced at secondary schools of humanities, which was considered the best way of studying the artistic and literary heritage of Georgia. After 20 years it turned out that religious education (RE) in schools was not successful; it had at least one deficiency because it had become a way to advance Orthodox Christianity.*

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## Introduction

Georgia is a multicultural and multiethnic country where people of many faiths have existed since ancient times. According to a statistical survey conducted in 2002<sup>1</sup> the majority of the population are orthodox Christians.<sup>2</sup> Despite living under the officially atheist Soviet regime for most of the last century, for the Georgian people Orthodox Christianity was always the main institution that preserved national identity. That is why since achieving independence near the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the question of religious education has become prominent in Georgian society. Since then the teaching of religion has gone through various phases. In this paper I will cover a few points of the history of religious education (RE), specifically:

- A Short history of Ecumenism in Georgia

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<sup>1</sup> The results of the first national census of population of Georgia in 2002, part I, National statistics office of Georgia, Tbilisi, 2003 [http://www.geostat.ge/cms/site\\_images/\\_files/georgian/census/2002/1%20tomi%20-%20saqarTvelos%20mosaxleobis%202002%20wlis%20pirveli%20erovnuli%20sayovelTao%20aRweris%20Sedegebi.pdf](http://www.geostat.ge/cms/site_images/_files/georgian/census/2002/1%20tomi%20-%20saqarTvelos%20mosaxleobis%202002%20wlis%20pirveli%20erovnuli%20sayovelTao%20aRweris%20Sedegebi.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Other religions are: Muslim (9.9%), Armenian Apostolic Church (3.9%), and Russian Orthodox (2.0%), Roman Catholics (0.8%) other religions 0.8% and 0.7% do not belong to any religion. *Ibidem*.