

HUMAN RIGHTS RELATED TO THE RIGHT TO RELIGION AND ECONOMY IN THE CONFLUENCE OF CULTURES

Anca MAGIRU¹, Mihaela Lavinia CIOBĂNICĂ², Daniel DĂNECI
PĂTRĂU³, Octav NEGURITĂ⁴

¹ *Spiru Haret University, 32-34 Unirii Street, 900532, Constanta, Romania*
Tel: +40341105047, Email: magiru_ion@hotmail.fr

² *Spiru Haret University, 32-34 Unirii Street, 900532, Constanta, Romania*
Tel: +40341105047, Email: mihaela.ciobanica@spiruharet.ro

³ *Spiru Haret University, 32-34 Unirii Street, 900532, Constanta, Romania*
Tel: +40341105047, Email: daniel.daneci@spiruharet.ro

⁴ *Spiru Haret University, 32-34 Unirii Street, 900532, Constanta, Romania*
Tel: +40341105047, Email: octav.negurita@spiruharet.ro

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Abstract

The paper is focused on the authors' opinion, based on deep research, that religion and education go side by side and could help a lot and should be the basic law for the development, rural or urban, against the background of the nowadays European challenges. Europe is confronted today with oncoming waves of immigrants from all over the world who have been invading it for several years, bringing with them cultures, customs, observances, different in many ways from ours. Under these circumstances, the authors would like to highlight their point of view, mainly the idea that the words of Martin Luther King Jr.: "Hate paralyzes life; love releases it. Hate confuses life; love harmonizes it", are much truer than ever. To keep an open mind on religious



Issue 2/2018

education, to be flexible, loving and understanding should be of vital importance in developing rural communities against the background of the European competitiveness.

Keywords: rural; development; European; competitiveness; religion; education.

JEL Classification: I₂₅, Z₁₂

Introduction

The paper aims to emphasize that the European political system should insure that the diversity of religious beliefs would never become a source of social and/or political injustice, hate, hate crimes, racism. It, on the contrary, should forbid to give special favours to any religion or to hinder the free practice or exercise of any religion of any kind. Although the European states have no European state-supported religion, and each and every state has its own religion, or religions, a kind of Christian consensus or agreement, about God's place in European life and government has developed. The arrival of large numbers of Muslim, Asian, African, Indian, Jew immigrants has challenged that consensus. Now, more than ever, in this newly and ongoing changing and religiously diverse Europe, among the rights that should be guaranteed, as a political necessity, is the freedom of religion as a basis for education and development of individuals.

A mosaic of nations in Europe requires tolerance, mutual understanding, freedom of expression, duties and rights, and above all, Christian LOVE. To develop as an individual against such a multicultural background, you need religious education which is preached in/by the Bible. Let us remind ourselves that the first schools in our country used the Bible to have the children read, learn, write and form their characters. Love is a feeling by which we defeat hate, anger, envy, which helps us be good, share our goods with those less fortunate than ourselves, give a hand to the needy and is a feeling much met with in the Bible. In courts, people swear on the Bible. Presidents, judges and high officials swear on the Bible when they are invested in their offices. Therefore, a condition *sine qua non* to live and develop beautifully, honestly, in harmony with nature and other people is to read, know, and study the Bible which is a jumping board towards education. "We, the people" of Europe, to paraphrase the words in the U.S. Constitution, more than ever must be aware that we are the hosts and we are the home for the new comers



Issue 2/2018

and, consequently, we must behave ourselves on principles grounded in the Holy Book and be models of manners, morality, education.

The first author, Anca Magiru, would like to present the American point of view compared to the Romanian and European views on immigration, education and religion, from her own experience lived there due to the Fulbright scholarship, the documentation in some of the U.S. great libraries, the social and academic life there, the attending of some different confessional services in different churches, taking part in the Washington D.C. Supreme Court cases, while the other co-authors would like to add information from the books read, studied, consulted.

This paper could not have come into being if documents in this field had not been written. The very first book in the mankind history on which this paper focuses on is the Bible, as a source of cultural, educational, legal, and moral basis; then, the authors keep on going deeply into the matter by finding their inspiration from The Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence, 1987; Anne Cusack (Religion in America, 1991), S.E. Ahlstorm, (A Religious History of the American People, Martin E. Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of American Religion, 1985) and others which are to be mentioned in the paper itself and the bibliographical references.

Literature review

The authors would like to emphasize that in America, religious freedom is guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution, which states that, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof;” while the Declaration of Independence, states that, “all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” and that, “the laws of Nature and Nature’s God”, entitled them to form a new nation. Among the rights that the new nation guaranteed, as a political necessity, in a religiously diverse society, was freedom of religion. [The Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence, Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution 1987, Washington, D.C.] The First Amendment insured that the American government would not meddle in religious affairs or require any religious beliefs of its citizens.

In some way, the U.S. Government supports all religions. Religious groups do not pay taxes in the United States. The armed forces pay chaplains of all faiths. Presidents and other political leaders often call on God to bless the American



Issue 2/2018

nation and people. Those whose religion forbids them to fight can perform other services instead of becoming soldiers. Government does not pay ministers' salaries or require any belief, not even a belief in God, as a condition of holding public office. Oaths are administered, but those who, like Quakers, object to them, can make a solemn affirmation, or declaration, instead. American courts have become more sensitive in recent years to the rights of the people who do not believe in any God or religion. However, in many ways, what the Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas wrote in 1952, is still true, "We are a religious people," he declared, "whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being". [Cusack, 1986, rev. 1991.]

In the early years of the American nation, Americans were confident that God supported their experiment in democracy. They had just defeated Great Britain, the most powerful nation in the world at that time. Protestant religion and republican forms of government went hand in hand. America thought herself to have a divine mission to make her unique combination of political freedom and "Yankee" thrift and ingenuity, a model for the world to follow. [Ahlstorm, 1972, rev. 1975.] For example, what can be more challenging than a Cathedral welcoming the people of all faiths and none? Fulbright Scholar Dr. Anca Magiru is speaking here of Washington National Cathedral which she and her husband visited in November 4, 2008. The conclusion is that no matter your church, your faith, or your reason for visiting, all are welcomed to come in here. This Cathedral is today an Episcopal Cathedral for national purposes, it is a catalyst for reconciliation and interfaith dialogue to promote respect and understanding, an invitation for all people to share in the American commitment to create a more hopeful and just life. In this respect, the words of Cathedral Dean Samuel Lloyd are remarkable, "My hope for this Cathedral is that it will be known not only as a great and holy building, but as a Place of reconciliation and healing, and a People serving Christ and working for justice among the broken and hurting of our world." [Washington National Cathedral, www.nationalcathedral.org].

On the other hand, on the opposite coast of America, at the Pacific Ocean, in San Francisco, California, we are welcomed by Grace Cathedral, a house of prayer for all people without exception. Symbols of the world's religions, Christianity, Islam, Taoism, indigenous faiths, Shinto, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Jainism and all other faiths, appear as elements in the chapel. That is why, today, the Cathedral has become an internationally-known place of pilgrimage, home to a vibrant and diverse congregation, and a place for civic celebrations and commemorations, truly "the city's church". [Grace Cathedral. www.gracecathedral.org]



Issue 2/2018

Today, in an American large city, you might see a multiplicity of Orthodox churches: Greek, Romanian, Carpathians-Russian, Serbian, and on and on. All these Orthodox bodies are one church. The ethnic designation refers to what is called the parish's "jurisdiction" and identifies which bishops hold authority there. The astonishing thing about this ethnic multiplicity is its theological and moral unity [Abortion. What the Church Teach. The Orthodox Perspective on Abortion as Presented to the United States Supreme Court in the Amicus Curiae. Concilliar Press Ben Lomond, California, 1990].

It was from the religious and political Western world that the vast majority of early colonists came to make their homes in the New World. Here they could be free to live without fear or threat of incrimination from either Roman Catholic or Protestant dictums [Gaustad, 1982]. The Pilgrims left behind them a continent torn by religious quarrels where, by the 16th century, many people had grown to resent the richly decorated churches and ornate ceremonies of the Catholic Church [Sparks, 1995]. In America, they had formed their congregation. They made a contract, which became known as the "Mayflower Contract". With this contract they agreed to form a "civil body politic" which could make "just and equal laws" for the colony [Marty 1985, reprint of 1972 edition]. Caring for the poor and disadvantaged has always been a concern for the religious people.

Pluralism and religious tolerance for all

By the middle of the 18th century, many different kinds of Protestants lived in America, Lutherans, who had come to America from Germany, Dutch whose Reformed Churches flourished in New York and New Jersey, Presbyterians, one of the largest Calvinist groups, who came from Scotland and, Huguenots, French Protestants, who subscribed to Calvin's doctrines, and who came from France. Congregationalists, as the Puritans came to be called, still dominated in Massachusetts and the neighbouring colonies, an area which came to be known as New England. [Hudson, 1981] Although the Church of England was an established Church in several colonies, Protestants lived side by side in relative harmony. Already they had begun to influence each other. The Great Awakening of the 1740s, a "revival" movement which sought to breathe new feeling and strength into religion, cut across the lines of Protestant religious groups, or denominations. At the same time, the works of John Locke (1632-1704) were becoming known in America. John Locke reasoned that the right to govern comes from an agreement or



Issue 2/2018

“social contract” voluntarily entered into by free people. The Puritan experience in forming congregations made this idea seem natural to many Americans and, taking it out of the realm of social theory, they made it a reality and formed a nation.

It was politics and not religion that most occupied Americans’ minds during the War of Independence (1775-1783) and for years afterward. A few Americans were so influenced by the new science and new ideas of the Enlightenment in Europe that they became deists, believing that reason teaches that God exists but leaves man free to settle his own affairs [Bellah *et al.*, 1985].

In the 19th century, another Great Awakening of revival swept through New England. Many had given up Calvin’s idea of predestination, which is the belief that God chooses those who will be saved, and that man cannot win salvation through good works or other means, salvation can only come from God, and then, only to the “elect”. Some Protestant clergy now preached that all men had free will and could be saved, while others moved on to positions yet more liberal, giving up many traditional Christian beliefs. In this liberal setting, poets and philosophers flourished. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) developed a transcendental philosophy, which stressed the presence of Spirit in man and nature; individual experience and Puritan virtues like self-reliance received a new spiritual foundation; the writings of Emerson and other Transcendentalists are read by millions of schoolchildren in American elementary and high schools. [Bellah *et al.*, 1985]

The idea of progress was appealing to liberal Protestants of the 19th century and they began to ask themselves why religious doctrines should not become more rational as science made the natural world more open to human understanding. In Europe, and particularly in Germany, scholars were reading and studying the Bible in a new way. They questioned the reality of Bible miracles, and challenged traditional beliefs about Bible authors. Liberal Protestants believed that if Christianity were to continue to appeal to educated people, it must accept these ideas. In the same spirit, liberals wrestled with the problems which Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution presented. If human beings had descended from animals, an idea which almost all scientists quickly accepted, then the story of Adam and Eve, the Biblical first parents of human beings, could not be literally true. To the many questions raised by the progress of science, Protestants sought and found answers which stressed the moral and spiritual meaning of the Bible but did not depend on its reliability as a book of factual history [Tillman, 1995].



Issue 2/2018

What set apart the 19th century liberal ministers from their descendants in the 20th century was their optimism about man's ability to make progress. Some, like Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887), still held that poverty and sin went hand in hand. Some liberal ministers were not very critical of the excesses of capitalism. But others, like Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), thought that the Church should concern itself with reforming society. They discovered a "social message" in the Gospels, the Biblical accounts of Christ's life, and began to concern themselves with the problems of workers and the city poor.

Modern liberal clergymen are less optimistic about the speed and extent of social reform, but they are still convinced that the Church must fight for the rights of poor people. They manage shelters for homeless people, feed the poor, run day-care centres for children and speak out on social issues. They seek areas of agreement with other Christians, with Jews and with those of other world religions. Many are active in the ecumenical movement, which seeks to bring about the reunion of Christians into one church. While some New England clergymen embraced the rational side of Puritanism, others turned toward the emotional or spiritual side. These ministers welcomed the "Second Awakening" of the early 19th century and they preached the message of man's sinfulness and Christ's redeeming grace. Evangelical religion, a conservative kind of Protestantism which relies on the authority of the Bible, spread rapidly. Evangelical preachers spoke simply and directly about the Christ of the New Testament Gospels who died to save mankind. The religious enthusiasm which their preaching aroused often led to the forming of associations, or groups, to carry on the work of reforming morals or spreading the gospel and these groups were often interdenominational, all Protestants were welcome to join them. Some groups were formed to fight sin; others were formed to spread God's word around the world and missionaries were sent to Africa, the Far East and to the American Indians in the western United States. Some of these groups, such as the American Bible Society, still exist today. Evangelical religion was fervent throughout America and especially on the frontier. Methodist and Baptist preachers competed with each other to win the settlers' souls for Christ [The New Testament, 1993]. The Methodists, beginning as an evangelical society of the Church of England, became established as an American church in 1784, sending travelling preachers, or circuit riders, into the Appalachian Mountains and beyond. The Baptists, like the Methodists, used lay preachers who preached to small frontier congregations on Sundays. Travelling evangelists preached at camp meetings, revival gatherings which became a regular part of life in the American West [Good News



Issue 2/2018

Bible, 1996]. The Methodists and Baptists grew rapidly in numbers. As both denominations matured their pastoral leadership was assumed by ordained pastors with formal seminary educations. They are still chief denominations in the southern United States. They have many members in other parts of the country as well [Brown, 1987, rev. 1992].

Most religious people were slow to condemn slavery, though from the earliest days the Quakers opposed it and risked their lives helping black slaves to freedom. By the 1850s, however, northern ministers of many denominations were preaching that slavery was a national sin. In the South, however, many clergymen defended slavery and even owned slaves. Northern victory of the Civil War (1861-1865) meant freedom for the slaves. In the war-damaged South, most of the freed slaves became poor farmers, working land they did not own for a share of the crop. Segregation, or racial separation, became a way of life. Many whites were just as poor as blacks. Black and white alike sought comfort in a conservative, evangelical form of religion. The South became a stronghold of “old time religion”.

In 1925, a biology teacher, John Scopes, was convicted under a Tennessee state law which forbade teaching the theory of evolution in a public school. Scopes' conviction was overturned on a legal technicality. But a number of other states in the South passed laws against teaching Darwin's theory. Even today, teaching the theory of evolution to the exclusion of religious teachings is controversial in parts of the United States [Knappman, 2003].

After the Civil War, northern factories grew rapidly. American Protestants did not give up trying to help the poor or convert non-Christians. But they spent a major part of their moral energy for the next 50 years on the temperance movement, an attempt to make all alcoholic drink illegal. Finally they succeeded, and for over ten years (1920-1933) it was illegal to buy beer, wine or liquor in the United States. However, America was changing and, by the late 19th century, a kind of Protestant consensus, or agreement, about God's place in the American life and government had developed. The arrival of large numbers of Catholic and Jewish immigrants challenged that consensus.

Education/Schools and Religion

By the Civil War, over a million Irish Catholics had come to the United States most of them being working people. The anti-Catholic prejudice was so strong that, on few occasions, it broke out in mob violence [Tindall *et al.*, 1992]. Although Catholics were not shut out of public schools and hospitals, they built their own



Issue 2/2018

schools, colleges and hospitals. Catholics believed that these institutions were needed to preserve their faith. Many Catholics now attend public schools and secular colleges even though Catholic institutions still serve large numbers of Catholics, who are attracted by the discipline and education, offered in these schools [Melton, 1985].

By the 1950's, many Catholics had risen to positions of leadership, not only in labour unions, but in business and politics as well [<http://stmarylaw.stmarytx.edu>]. The costs of modern education had made Catholic schools very expensive to maintain.

The lawmaking bodies of many states were sympathetic to these demands, but most attempts to provide help for religious schools were ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States. Giving public money to a religious school was held to violate the First Amendment to the Constitution which prohibits the establishment of religion. Public money for religious schools remains an issue in American politics in the 1980s. If Catholics feel that government should support the non-religious aspects of private education, other American groups call for even less government connection to religion. Sunday closing laws were a real hardship to Jews and Seventh Day Adventists. They were forced to observe two Sabbaths, their own and the majority Christian one, as well. Non-believers and some religious people as well, objected to prayer and Bible reading in public schools. They thought that a modern government in a free society should be basically secular [Tiedebohl, 2008]. In 1962, the Supreme Court declared that prayer and Bible reading could not be used to start the day in public schools. The Court decision was extremely unpopular and, in 1983, a survey showed that eight out of ten Americans favoured amending the Constitution to allow prayer in school [McNally *et al.*, 1975]. Like Catholics, Jews were a small minority in the first years of the American republic. Anti-Semitism was not a big problem before the Civil War, but when Jews began coming to America in great number, anti-Semitism appeared. Usually, Jewish children attended public schools. The children of the immigrants moved rapidly into American universities, where many became intellectual leaders. When faced with prejudice and discrimination, Jews responded by forming organizations to combat prejudice. The Anti-Defamation League has played a major role in educating Americans about the injustice of prejudice and making them aware of the rights, not only of Jews, but of all minorities [Bernstein, 1995]. By the 1950s, a kind of "three faiths" model of the United States had developed. Americans were considered to come in three basic religious varieties: Protestant, Catholic and Jewish, the order reflecting the strength



Issue 2/2018

in numbers of each group. In 1990, Protestants of all denominations numbered about 79,000,000 people. Catholics, the largest single denomination, numbered 55,000,000, over 5, 900,000 Jews lived in the United States. However, an increasing number of Americans did not fit into any of these categories. And some who could be considered Protestant had a style of life and beliefs that did not fit into “mainstream” America [Tindall *et al.*, 1992].

Americans trace the origins of their nation to the English colonists who came to the eastern coast of the North America in the 17th century. The largest group of these first colonists were the Puritans who sought for freedom to practice their religion and they found this freedom in the small towns and villages they built on the edge of the forest in Massachusetts. They believed that every person should be able to read the Bible and they wanted, therefore, one hundred percent literacy which seemed like a dream in the 17th century. In less than 20 years after their arrival, they set up a system of education in their colony: 1. In 1634, they opened a Latin Grammar School for those who wanted to prepare for college; 2. In 1636, Harvard College for training religious ministers was founded; 3. In 1634 and 1638, they passed laws declaring that all property could be taxed for the common good which included the support of schools. 4. In 1642 and 1647, they passed laws requiring all parents to provide reading education for their children. The 10th Amendment of the Constitution included the right of each state to provide for the education of its people. In the 1800th, Americans wanted each child to learn to write his/her name, to do simple arithmetic, to learn the local rules of conduct. Most of all, they wanted their children to learn to read. The first colonists believed that literacy was important to the preservation of religious freedom. They also believed that the ability to read was important to preserving a democratic republic. Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States, argued that Americans should be given an excellent education. Nevertheless, improvements in educational opportunity continued to be made in both the 19th and the 20th centuries. By the early 20th century, compulsory education was very important in the States. The old dream of universal literacy seemed to come true. More than that, the schools were becoming centres for the “Americanization” of immigrants from all over the world.

The Department of Education, established in 1979, sponsored the National Commission on Excellence in Education which tried to raise the standards of performance in each subject. On the other hand, schools must deal with a large influx



Issue 2/2018

of immigrant children, many of whom do not speak adequate English. They must meet community demands that the curriculum reflect the culture of the children attending the school. Schools are meeting these challenges in ways that they reflect the diversity of the U.S. educational system. [Johnson *et al.*, 1981]. President Clinton and state governors made a commitment to improving America's education system with the Goals 2000 Act, a decade-long effort to improve the education started by ex-president Bush. The six education goals focus on high standards and excellence and offer all communities some help to reach for these standards by encouraging and supporting their own action plan that these goals be achieved by the end of the century. The goals are as follows: "Goal 1: by the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn. Goal 2: the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent. Goal 3: American students will leave grades four, eight, twelve having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography. Goal 4: the U.S. students will be the first in the world in math and science achievement. Goal 5: every adult will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise responsibilities of citizenship. Goal 6: every school will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" [Rippa, 1996].

Religious diversity in the confluence of cultures

The United States has always been a fertile ground for the growth of new religious movements [Tindall, 1992]. Individuals may believe anything they please in America, but they may not do anything they want, even if the action is based on a religious belief. Such questions do not usually cause great controversy, because they do not reflect basic divisions in American society. However, there are some questions which reflect continuing conflicts in the American life. When a 1973 Supreme Court decision made abortion legal in America, many Catholics and all Orthodox people were shocked. Many evangelical Protestants and Orthodox Jews also objected. Yet more liberal Protestant and Jewish clergymen joined nonbelievers in maintaining that abortion is a basic right in a pluralistic or religiously varied society [Knappman, 1973]. Inter-religious meetings and discussions are frequent.

Other world religions are increasing their numbers and influence in America. Over two million members of the Islamic religion live in America. Some are immigrants, others are Americans, including some black Americans who have



Issue 2/2018

converted to Islam. Buddhism is a growing faith in America. Recent immigration from Asia has raised the number of Buddhists in America, no one seems quite sure how many. Several hundred thousand Hindus have also come to America. In recent years, young native-born Americans have shown great interest in these and other Eastern religions and philosophies [Bellah *et al.*, 1985].

American pastors are as varied as the flocks they serve. Some of them are women. The Protestant Episcopal Church now ordains women as priests, although the Catholic Church continues to have an all-male clergy. The United Methodist Church has appointed women as bishops. Women can also be ordained as rabbis among some Jewish congregations. Catholic nuns teach and manage large hospitals. Chaplains of all faiths visit the sick in hospitals and nursing homes. Pastors of churches are expected to be active in the civic affairs of their communities. Often they have psychological training and spend part of their time counselling people with personal problems. They preach to congregations assembled in small chapels and huge city cathedrals, in modern synagogues, and even sometimes in drive-in churches, where people can worship without leaving their cars. Some evangelical preachers reach a television audience of millions.

How do Americans of so many different religions manage to live together under common laws and pursue common goals? This is a question for everybody to ask. Most Americans are proud of America's religious variety and they consider it a natural result of religious freedom. On public occasions, they stress the ideas that most religious people share belief in God and the importance of living a good life, which seems to be a great model to follow, for the whole world, having a precise goal: to promote peace, friendship, understanding, tolerance, in the confluence of cultures, and also, to say: "NO", to War, Hate, Racism!

Conclusions

The authors conclude that the ambitions of this research proposal have been: 1) to emphasize the value of a knowledge of the American religious and educational systems against their historical background and the associated mechanisms of legal reasoning which might become increasingly important for Romanian citizens especially now, when there are many changes in the Romanian social, political, judicial, religious and educational fields which vitally require rural development; 2) another ambition of this project has been to stress the importance of the democratic American educational and religious systems as a model for the reform

begun in the Romanian system regarding the rural development against the European background of immigration. Accordingly, the investigation has intended to be a complex process in which concepts such as freedom, human rights, tolerance, pluralism, confluence of cultures and education interact dynamically with the American history in order to offer a model of democracy and a source of inspiration for a multicultural and multilingual Europe.

The authors would like to make it clear that the American model cannot be transferred entirely into another cultural background however only some elements, such as the openness towards various confessions, tolerance, for instance, can be values which could inspire educational, pedagogical models. Traditionally and historically, the rural background is conservative, sometimes hostile and less flexible to modernity and change than the urban background, therefore the implementation of some values connected to peaceful and harmonious living among cultures, religions and languages different from ours, is a challenge for the decades which are to come.

The project has also been intended to: 1) offer new opportunities to learn more about life and democracy in the U.S.A.; 2) be a valuable contribution to the intellectual environment. Therefore, Romanians and people overseas will greatly benefit from the paper as it is grounded in current educational thinking and research and also cross-culturally and internationally based. The authors' intention is to use the paper as a starting basis for a research-to-be-article in the field of rural development against the European competitiveness by going deeply into possibilities, ways, realities, reasons which might help improve democracy.

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Issue 2/2018

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