

Catholic Religious Education in Ontario, CANADA --

Opportunities and Challenges for the 1990s:
Implications for Teacher Education

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When 22,000 members of the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) of the United States held their annual meeting in Toronto last April local newspapers carried accounts of the incredulity expressed by administrators and parochial teachers from across the USA -- incredulity about Catholic teachers' salaries, the size and number of Catholic schools in Ontario, and the quality of the school facilities. In Ontario there are approximately 500,000 pupils and students taught by 30,000 teachers in a Catholic school system which spans kindergarten to the end of high school (first year university in other provinces and the USA). For many educators from the United States it appeared a dream come true.

Catholic schools became eligible for funding throughout the grades for the first time in the fall of 1985 with the passage of Bill 30 by the Conservative Government in the province of Ontario in June of 1984. Bill 30 provided for the full integration of the last three years of secondary school (grades 11, 12 and 13) into the already existing Roman Catholic separate school system of Ontario and thus created a need to transfer public schools to separate school boards to accommodate the increased Catholic school population. This has been achieved over the past five years but full and equal funding with the public system is yet to be realized. A pooling process, however, for monies raised for education from corporate and commercial taxes (Bill 64) is in process. Roman Catholics in Ontario have long held that such full and equal financial support for the separate school system is their constitutional right.

The socio-political reality of having a publicly-funded educational system serving a particular tradition in the most

colonies of Lower Canada (now Quebec) and Upper Canada (now Ontario) becoming the United Province of Canada in 1841. The first Catholic Bishop of Upper Canada, Alexander Macdonell, "constantly stormed governmental portals for aid to establish Catholic schools."³ In a letter written by him in 1839 we read, "To promote the advancement of the Catholic religion and Catholic education is my greatest interest and desire and what tends to that will afford not only the greatest but the only satisfaction I can enjoy in this life."⁴ It is important to note that Macdonell's motivation was both practical and religious -- arising in part out of a concern that Catholics, unable to pursue seats in the national legislature for want of education, were the vassals of the better-educated Protestants who did, and who were consequently able to influence Governmental procurements and appointments in the fledgling colonial union.⁵ Although some Catholics in other parts of the British Empire still did not have full citizenship, and the Catholic Church had not been restored in England, Macdonell was an "ardent patriot and Conservative" who promoted the full involvement of Catholics in their new homeland.⁶

³ Franklin A. Walker, Catholic Education and Politics 3 vols. (Toronto: Catholic Education Foundation of Ontario, 1955, 1964, 1986), I:22.

⁴ Ontario Archives, Macdonell Letters, vol. 4, p. 558. Cited by Walker, p. 22.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Walker 1: 17-18. Not until the Emancipation Act of 1829 had Catholics been able to vote at elections and sit in Parliament in England. The Catholic Church was restored in England in 1844.

Thus Catholic education in Ontario has never been entirely about education in faith. It has been about Catholics both living out their gospel-vision and making their particular contribution to society as a whole.⁷ Moreover, in the early nineteenth century, throughout both Europe and North America there was a general belief that religion and education went hand in hand: education to be of benefit had to instill moral principles arising from the Christian tradition. In the United Province of Canada the situation was no different.

What is known as the Common School Act of 1841 provided for the recognition of elementary separate schools as part of the public school system in pre-Confederation Ontario. This Act also laid the basis for religious dissent in common school education. "Any group 'professing a Religious Faith different from that of the majority of the inhabitants' in a township and dissenting from the 'regulations, arrangements or proceedings' of the commissioners, was empowered to set up a separate school, which could also participate in the provincial fund for common schools."⁸ The outcome of this Act found a public Catholic system in Canada East (later Quebec) complemented by a separate Protestant system; in Canada West (later Ontario) the converse was true.

Fearful of an entirely secular common school system, both Protestants and Catholics appealed to the Legislative Assembly in

⁷ This notion is developed for today in This Moment of Promise (Toronto: OCCB, 1989), pp. 5-7.

⁸ Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: Ontario Historical Studies Series for the Government of Ontario, 1988), pp. 108-109.

Canada West for a form of popular education based on sound Christian precepts. Protestants joined together to form schools where the Bible could be studied. Because the use of the Bible in this way was unacceptable to the Roman Catholic Episcopacy it was decided that it was best for both groups to have their children educated separately.⁹ In the Protestant schools there was concern by some denominations that others would use education as a means of proselytizing. In 1843 further educational legislation was passed. Among other concerns this legislation addressed and guaranteed the rights of parents or guardians to determine the kinds of religious education and devotional practices in which their children would participate.¹⁰ This legislation was also of benefit to Catholics living in areas where the size of the Catholic population did not allow for Catholic schools and all children were educated in the common public schools.

The school bills which followed during the 1840s and 1850s maintained the Catholic-Protestant duality established by the Legislature in 1843. It is the Scott Act of 1863, however, "which extended the facilities for establishing separate schools in rural areas and made much simpler administrative tasks in the listing of separate school supporters and obtaining government grants."¹¹ The Scott Bill applied only to Roman Catholic separate schools. It became the basis of constitutionally guaranteeing denominational schools at Confederation when the British North America Act of 1867, which

⁹ Walker, I:36-47.

¹⁰ Walker I:48-49.

¹¹ Walker I:250.

created the Dominion of Canada, provided for the educational rights of minorities and made permanent the benefits previously granted to Roman Catholic separate school supporters.¹²

A three-volume account of "Catholic Education and Politics in Upper Canada" has been prepared by Franklin Walker. The fact that the most definitive study of Catholic education in Ontario is inextricably tied to an account of the changing political climates of the last 150 years is the consequence of Catholic education's continued reliance on public funding. This public funding of Catholic education has had, in turn, a formative influence on the programs of religious education in Catholic secondary schools -- an influence which continues today.

The Institutional Setting

Catholic education, per se, is a complex organizational structure in the Province. This arises out of its historically-determined rights, its relationship to the Catholic Church and its relationship to governmental structures, particularly the Ministry of Education.

The Ontario Ministry of Education is the governmental department responsible for education in the province. Ultimately it is the Ministry which establishes curricula and implements policy determined by the Ontario Legislature. For the purposes of our discussion we will focus on the institutional context of the secondary school religious education curricula and their implementation in the 54 English Catholic school boards in Ontario. The role of The Ministry of Education will be noted.

¹² BNA Act 1867, s. 93.

One of the strongest voices in the discussion around the priorities for Catholic school boards is the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association (OSSTA) representing some 800 trustees of these boards. In addition to lobbying government, providing legal advice on issues of common interest to its members and acting as an advisory board to separate school boards, OSSTA with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) also develop the curricula and administer the courses leading to certification to teach religious education in Catholic schools. This they do literally in the name of the Ministry of Education -- a special arrangement negotiated because religion is not a "teachable" subject (i.e., not a recognized teaching subject) in Ontario's schools and provision is not made in Ontario's Faculties of Education (i.e., post-baccalaureate "teacher-preparation" colleges) for would-be teachers to learn how to teach religion.¹³ It is a very unique situation to have a teachers' professional organizations responsible for the certifying of its own members.

OECTA/OSSTA encourage a general teacher-hiring policy for Catholic schools throughout the province. In addition to diocesan-sponsored pre-service courses at the Faculties of Education teachers who do not have at least five approved half credits in religious studies as undergraduates are required to complete what is known as

¹³ In each Faculty of Education across the province provision is made by the local diocese for would-be Catholic teachers to be introduced to the teaching of religious education. At present there is not a standardized pre-service course offering. Some separate school boards require new teachers to have taken this course for hiring purposes. These courses are not recognized by the Ministry of Education or by OECTA/OSSTA for the Ministry of Education.

PART I of the Ministry Course in Religious Education administered by OECTA/OSSTA soon after they begin teaching.¹⁴ Much of the purpose of these courses is seen to be the "formation" of Catholic teachers for the separate school system.¹⁵ Such policy is seen as supporting "religion across the curriculum."¹⁶

OECTA is also a member of the Rome-based World Union of Catholic Teachers (WUCT). In Ontario the formal link with the Church is represented provincially by the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE). This umbrella organization for what are called the "Partners in Catholic Education" was created by the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops following the passage of Bill 30 in 1984. The partners include students, parents, professional educators: teachers, principals and vice-principals, supervisory officers (i.e., superintendents) as well as support personnel, trustees and priests. Concerns addressed by ICE over the last few years include, among others, the formation of Catholic teachers, the preparation of

¹⁴ This policy has its origins in a joint-executive meeting of OECTA and OSSTA in 1969. It was proposed and approved that Catholic boards only hire graduates who would complete ministry-approved OECTA/OSSTA religion courses. This was never fully implemented. Walker III: 188-189.

¹⁵ A full discussion of the concern about the appropriate training of teachers to teach religion and to teach in Catholic schools is found in "Separate School Teachers and Religion," Walker III: 168-200. The dual purposes proposed for these courses date to the mid 1940s.

¹⁶ "The term 'religion across the curriculum'... refers to the process whereby the aims and objectives of Catholic education are integrated into the different aspects of human experience through the instructional, organizational, and interpersonal dimensions of Catholic schools." Curriculum Guideline, p.34.

teachers to teach religion and the secondary school religious education curriculum.

In summary, then, there are approximately 8,400 teachers teaching 22,200 students in English Catholic secondary schools in 54 school boards throughout the province. The certification of teachers to teach religion is effected and administered by two Catholic educational bodies, OECTA and OSSTA, on behalf of the Ministry of Education. These bodies, in turn, work with the 54 English Catholic school boards in the province to help set hiring policy for the separate school system in general and in the area of religious education in particular.

Religious Education in Context

In 1987 the Institute for Catholic Education developed a province-wide guideline in religious education in conjunction with, and endorsed and approved by, the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Ontario Separate School Trustees' Association, the Ontario English Catholic teachers' Association, and the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association. "This document authorizes the development of courses of studies, according to these guidelines and in conjunction with the local bishop ... for Roman Catholic secondary schools of the province of Ontario."¹⁷ The Guideline, was prepared with every effort to meet the general goals of education as established by the Ontario Ministry of Education "with some interpolations and amplifications considered necessary to do justice

¹⁷ Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, Religious Education Curriculum Guideline 1987, (Toronto: Institute for Catholic Education, 1987), p. 7.

to the distinctive vision and religious dimension of a Catholic school."¹⁸

The Guideline for courses in religious education at the secondary level is designed to build on The English Canadian Catechetical Series prepared under the auspices of the Canadian Catholic Conference of Catholic Bishops by the National Office of Religious Education. Canada is somewhat unique in that there is a common religious education curriculum for grades one through eight across the country. A parallel version for home use exists for students who live in remote areas or in municipalities where there are no Catholic schools. Thus religious education at the high school level is able to build on the students' catechetical formation in the earlier grades.

Since 1978 the Ministry of Education has allowed separate school students in grades nine and ten to earn two credits towards their high school graduation diploma in the area of religious education.¹⁹ The religious education Guideline described above was developed with the goal of this provision being extended to the last three years of secondary school.²⁰ In the province of Ontario school instruction in

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁹ V.K. Gibert, et al., A Hard Act to Follow: Notes on Ontario School Law (Toronto: Faculty of Education Guidance Centre, University of Toronto, 1979), p.20. According to the Ontario Schools Intermediate and Senior Divisions Program and Diploma Requirements, 1984 "Credit courses in Religious Education in Grades 9 and 10 of Roman Catholic separate schools are exempt from non guideline course approval...." (Toronto: Department of Education, 1984) pp. 32-33.

²⁰ Although grade 13 no longer formally exists in Ontario many students continue to spend 5 years in high school -- using the fifth year to complete Ontario Academic Credits, (OACs). These are used for

religion has also been part of the public school curriculum since before Confederation -- but not without serious questions being raised.

In the sixties a Committee on Religious Education in the Public Schools of Ontario (1966-1969) was set up under J. Keiller Mackay. At that time the course of study for instruction in religious education in Ontario's elementary schools introduced in 1944 was examined. It was found that "Christian doctrines [were] not only inculcated by the ... course but that it [was] implied that these truths [were] exclusive to Christianity."²¹ In keeping with the philosophy of the nineteenth century the introduction to the 1944 programme asserted that:

Religious teaching cannot be confined to separate periods on the timetable. It will affect the teaching of all subjects, and the wise teacher will be anxious, in the various departments of school activity, to bring home to pupils, as far as their capacity allows, the fundamental truths of Christianity and their bearing on human life and thought.²²

Concern was also expressed over anti-semitism.²³ Indeed, both in 1945 and in 1967, the Canadian Jewish Congress prepared special briefs expressing their apprehension over the provision for religious

admission to university and developed by local school boards with university representation to meet Ministry of Education guidelines.

²¹ J. Keiller Mackay et al., Religious Information and Moral Development: The Report of the Committee on Religious Education in the Public Schools of the Province of Ontario (Toronto: Department of Education, 1969), p. 22.

²² Cited in Mackay, p. 22.

²³ Ibid.

instruction in the public schools.²⁴ The sense of the Mackay Report was that formal religious education in public schools should be discontinued because of the diversity or lack of religious belief of many in the public system. The Report urged that the Ministry of Education put emphasis on program development in the area of character building "through a clearly understood, continuously pursued, universal program pervading every curricular and extra curricular activity ... from the beginning of elementary to the close of secondary education."²⁵ In the area of religious "information" it was important that "the schools of Ontario ... [provide] a forthright, honest and objective consideration of the influence of religion upon historical and social development, if they are to remain true to the concept that the ultimate aim of education is the search for truth."²⁶ Since 1944, when the guidelines had been introduced for religious instruction in Ontario's elementary schools, it had been a matter of public debate as to whether or not it was possible to create a course "which [would] offend none of the children in our schools, which is why religion should be taken out of our schools."²⁷

In spite of the Committee's study and their reception of numerous letters to support their proposals, the long marriage of religious

²⁴ The Canadian Jewish Congress, "For Children in a Democracy," (Toronto: Morris Printing Company, 1945) and Brief of the Canadian Jewish Congress Central Region to the Committee on Religious Education in the Public Schools, privately printed, 1967.

²⁵ Mackay, p. 93.

²⁶ Mackay, p.72.

²⁷ Globe and Mail 62.10.4. Cited in Walker III: 234.

instruction to the early settlers' commitment that moral education was tied to knowledge of the Christian Bible won out and religious education remained optional in public school boards throughout the province.²⁸

Although all of the recommendations of the Mackay Committee were not implemented in 1971 the Ministry of Education did introduce the suggested formal course of study dealing with the principal religions of the world, a history credit in World Religions, to be taught by members of that department.²⁹ What was most important was that the teaching be objective, and that it not "provide a basis for a religious doctrine."³⁰

In light of the fact the introduction of this new course the last recommendation of the Mackay Committee is of note:

We recommend, in order to provide for accreditation of students who will take courses in religion and desire to enter a college of education, that courses be allowed for appropriate courses in the subject under the academic requirements for the interim high school assistant's certificate, Type A, in history. Courses in religion should also count as history courses under the English and History speciality.³¹ (Emphasis added)

The course was introduced but not the provision to provide qualified persons to teachers the course.

²⁸ More letters were received in support of religious education in public schools than for the Committee's stand. Mackay acknowledged that "the views held by the majority of the population may not necessarily be in accord with the views held by educationists and academicians." Cited in Walker III: 223-224.

²⁹ Mackay, p. 11. See also World Religions: Curriculum Guideline (Toronto: Ontario Department of Education, 1971).

³⁰ Mackay, p.73.

³¹ Mackay, p.94.

For our conversation what is also significant about this development is that it was used as a means of introducing a third credit in religious education towards the high school graduation diploma in Catholic high schools. Whether or not these courses meet the objective standard proposed in the Mackay Report is another question. Examination of the Religious Education Guideline reveals far more attention being given to (Roman Catholic) Christianity than to the other world religions. The Guideline, however, is prepared for a course in religious education not in history -- although this seems in contradiction to the original concerns by the bishops that such a course in "world religions" would induce superficial judgments among high school students.³² If the current curricula for World Religions in Catholic secondary schools are similar to that in the Guideline one must question what the null/hidden curriculum communicates to senior high school students. Making religious education a "teachable" subject in the last three years of secondary school would make it possible to introduce such a course in the history department in greater congruence with spirit of the Mackay Report and also to have a religious education credit at that level.

The reason that one speaks of a "teachable" subject is that Regulation 269, which specifies areas in which teachers may become certified, does not include religious education. In 1984 OECTA submitted a request for an amendment to Regulation 269 -- seeing it as

³² Walker III: 226.

natural part of the government's completion of the Roman Catholic School Boards.³³ Although this request was made for the Roman Catholic separate schools, in 1989 the Ministry of Education decided to set up an inquiry under Dr Glenn Watson to gather information about religious education in Ontario's public elementary schools.³⁴ This inquiry was not designed to look into religious education at the secondary level but it has delayed action on the submission originally made by OECTA on behalf of the Roman Catholic community. The Watson Report was tabled on February 6, 1990 and has not been released to the public. Before the Watson Report was introduced, however, another player came into the scene.

On January 30, 1990 the Ontario Court of Appeal struck down as unconstitutional the governmental regulation providing for religion classes in the regular curriculum of public elementary schools.³⁵ The Mackay Report had clearly delineated the kind of non-indoctrinal instruction which it felt was acceptable in Ontario's public schools - but the provisions from 1944 were still in place. In this case the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom was used to decide that the regulations which provided two periods of one-half hour of religious education in public schools per week were being used to

³³ Submission to the Commission for Planning and Implementing Changes in the Governance and Administration of Secondary Education in Ontario on Roman Catholic Separate School Boards and Secondary School Education (OECTA: Toronto, 84.11.15). This recommendation is really an adaptation of the Mackay Report recommendation above and asks that credits be allowed for a Type A certificate in religious education.

³⁴ This was formed on January 12, 1989.

³⁵ Toronto Star, January 31, 1990.

"indoctrinate" children in Ontario in the Christian faith.³⁶ It was "conceded that education designed to foster moral values without indoctrination in a particular religious faith would not be a breach of the Charter. It is indoctrination in a particular religious faith that is alleged to be offensive."³⁷

The case in question arose when a fundamentalist Bible club and the local clergy association in an area of south western Ontario participated in the development of religious instruction programs for the local public schools. In spite of several attempts to revise the curriculum since 1983, the Court of Appeal found that the religious instruction offered favored Christianity over other religions. The original court case dates to 1986; in March of 1988 the Court had decided in favor of Elgin County and its religious education program. The perspective proffered in the religious instruction fell into the category of the study of the practice of religion and the Court ruled that such teaching was, in effect, indoctrination.

The Court of Appeal decision does not speak to religious education in Ontario's separate school system. The fact, however, that the Watson Report is yet to be released, and that no decision has been given to the Roman Catholic community in Ontario regarding the OECTA submission, ostensibly because religious education as an area of

³⁶ Canadian Civil Liberties Association v. Ontario (Minister of Education) and The Elgin County Board of Education (Action No. 364/88, [1990] O.J. No. 104, pp. 2-3.

³⁷ Ibid.

study was being considered for public secondary schools,³⁸ is illustrative of the multi-level political investment in religious education both within and without the Church. At the present moment the Ministry "is considering policy options in light of the Watson Report and the Court of Appeal ruling."³⁹ With full and equal funding throughout the grades the increased effort to make religious education a recognized discipline in the separate secondary schools seems very logical provided that the Catholicity of the separate school system is fully acknowledged both by those who attend and those who teach.

Many perceived the move by the Conservative government in 1984 to "complete the separate school system" tied to the changing demographic profile of the electorate. When the Conservatives came to power in 1943 many had hoped that "equal educational opportunities" would be afforded the Catholic community.⁴⁰ Initially a minority in the province by the 1980s Catholic numbered over three million -- approximately one third of the population. Forty-one years later, with the Conservatives still in power, Premier William Davis introduced Bill 30 -- many said to secure the Catholic vote. Since 1984 Ontario has voted in -- and out -- a Liberal government. The Watson inquiry was set up during the Liberal administration. The stance to be taken by the New Democratic Party towards the proposed

³⁸ During the preparation of the Watson Report a copy of the Religions Education Guideline prepared by ICE was requested by the Ministry of Education to be used as a model for religious education courses in the public system.

³⁹ Telephone conversation with Richard Szymczyk, Religions Education Inquiry, Ministry of Education, 90.10. 9.

⁴⁰ Walker III: 13.

OECTA amendment to Regulation 269, and the recommendations of the Watson Report are not yet known.

The Present Educational Context

In this paper I have attempted to examine the historical and political forces impinging upon the Catholic community's commitment to Catholic education, and by extension, to religious education. "There is a close connection, and at the same time a clear distinction between religious instruction [education] and catechesis, or the handing on of the Gospel message."⁴¹ While one could refer to the work of Graham and Rossiter to reflect on the goals and objectives of the activity in the classroom which we call religious education,⁴² it is important that the historical and socio-political forces operative in the Canadian context be fully appreciated.

Mary Boys defines religious education as "the making accessible of the traditions of the [Catholic] religious community and the making manifest of the intrinsic connection between tradition and transformation."⁴³ For the purposes of our discussion I will focus on the curricular and teaching aspects of this process.

Thirty years ago Israel Sheffler made an important clarification

⁴¹ The Religious Dimension of Education in A Catholic School (Rome/Ottawa: OCCB, 1988), #68.

⁴² Marisa L. Crawford and Graham M. Rossiter, Teaching Religion in Catholic Schools: Theory and Practice (Sydney: Christian Brothers, 1985). Also. Graham Rossiter, "The Place for Faith in Religious Education in Catholic Schools," Living Light (1987): 7-16.

⁴³ Mary C. Boys, Educating in Faith (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 193.

about the activity of teaching. It is possible to distinguish among the uses of the concept "teach":

X teaches Y that religion is
 X teaches Y to be religious
 X teaches Y how to be religious⁴⁴

The first concept, "X teaches Y that religion is" meets the criteria set down in the recent decision by the Ontario Court of Appeal:

1. The school may sponsor the study of religion, but may not sponsor the practice of religion.
2. The school may expose students to all religious views , but may not impose any particular view.
3. The school's approach to religion is one of instruction, not one of indoctrination.
4. The function of the school is to educate about all religions, not to convert to any one religion.
5. The school's approach is academic, not devotional.
6. The school should study what all people believe, but should not teach a student what to believe.
7. The school should strive for student awareness of all religions, but should not press for student acceptance of any one religion.
8. The school should seek to inform the student about various beliefs, but should not seek to conform him or her to any one belief.⁴⁵

These criteria also meet the concerns expressed in the Mackay Report regarding religious education in the public schools of the Province which, during the past twenty plus years, have only increased as Canada has become increasingly multicultural and aware of the responsibility it has to this pluriformity. Clearly, however, this

⁴⁴ Israel Sheffler, The Language of Education (Springfield, Ill.: Chas. C. Thomas, Bannerstone House, 1960), p. 75.

⁴⁵ Canadian Civil Liberties Association, pp.52-53.

understanding of teaching is not adequate to that dimension of a Catholic school "characterized by its formal religious education courses, and by the integration of Christian principles and concepts with the academic subjects."⁴⁶ Catholics now find themselves in the privileged position of the majority Protestant population of the 1940s with their desire to have religion "affect the teaching of all subjects."⁴⁷

Sheffler's second construct, "X teaches Y to be religious," may be understood as indoctrination. If one understands "indoctrination" in its historical usage it has to do with instruction in a body of doctrine, that is, in a system of religious or philosophical beliefs. The Catholic tradition would see this as part of the role of not only religious education but Catholic education per se. The more ambiguous understanding of the term in educational circles today results from Dewey's critique as to whether or not indoctrination allows for freedom of inquiry, examination, criticism, and evaluation.⁴⁸ But this does not mean that provision to address Dewey's critique cannot be made within Catholic religious education in a way which is consonant with the psycho-social development of the child.

The third construct, "X teaches Y how to be religious," addresses Dewey's critique and embraces the transformative dimension of religious education.

⁴⁶ Catholic Education and Separate School Boards in Ontario (Toronto: COSS, 1988), p. 5-3.

⁴⁷ Cited in Mackay, p.22.

⁴⁸ Iris V. Cully and Kendig Brubaker Cully, Eds., Encyclopedia of Religious Education (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1990), p.321.

Because the community's traditions are for the sake of transformation, educators must seek to make this relationship transparent. It is their responsibility to make the traditions luminous and to enhance the community's thinking about them. It is not their responsibility to indoctrinate the community, that is to stress the transmission of beliefs to the exclusion of showing how one thinks about the beliefs. Nor is it the religious educator's role to monitor an individual's conversion. Teaching has a transcendent quality. Each person needs to be respected; the educator stands before the mystery of God at work in the community.⁴⁹

This understanding of religious education would not meet the criteria of the Ontario Court of Appeal for public elementary schools, but it is one which might assist governmental bodies to apprehend the commitment of the Catholic community to their own system of education.

Since the 1840s there has been concern about the use of religious education by certain groups to proselytize others. This certainly was behind the Elgin County case described above. Toronto, the seat of government for Ontario, is also Canada's largest city. It is home for about one-third of Ontario's population. More than 100 minority groups with 85 different languages make up the demographic mosaic. Any policies made on the basis of the Watson Report and the Court of Appeal decision must take these factors into account.

It is also true that at least 36% of Ontario's population, and easily 40% of Toronto's, is Roman Catholic. The liturgy is celebrated officially in over 20 different languages. The demographic shift which probably predicated Bill 30 is part of the challenge to religious education in Catholic secondary schools in Ontario. How do you do religious education in a manner which initiates into a tradition and a new culture, is transformative and

⁴⁹ Boys, p. 210.

also fosters informed respect for the other living faiths represented in one's family and neighbor? And what questions are raised for Catholic religious education by the pluriformity of cultural perspectives within the Roman communion itself?

When one speaks of the vocation of religious education in the Catholic Church it is not possible to fully separate it from the vocation of Catholic education. The privileged position in which Catholic education finds itself in Ontario is a constitutional right. The struggle to work out a means whereby it can make accessible the traditions of the Catholic community and also make manifest the intrinsic connection between tradition and transformation provides an opportunity and challenge to the field of religious education per se. Such programs of religious education will be more possible with the amendment to Regulation 269 for it will then be possible to develop teacher education programs which build on a solid undergraduate program in religious studies. If Catholic religious educators can demonstrate this intrinsic connection in the lives of the students they teach, it may open the doors for other faith communities to do likewise.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ This is an expressed desire of part of the Jewish community as well as some other Christian communions.