McGILL UNIVERSITY

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

SUGGESTED APPROACHES BASED ON THE WORK OF GABRIEL MORAN AND STANLEY HAUERWAS

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION
McGILL UNIVERSITY
MONTREAL

MARCH 1991

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the teaching of Professor Martin Jeffery, Professor Stanley Nemiroff and Professor William Ryan, all of the Department of Religion and Philosophy in Education, McGill University. Their scholarship, their provocative classroom lectures and their friendship have been an immense and stimulating pleasure.

I thank Grace Wong-McAllister, the secretary of the department, for all her Christian courtesy.

I am grateful to Geoffrey and Therese Staines for their help in translation.

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ABSTRACT

Increasing pluralism in Canadian society challenges educators who wish to continue religious education in Ontario's public schools. A brief history of religious education in Ontario helps explain the current situation.

Because religion is foundational to human experience, religious education is vital. Various scholars are cited in support.

Gabriel Moran is a major resource in developing religious education as an academic field. He helps teachers to teach religion itself rather than about religion.

Stanley Hauerwas broadens religious education to include character development. His emphasis on the self-agency of the moral agent helps teachers to educate character. His use of narrative encourages teachers to be inclusive and non-judgmental.

Religious education must change to accommodate pluralism. Yet it still has a valid place in the public school if it is multi-faith and inclusive, encouraging all students to be religious according to their own faith community.

SOMMAIRE

Le multiculturalisme grandissant de la société canadienne met au défi les enseignants qui désirent poursuivre l'enseignement religieux dans les écoles publiques ontariennes.

Un bref historique de l'enseignement religieux en Ontario éclaircit la situation actuelle.

Puisque la religion sous-tend l'expérience humaine, l'enseignement religieux est primordial. Plusieurs sources sont citées à l'appui.

Gabriel Moran fait figure de proue dans le développement de l'enseignement religieux comme domaine d'études. Il aide les professeurs à enseigner comment être religieux plutôt qu'à enseigner la religion.

D'après Stanley Hauerwas, l'enseignement religieux englobe le développement du caractère. À cet égard, l'accent qu'il met sur l'auto-développement moral apporte aux enseignants une aide précieuse et son utilisation du récit les incite à être ouverts et à ne pas passer de jugements.

L'enseignement religieux doit changer pour s'adapter au multiculturalisme. Il garde néanmoins sa place dans les écoles publiques à condition d'être interconfessionel et ouvert, en encourageant les etudiants à être religieux, chacun selon sa propre confession.

To David James Pountney, my father,

who never allowed a minimal formal education

to hinder him from being a keen student

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing awareness in Canada today that we are living in a pluralistic society.[1] The growth of ethnic and cultural diversity poses many challenges. In particular, religious pluralism challenges those who are charged with the responsibility for doing religious education in non-confessional, public schools. This thesis explores that challenge and seeks to provide suggested approaches towards a possible solution.

It is obviously impossible to provide a thorough exploration of the complete Canadian situation, so I have chosen to focus on Ontario. This is not to imply that Ontario is either the most important part of Canada or the most representative. It is simply an attempt to particularise the discussion, with the reasonable hope that the ways in which Ontario records the history of religious education in public schools might provide illumination to the situation across Canada.

As we move into the last decade of the twentieth century, it is becoming increasingly difficult to continue to do religious education in the public schools of Ontario. While, at the time of writing, we still await the report of the Watson Inquiry,[2] recent legislation has most certainly pronounced the end of the era of majoritarianism in religious education (by which all religious education was presumed to be Christian education) and possibly pronounced the end of all religious education within the context of formal schooling.[3]

However, a sign that religious education is still a potent and provocative concern of contemporary life is evident in the numerous response groups that have arisen since that legislation, and in the establishment of the Watson Inquiry.[4] As Clive Beck writes in Better Schools, "Despite the firm prediction of some great western thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, religion is clearly not about to disappear, and one must come to terms with it rather than simply reject it."[5]

However, demographic complexities, religious pluralism, multi-cultural school populations, and anthropological egalitarianism, whether arising from a seed bed of philosophical relativism[6] or perhaps sowing that very seed itself, have all combined to make it impossible to foster any one religion in schools or to do any kind of monochrome religious education; we are a multi-coloured society now.

In the face of mounting difficulties and problems, what are religious educators going to do? Some would argue that it is actually impossible to continue to do religious education in Ontario schools; the subject is beset by so many objections and sensitivities that to continue to include religious education in the curriculum is to continue to court enmity, misunderstanding, fraction and division. Others would argue that the only route for those with a strong commitment to any religious system is to withdraw from public education and found private schools where a single, particular religious basis can be clearly articulated and overtly maintained. Others would see the whole idea as an odious intrusion into private preferences.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to argue against those who would see any kind of religious education as at best a divisive exercise in intolerance or at worst an outrageous imposition on their children. Obviously, educators neither wish nor are able to coerce students into a form of religious education against their will, or, in the case of younger children, against the will of their parents.

But there is a strong argument that religion plays a fundamental role in the affairs of humankind and that consequently religious education is a valid item for the school curriculum. For a discussion of the former, I refer the reader to the works of Ninian Smart and Mircea Eliade, the child psychology of Robert Coles,[7] and the literature of

Fyodor Dostoevsky, amongst others.[8] For a discussion of the latter, I recommend especially Clive Beck's Better Schools.[9]

While I might have a certain sympathy with those who would withdraw religious education from the curriculum or relegate it to the realm of private education, I am not ready, personally, to endorse either of those suggestions. I believe there is still a way to keep religious education on the curriculum of Ontario schools which will pay due respect to our pluralistic culture and yet do a great service both to the students and to religion itself. It is the way which uses the work of Gabriel Moran and Stanley Hauerwas as an approach to solving a delicate problem.

Gabriel Moran pleads for the establishment of an academic field called religious education. Such a field is justified by two major proposals: it is a recognition of religion as a legitimate field of study, as a scientia in the Latin sense of the word; and it is an argument that such a field has its place in the school curriculum because of its educative nature and purpose. It is therefore quite possible, argues Moran to continue to do religious education within a relativistic and pluralistic culture. Claims to truth are suspended - teaching towards transcendence[10] is the target.

Stanley Hauerwas provides us with an exceptionally useful means by which to add content to a course in

religious education for today's pluralistic schools. He suggests the use of narrative theology - in simple terms, that we tell our story. Again, the claim to truth must be suspended so that we can be together in conversation, listening to each other's story and the story of each other's community.

Both these scholars are interested in going beyond courses in comparative religion. They both realise that for adherents, religious belief and religious practice are life changing and life forming. Religion is rarely a hands-off, at-a-distance series of propositions to which we give mental assent. Religion is usually a vocation, a calling, an overpowering visitation that demands a total commitment. How, then, can we get at the substance of that by courses in comparative religions? We cannot, say Moran and Hauerwas. We must not teach merely **about** religion - we must teach religion itself. In other words, we must get into the inside of the subject and teach from there, drawing our students into the inside of their own particular religion - whatever it is - and enlightening their own understanding of transcendence.

I begin this thesis with an historical overview of religious education in the public schools of Ontario, mainly to show how, in Ontario, we have moved from an unquestioned and unquestioning Christian majoritarianism to a situation fraught with and almost paralysed by overwhelmingly diverse

religious sensitivities. In chapter three, I make four conclusions from the historical survey and give four reasons why we should continue to do religious education in schools. Then I refer to various ways in which I believe we can begin to move towards a solution.

Chapter four is a major reflection on the work of Gabriel Moran, supporting his plea for an academic field of religious education. In chapter five, I look at the work of Stanley Hauerwas, and draw from him the excellent notions of character formation and the place of narrative in religious education. The conclusion is my own recommendation that educators continue to keep religious education on the schools' curriculum, and that the works of Gabriel Moran and Stanley Hauerwas provide us with good tools for making an effective approach.

NOTES

1. There are, of course, many kinds of pluralism - ethnic, cultural, religious. For a discussion which challenges the view that our society is pluralistic on all counts, see Lesslie Newbigin, "Dogma and Doubt in a Pluralist Culture" in The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans and Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1989), 1.

2. Glenn Watson, Chairperson, The Report of the Ministerial Inquiry on Religious Education in Ontario Public Schools (Toronto: The Ontario Government Bookstore, January, 1990). Though given to the Minister of Education in January, 1990, this report had not yet been generally released or acted upon by January 1991. The election of a new provincial government in the fall of 1990 has possibly caused further delay.

3. On January 30th, 1990, the Ontario Court of Appeal struck down as unconstitutional the provincial regulation providing for religion classes in the regular curriculum of public elementary schools.

4. Note, for example, the work of such agencies and organizations as: Canadian Civil Liberties Association (Toronto, ON); Christian Parents and Citizens Organization (Brampton, ON); Citizens for Public Justice (Toronto, ON); Coalition for Religious Freedom in Education (Brampton, ON); Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (Willowdale, ON); Ontario Multi-faith Group for Equity in Education (Oakville).

Note also that the Watson Inquiry (see note 2 above) received 408 individual and corporate briefs.

5. Clive Beck, Better Schools: A Values Perspective (New York: The Falmer Press, 1990), 162.

6. The connections between relativism and pluralism are explored by such groups as the APJ Education Fund, 806 15th Street., NW, Suite 218, Washington, D.C. 20005 and the Institute for Christian Studies, 229 College Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 1R4. In particular, at the latter, I note the work of Dr. Paul Marshall.

7. Interview with Robert Coles, "Youngsters have a lot to say about God," Time, 21 January 1991.

8. It is, perhaps, ludicrous to offer four names as sources for researching the religious and spiritual dimension of humankind. Readers will also have their own quartet. Here, I simply refer the reader to an interesting and contemporary essay which argues the intrinsic connection between religion - in this case, Christianity - and politics. See Glenn Tinder, "Can we be good without God?" The Atlantic Monthly, December 1989.

9. Beck, Better Schools, especially chapters 7, 8 and 14.

10. It is difficult to state with absolute precision what Moran means when he talks of "transcendence". However, his use of the term would include the following: the inner journey towards the more than human center; the quest for the divine at the midpoint; the search for meaning and purpose as a religious search for that which lies beyond mere materiality; growth in understanding traditions and sacred texts; participation in community rituals; and an open-ended, inter-faith conversation that leads to tolerance and appreciation.

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ONTARIO

Religious education in Ontario schools has a long and complicated history. The scope of this chapter in no way allows a complete look at that whole history, but some understanding may be gained by a brief overview.

The British Church brought education to Upper Canada, establishing private schools, grammar schools and colleges as means not only for broad intellectual education but also for Christian education.[1] The task was clear; the means were at hand. The task was to produce good Christian citizens at the appropriate class level;[2] the means were the private schools, which from the earliest were built on religious foundations. "Acceptance of a close relationship between religion and education was part of the educational tradition inherited from the old world."[3]

As the population increased, as settlers arrived predominantly from Great Britain, as towns grew, as society flourished, private education or the increasingly unpopular

elitist grammar schools ceased to answer all the needs.[4] Good Christian citizens were needed at all levels of society. Upper Canada needed good Christian farmers, good Christian woodworkers, good Christian workmen, good Christian merchants. Schools were needed to weld burgeoning numbers of recently arrived people together. Schools, argued the first Lieutenant - governor of Upper Canada, Colonel John Simcoe, "would help to secure conformity and loyalty."[5] There was never any doubt that, in religious matters, conformity was to the Christian religion and loyalty was to the predominantly English established church.

Religious education[6] was clearly seen as a means of producing conformity and loyalty. The Royal Instructions of 1784, as given to the Governor of Upper Canada, included: "It is our further will and pleasure that you recommend to the Assembly to enter upon proper methods for the creating and maintenance of schools in order to the training up of youth to reading and to a necessary knowledge of the principles of religion." But Phillips interprets the royal motivation as being at least in part political; such schools and such religion would help the governing class keep order.[7] Lieutenant-governor Maitland, writing to Lord Bathurst in 1819, said, "To restore the Province to real tranquility and to render it truly English, our principal attention must be paid to the religious education of the

people."[8] However, the common people were not necessarily as interested.

In 1799, John Strachan arrived from Scotland. Priested in Kingston, he became the first Bisnop of Toronto and was "the dominating figure in education in Upper Canada for at least tne first four decades of the nineteenth century."[9] In 1823, he became president of the provincial Board of Education. Openly and candidly, Strachan planned a system of education that would clearly reflect its submission to the leadership of the Church of England.

Yet that monolithic, single minded allegiance to the Church of England would not go unchallenged. As Methodist circuit riders pushed into New England and further north into Upper Canada, so an alternative form of religious education in schools became a possibility, and this new brand of disestablished, grass-roots religion found a redoubtable champion in the person of the Reverend Egerton Ryerson, appointed chief superintendent of education in 1844. He opposed the domination of the Church of England in matters relating to religious education and confronted Strachan on the issue.[10] "Two major religious denominations thus early faced each other and the duel between them continued into the last quarter of the nineteenth century."[11] But there was, of course, not yet any hint of suggestion that Christianity cease to be the only religion taught.

Many years before Ryerson began his leadership of the ministry, in 1816 in fact, religious exercises had been established as an official part of the daily routine and religious instruction had been encouraged as a voluntary addendum to the school day. In that year, the Home Board of Education had urged:

1. That the labours of the day commence with prayer

2. That they conclude with reading publicly and solemnly a few verses of the New Testament proceeding regularly through the Gospels

3. That the forenoon of each Saturday be devoted to Religious Instruction.

But a few years later, Ryerson wrote, "In not one School out of ten, if one out of twenty, were there daily Prayers and Scripture reading, or Religious Instruction of any kind."[12]

Educators, politicians, parents and community leaders have always been worried about the youth and their apparent lack of proper behaviour, good morals, and traditional values. This was as true in Upper Canada in 1820 as it is today. Thus, in that year, the Legislature spoke of the need for "the improvement of the moral and religious habits of the rising generation."[13] Certain monies were released to foster Sunday Schools, especially in the rural areas, and to purchase religious books and tracts for school children.

Amongst the chorus of voices raised to sing the anthem of increasing education, expanding literacy and advancing basic life skills there could always be heard the single voice of church leaders promoting religious education. Indeed, for many such leaders, religious education was the priority. So we read Strachan in 1829 as he asserts that "Christian virtue is the first distinction among men, and that useful knowledge is the second."[14] In the 1830's, there was growing protest against the obvious vices of, for example, drunkenness, gambling, stealing. The bulk of the population was Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist or Roman Catholic. Schools were used as places of moral exhortation, but as Phillips laconically observes, "Youngsters in school were for ever confronted with moral platitudes and melancholy discourses on the gravity of sin; it hardly seems possible that their spirits were thereby permanently depressed. Perhaps their elders, too, could take a spiritual licking and carry on."[15]

Additional weight was provided for the regular teaching of religious education by Dr. Charles Duncombe's extensive report issued in 1835. The report issued a strong endorsement of in-school religious instruction and suggested that regular classroom teachers be trained and hired for the program. Soon after, the first statutory recognition of the existence of religious instruction in public schools, the School Act of 1843, stated:

> No child shall be required to read or study in or from any religious book or join in any exercise of Devotion or Religion, which shall be objected to by his or her parents or guardians; provided always that, within this limitation, pupils shall be allowed to receive such religious instruction as their parents or guardians shall desire, according to law.[16]

One element here that is particularly interesting is the acknowledgement that children should not be coerced into religious study or exercise and that parents have the prime authority in the matter of their children's religious upbringing and nurture. Here, surely, is the legislative basis for the ensuing exception clauses of the following hundred and fifty years.

Ryerson's School Act, passed in 1846, sounds extremely enlightened for its time, and reflects the kinds of progressive opinions that only a dissenting religious tradition could espouse. Whilst he acknowledged that "Christianity was the all pervading principle" of Canadian life, he was cautious about indoctrination. He was keen to distinguish between teaching the Christian religion (which he proposed) and teaching narrow sectarianism (which he abhorred).[17] Ryerson's Act empowered local school boards to decide on the amount and the content of religious education in their schools and permitted local clergymen to do the teaching if invited.

Ryerson's act prompted two different responses. On the one hand, the cry of "Godless schools" was raised up, some people seeing in this Act a disturbing trend towards

theological liberalism and the abandonment of traditional Christian strongholds. Such people argued that the Bible must be a compulsory text book and regarded most ordinary teachers as being far too incompetent, morally and intellectually, to teach the Christian faith. On the other hand, some thought that Ryerson was actually too traditional, too cautious, and wanted an act that would seek further to avoid religious controversy, sectarianism, and indoctrination. Attempting to find a smooth middle ground, the hon. Malcolm Cameron pressed a bill through the Legislature, in 1849, that proscribed from the schools all books containing "controverted theological dogmas or doctrines".[18]

Ryerson promptly resigned, arguing, quite obviously, that such a bill would ban the Bible, for what other book so masterfully presented doctrines and dogma that challenged all truths and provided unceasing grist for an interpreter's mill. The Legislature refused to accept his resignation, and a new bill was prepared, the School Act of 1850, which was the foundation of Ontario's public school system. The preamble read:

> In each School the Teacher should exert his best endeavours, both by example and precept, to impress upon the minds of all children and youth committed to his care and instruction, the principles of piety, justice, and a sacred regard to truth, love to their country, humanity and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance, and those other virtues which are the ornament of society

> on which a free constitution of government is founded.[19]

One might note three things about this preamble. Couched in terms that remind one of Aristotle's "bag of virtues", it has attempted to list the basic moral values that society affirms and wishes therefore to replicate in its young people through the public school system. Teachers, then, are clearly mandated to inculcate virtues. Secondly, there is, at the end of the preamble, a note that speaks to citizenship and the building of a democratic, constitutional society. Teachers, then, are to produce good citizens. Thirdly, there is no mention of God or of the Christian religion. Teachers, then, are free to do moral education without any connection to Christianity.

God was not totally excluded, though, and neither was Christianity, for the same School Act gave room to religious instruction (which was still Christian instruction) as a voluntary activity, and provided for opening exercises of a Christian nature. Thus, recorded in a minute of the 1855 report of the Council of Public Instruction, we read this:

> The daily exercises of each Common School be opened and closed by reading a portion of Scripture and by Prayer. The Lord's Prayer should form part of the opening exercises, and the Ten Commandments be taught to all pupils, and be repeated at least once a week. But no pupil should be compelled to be present at these exercises against the wish of his parents or guardians, expressed in writing to the Master of the School.[20]

Two years later, a revision of 1857 allowed local clergymen to go into schools to give parochial and denominational teaching, but only after 4.00 p.m. and only, still, on a voluntary basis.

During the 1860's, the debate about religious instruction was fairly quiet. Canadian Confederation, achieved in 1867, drew great energy and empnasis towards political principles, democratic government, national coherence and identity. In 1871, the private grammar schools became public high schools, and by the time Ryerson retired in 1876, his vision of a school system that was free of sectarian control, and yet clearly taught basic religious truths, knowledge and values was largely in place.

Yet the last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed an irreversible movement which increasingly drew sharp distinctions between religious education in its general, broad, non-confessional, non-denominational, non-doctrinal sense and Christian education in its confessional, denominational, doctrinal, evangelistic sense. Increasingly, only the former was being accepted as legitimate in public schools. Illustrative of the distinction was the controversy that reigned over texts. In 1871, for a course in Christian Morals tnat was recommended by a group of Protestant ministers to the Council of Public Instruction, Ryerson had prepared a text entitled "First Lessons in Christian Morals for Canadian

Families and Schools". The book was lambasted in "The Globe" and strongly criticised by those who saw it as a tool of churchmen to enable proselytisation.[21] Eventually, Ryerson's text was replaced by Wyland's "Elements of Moral Science", a title which reveals both a growing caution about the place of Christianity and a growing love for things scientific. In 1874, the course was dropped.

This short lived appeal for compulsory Christian moral education raised quite a storm. Interestingly, some dissent came from established churchmen. The Reverend William Robertson, from Chesterfield, in a ten cent pamphlet published in 1882, protested a proposed amendment to the existing Act that would make Christian religious education compulsory because such a task was the divine prerogative of the Church, and this kind of state intervention meant corruption. He supported the current law that allowed school boards "as representatives of the Christian people who elected them to office" to voluntarily offer the Bible and prayer...this is acceptable because then "the state divests itself of responsibility for religious instruction, laying it on the shoulders of the people to whom it rightly belongs". He is against the amendment because it assumes "that the state is responsible for the religious instruction of the children under its supervision and is justified in using the public funds for promoting that end."[22]

The flavour of the conflict is well caught in this quotation from Goldwin Smith, professor and editor, and an elected member of the Council for Public Instruction:

> Nor do I attach much value to any slight or furtive recognition of Religion in the way of a deodorised Prayer or Scripture Reading. It seems to be better to say at once the School is secular, and does not presume to meddle with things to which it cannot do justice. Religion itself we must let alone, and leave to the Home and to the Pastor. But there may still be in our education a valuable moral element, both in the way of teaching and influence.[23]

There one has it at last; a clear distinction between religion and morals, between the sacred and the secular. This is what Malcolm and Fernhout call the "split framework".[24]

The first quarter of the twentieth century continued to see discussion on both sides of the developing debate. On one hand, numbers of educators, clergy and lay leaders, and thinkers and planners advocated what might be called the partisan model of religious instruction, a model that advocated daily Christian worship, regular Bible teaching, cooperation with the churches, and a spiritual challenge to children to become believers and good Christians. On the other hand, numbers of educators and thinkers, with or without their personal involvement in the life of the churches, argued for a non-partisan model, one that advocated moral principles, no-comment Bible readings, instruction in values and ethics and citizenship, and a clear understanding that churches were to stay out of the

schools. In other words, they argued, public day schools were secular, and Sunday Schools were for sectarian training.

Post World War One concerns settled around two areas. Dissatisfaction with the religious content of various courses and opening exercises meant that many educators explored new curricula for Bible readings and new ways of teaching religion. Apprehension about the rise of juvenile delinquency and the deterioration of morality meant a growing concern to teach values, to improve behaviour. Religious education was still seen as a prime vehicle for the latter. In 1929, an inter-denominational committee of church leaders produced "Bible Readings for Schools", a well received series of three books that unhappily proved too expensive to use. In 1936, the Inter-Church Committee on Week-day Religious Education was established. In 1939, a committee of the Ontario Educational Association recommended that religion be a mandatory course of study. In various parts of the province, local School Boards were experimenting with various kinds of religious instruction, using a variety of teacher resources (occasionally local clergy) and a variety of materials.

On the world scene, the onset of Nazism and Fascism and the outbreak of World War II gave fuel to the fires of religious traditionalism. It was a time to return to national prayer, to church-going. With the overhauling of

the whole educational curriculum in Ontario happening at the same time, a consensus developed that favoured compulsory religious education in all Ontario schools. Such a decision was announced by the new Premier, George Drew, in a speech from the Throne in 1944. (See the Appendix at the end of this thesis and endnote 25). Classroom teachers were henceforth to give religious instruction in two weekly half-hour periods. There were various provisions for local adaptations or exemption because of conscience. However, public response to this decision was varied and animated. In a poll, it was discovered that only 49% of people were in favour of compulsory religious education in schools whilst 44% were opposed.[26] Mitchell Hepburn, leader of the Liberal opposition, protested the introduction "of a programme of religious education which has caused disunity among large sections of our people, and has thereby violated the cherished democratic right of each to worship according to his conscience free from interference from the State."[27] This speech was championed by the Association for Religious Liberty and leaders of the Jewish Community were up in arms about what they saw as anti-Jewish bias in the materials.[28] But the Ministry persisted, and as the second World War receded into the past, religious instruction by classroom teachers settled into its compulsory position on the Ontario curriculum.

In 1950, the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario endorsed the 1944 decision. In fact, the Commission wished to expand compulsory religious education throughout all years of high school and even into the first two years of junior colleges, but this did not happen. In the face of sustained criticism, the revised guides were found unacceptable and the proposals to extend religious instruction were dropped.[29]

The 1960's have been documented by too many commentators and analysts to need many words here. Malcolm and Fernhout list the following features: new waves of immigrants brought significant shifts in the composition of the population;[30] various world religions made Ontario their home; secular materialism flourished as residents became urbanized and prosperous; religion was seen as irrelevant and private, suitable only for the home and church; society shifted its standards of religio-moral propriety; and a strong sense of philosophical relativism dominated the public mind.[31] There was outspoken criticism of religious education in schools, and a dissatisfied educational community, with public support, pleaded for religious education to change.

So confusion over the issues of religious education continued to grow. In 1959, the Ethical Educational Association railed against any kind of religious instruction in schools while the Christian Women's Council on Education

vigorously defended it.[32] By the mid-sixties, various school boards were so unsettled and disturbed about the whole thing that they petitioned the Minister to establish an inquiry. The controversy settled around three points:

1. the recognition of the rights of religious minorities

2. the concept of the separation of church and state

3. the increasingly secular character of public schools.

In January, 1966, an Order-in-Council was approved to establish a special committee to study religious education in the public schools of Ontario. The Mackay Committee, as it came to be called, published their report in 1969 under the title "Religious Information and Moral Development". It was of major importance.

The Mackay Committee

The Mackay Committee attempted to respond to widespread dissatisfaction and heated opinion on all sides, a background recognised somewhat in a dry comment in the preamble that "there has been from time to time representations made for changes in the [religious education] programme." Amidst the clamour of voices raised on the issues (141 separate briefs were received) the Committee sought to speak clearly, rationally and calmly.

The Mackay Committee offered an appraisal of the current situation, examining as part of that situation the standard material that was available, the "Teachers' Guides to Religious Education". They were not impressed. "It became quite apparent to us as we proceeded that the course and guides do not meet the needs and conditions of today . . . This material, much of which is definitely Christian and Protestant in content, is in our opinion a vehicle leading to religious commitment rather than true education."[33] Immediately the familiar note is struck, the same note of the distinctions being argued in Ryerson's time. Schools might be places for religious education, but they certainly could not be places for Christian indoctrination or personal commitment.

Therefore, if there is any justification for keeping religious education on the curriculum and in the classroom, it is because religious education is an educational activity, and not a religious activity. It is interesting to note how quickly the point of view has changed. The Mackay Committee refers back to the 1960 "Programme for Religious Education in the Public Schools of Ontario", which programme stated its desire to bolster Christian ideals and encourage teachers to model Christian values, but the Mackay committee criticises this ambition as being insensitive to other world faiths, making them appear "alien and inferior",[34] insensitive to the aspirations of non-Christian

parents, and inaccurate in assuming that Christian values are exclusive to Christianity.

Consequently, the Mackay Committee, a mere nine years after the Programme mentioned above, is unalterably opposed to its continuation. "The present course in religious education not only affronts many adherents of non-Christian faiths, but it appears to have failed to achieve even the sectarian Christian objectives it pursues."[35] Dismissing a few pleas merely to modify the course and rejecting a small number of pleas to retain Christianity as the dominant religion because of Ontario's historically Christian heritage, the Committee stands firm. The old programme must go completely. "There is no evidence that the course has even succeeded in preparing children to live in a democratic society which bases its way of life upon the Christian ideal"[36] (which was the political ambition of the 1960 Programme).

So the Mackay Committee makes a very clear distinction between religion as a subject for instruction woven through the curriculum (which it wants to keep) and religion as an expression of personal faith development (which it wants to reject).

> We do, of course, recognise that a general knowledge of religion is necessary to form a well-educated person. This, however, does not mean that religious indoctrination should take place in the public schools. We must distinguish between religion as a subject for study and religion as a manifestation of faith. As a subject for study it will be encountered naturally in all areas of the curriculum. When taught in a period

> specifically set aside to achieve the aims of the present course, it is much too likely to become an exercise in religious commitment.[37]

As encountered in the warp and woof of the curriculum, religious instruction must pay due attention to all religions, without bias or preference, with tolerance and equity, and there must be absolutely no thread of indoctrination of any size or colour.

Furthermore, any religious instruction in the public schools must be of such a nature that it appeals to all and offends none. The Mackay Committee heartily rejects any system of instruction that necessitates exception clauses or conscientious objection, or provokes withdrawals because of insensitivities. "Every course or program in the public school should be designed to be acceptable to all reasonable persons and, consequently, leave no justification for requiring discriminatory exemptions."[38] Ontario, says the Mackay Committee, needs to take into account that it is a society of increasing pluralism, a host to many and varied immigrant cultures and religions. In addition, the decade of the 1960's has seen an upsurge of affirmation about individual rights and freedoms, with a concomitant iconoclasm in which traditional Christian authority has been overthrown. "It is important that [Canadians] adopt a broad religious outlook that will enable them to regard world movements sympathetically. The principles of human and civil rights which are being passionately restated all over

the world must certainly be applied in the public schools of this enlightened province."[39]

Lastly, the Mackay Committee states its conviction that personal religious commitment and development are important areas, that the weight of choice is most fairly laid upon the developing child as a free person, but that such choice, and the education that it needs, must be left to the home and the local church. Once again, as they reiterate several times, the school is not the place for sectarian indoctrination, and Christianity carries no longer any pre-eminence.

The Conclusions of the Mackay Committee bear reading in full and I recommend the reader to that document. In sum, the Committee makes this claim:

> We believe that it is possible to build a sound program which will furnish young people with adequate knowledge of world religions. In the course of this program, they can be made aware, for example, that most people in our society believe in a religious interpretation of life which involves the existence of God as a transcendental power. At the same time, they may recognize, without prejudice, that there are people for whom this interpretation is not valid. And we believe that there are ways of encouraging the development in young people in public school of high standards of character, ethical ideals, and an understanding of moral values, without trespassing on the personal religious beliefs which they have learned at home or in their separate places of worship.[40]

Earlier on, (page 26), the Mackay Committee urges the need for a totally new approach, firstly in moral development. It argues that moral development - character building - must be a program, not a course, and must be

diffused throughout all the curricular and extra-curricular instruction the school provides. Moral development must be an explicit objective. The Committee leans strongly upon the work of Kohlberg and the use of maieutic discussions.[41]

Secondly, the Committee recommends the following new approach in religious information. Never before, they say, has it been more necessary to understand the effect that religions have had upon the historical, social and artistic development of all societies. Therefore, it is imperative that schoolchildren be taught about the world's religions, and a phenomenological approach should be adopted. Information should be offered in a scholarly and objective way but incidentally to the subject under discussion; it must be woven into the material of art, literature, history, etc. However, for senior students in grades 11 and 12, the Committee thinks that a formal course in world religions should be added to the curriculum, as an option, and that it should be taught by teachers in the history department.

> In summary, the Committee recommends that information about world religions and their influence on the development of mankind should come to be imparted to students in all grades in a non-doctrinal, incidental, manner through textbooks and class materials used in social studies, history, geography, art, music, literature, and other subjects. Visual aids will be particularly helpful in the lower grades in conveying this material essential to the child's education. In grades 11 and 12, a formal, optional, course dealing with the religions of the world should be offered. Because of the cultural literary importance of the Bible, stories and selections from it have a place in the literature program throughout the school, but great care must be taken to keep such material free of doctrinal implications.[42]

This report, of major importance in the history of religious education in the public schools of Ontario, has been received in various ways. For an example of approaches to teaching the senior course on comparative religions, see endnote 43 - for a critical response see endnote 44.

The twenty years since the appearance of the Mackay Report have confirmed and reinforced many of their conclusions. Growing religious pluralism and the dominance of philosophical relativism (cf. Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind) have definitely removed Christianity from its place of prominence and given equal voice to all religions. Increasing sensitivity to sexism and racism, coupled with a raising of consciousness about the inequities of our colonial past and the arrogant dominance of the "WASP" mentality have resulted in a recognition that adherence to any one historical majority of religious particularism is no longer possible or indeed is no longer right. Revolt against Christian indoctrination, as led by the Canadian Civil Liberties Union and documented in such cases as the Elgin School Board case (see, for interest, the various reports and commentaries in the Globe and Mail)[45] has made it impossible to think of continuing Christian education in the public schools.

Growing confusion amongst teachers of religion about their place in the schools and a subsequent lowering of

morale have made the situation even more urgent. In an attempt to respond to these obvious developments, the Ontario Minister of Education has initiated yet another inquiry into the state of affairs regarding religious education in the public schools of that province. This inquiry, led by Dr. Glenn Watson and therefore called the Watson Commission was published in 1990.[46]

All in all, religious education in Ontario schools is at a demanding and challenging crossroads. So, one would surmise, is religious education in probably all Canada. What can be done? Has the time simply come to recognise that pluralism and relativism have actually made the teaching of religion impossible any longer? Is the answer simply to dilute all the religions of the world to a lowest common denominator, inoffensive, palatable and inclusive? Must we conclude that all that is left for teachers of religion is to teach about religion, distancing the subject into an objective neutral art form? Or is it still possible, giving due respect to pluralism and relativism, to teach not about religion, but religion itself?

NOTES

1. Charles E. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada (Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1957), 109-110. The Anglicans founded Upper Canada College in 1829 and King's College in 1843; the Methodists founded Upper Canada Academy (Coburg) in 1836 - this became Victoria College in 1841; the Presbyterians founded Queen's College, now Queen's University, at Kingston in 1841.

2. Ibid., 105. He describes the ambition of the governing class to produce educated young men to replace them, and to train young men to take moral and religious leadership; those who were prospering in trade wished to give their youngsters a more practical education so that their commercial leadership might be guaranteed.

3. Ibid., 301.

4. Ibid., 107-108.

5. Religious Information and Moral Development: The Report of the Committee on Religious Education in the Public Schools of the Province of Ontario, by J. Keiller Mackay, Chairman (Toronto: Ontario Department of Education, 1969), 3.

6. Andrew G. Blair, The Policy and Practice of Religious Education in Publicly Funded Elementary and Secondary Schools in Canada and Elsewhere: a Search of the Literature, (Toronto: The Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1986), 1. His analysis of the definitions involved in these discussions are useful, and are followed in this paper. "Confessional" religious education refers to education designed to foster commitment to some faith. "Non-confessional" religious education refers to education which is not designed to lead to commitment. "Denominational" religious education refers to a particular type of confessional education, namely that which attempts to foster commitment to some particular variety of Christianity.

The term "religious instruction" is sometimes used in this study as an alternative phrase to "religious education". The term "instruction" ordinarily has a more

narrow sense than "education", referring to education of a didactic kind. Legislation concerning religious education, however, often refers to "religious instruction" and we should not assume that the legislators intended the term to be interpreted narrowly, with its nuance of didacticism.

This study often quotes the legislation, and in order to keep the terms constant, freely interchanges "instruction" and "education".

7. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, 326.

8. The Mackay Report, page 3.

9. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, 107.

10. Ibid., 258: "Egerton Ryerson (1803-1882) for length of service and magnitude of achievements must be given first place among the early superintendents...From 1844 to 1876 he was superintendent of education for the province...He became a chief opponent of John Strachan and of special privileges for the Church of England.)

11. The Mackay Report, 4.

12. Ibid., 4.

13. Ibid., 4.

14. Ibid., 5.

15. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, 102.

16. The Mackay Report, 5.

17. Ibid., 8.

18. Ibid., 6.

19. Ibid., 7.

20. Ibid., 7.

21. Phillips, The Development of Education in Canada, 329.

22. Rev. Wm. Robertson, Religion in the School: a Protest (Toronto: Globe Printing and Engraving, 1882), 2. This is an original 10 cent pamphlet on Microfiche at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

23. The Mackay Report, 9.

24. Harry Fernhout and Tom Malcolm, Education and the Public Purpose: Moral and Religious Education in Ontario (Toronto: Curriculum Development Centre, 1979), throughout.

25. Jack Mobley, "Protestant Support of Religious Instruction in Ontario Public Schools" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1962, microfiche), argues that the organised Protestant movement of Ontario was motivated in its successful attempt to change the curriculum of the Ontario public schools through rivalry with the Catholic Church in the field of state-supported education.)

26. The Mackay Report, 12.

27. Ibid., 12.

28. Brief of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Central Region, to the Committee on Religious Education in the Public Schools of Ontario, (Toronto: February 10th, 1969). It is interesting to note the continued opposition expressed by the Jewish community. In particular, the 11 propositions of this brief are noteworthy, the first two of which are reproduced here:

1) From 1860 until 1944 religious instruction in the public schools was not a part of the curriculum (except for a three year period from 1871-1874); therefore it cannot be said to be in the tradition of our public school system.

2) The introduction of doctrinal religious education into the public schools of Ontario in 1944 marked the first time such instruction had been prescribed as part of the curriculum in any North American public non-denominational school system.

29. The Mackay Report, 14.

30. Ibid., 14. In the year 1966 for example, nearly 200,000 immigrants arrived in Ontario, and no longer were they predominantly European and Anglo-Saxon.

31. Fernhout and Malcolm, Education and the Public Purpose, 22.

32. Rev. Dr. C. E. Wilcox produced a study document on behalf of the Canadian Council of Churches, in October 1960, in which he made a strong case for keeping religious education in the public schools. His final paragraph sums up his position: "Down through the centuries, the church has always played an important role in the development of education. Today, the collaboration of both state and

church is essential, since education can not discard religion and religion can not discard education."

33. The Mackay Report, page 21.

34. Ibid., 22.

35. Ibid., 23.

36. Ibid., 23.

37. Ibid., 24.

38. Ibid., 24.

39. Ibid., 25.

40. Ibid., 27.

41. These proposals regarding moral education parallel the movement to foster a values clarification program. The strengths and weaknesses of the values clarification movement have been well documented. For the former, see, for example, Clive Beck, Moral Education in the Schools (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1971): for the latter, Kathleen Gow, Yes, Virginia, There is Right and Wrong (Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 1980).

42. The Mackay Report, 75.

43. Hugh Oliver, ed., Three Approaches to Religious Education: Profiles in Practical Education No.7 (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1972). This is a collection of three reports by practicing teachers on the ways in which they teach the course on world religions in the senior grades. Malcolm Mitchell takes a conventional, historical approach - "to discuss the ways people in the past tackled religious questions and the answers they came up with". Gailan MacQueen focuses on religious issues, i.e. birth, coming of age, suffering. Marina Bieler centres on the study of myth and symbolism that "touches on the depths of personal experience."

Writing in the introduction, the editor says, "R.E. should not be treated as an intellectual exercise in which the main task for the student is to learn facts about world religions. R.E. provides one of the few opportunities in school for the student to consider basic human values, and to experience how others feel (or have felt) about these values. The hoped-for outcome is to help the student to create his own set of values and to promote in him a deeper feeling for the human condition."

44. Malcolm and Fernhout, 1979, make the point that all schools indoctrinate; the only question then is what kind of indoctrination shall we have in the schools. From Lyle McBurney's Foreword, the Mackay report is seen as a retreat from the once-solid Protestant religious consensus. The Ecumenical Study Commission is seen as sadly resigning the field to the "religion-as-information" brigade. The authors criticise the utilitarian approach of the Mackay Committee, reject the split framework between education and nurture, information and belief, and do not accept values clarification as the best way forward. They support the establishment of alternative, publicly funded schools that can operate clearly and without hindrance out of a Christian understanding of the total curriculum.

45. Between January 1st and September 30th 1989, eleven reports or commentaries appeared in the Globe and Mail which pertain to the legal debate over religious education in Ontario's public schools. They are dated: Jan. 4th., Jan. 5th., Jan. 13th., Feb. 11th., Feb. 27th., Feb. 28th., Mar. 4th., Mar. 6th., Jun. 6th., Sept. 12th., Sept. 13th.

46. The Report of the Ministerial Inquiry on Religious Education in Ontario Public Elementary Schools, by Glenn A. Watson, Chairperson (Toronto: Ontario Department of Education, January 1990). This report, a major government document in the continuing debate over religious education in public schools, appeared whilst this thesis was being prepared and could not therefore be included as a quoted source.

CHAPTER 3

RESPONDING TO HISTORY: THE WAY FORWARD

One advantage of an historical introduction is that it helps to develop a picture that clearly explains, enlightens and focuses the current problem. From a survey of the history, the contemporary difficulties associated with teaching religious education may be grouped into four areas:

1. Christianity is no longer the dominant religion of Canadian society and its historically acclaimed majoritarian position as the prime faith of parents and schoolchildren can no longer be maintained.

2. Canadian society is clearly multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious; therefore any religious education that purports to be part of the state system must take this into account.

3. Public schools are not the place to proselytize and in the schools, sectarian evangelism of any kind is not to be tolerated.

4. There appears to be widespread confusion over the whole question of teaching religion in a secular society, a

lack of direction from educational leadership and a lack of morale amongst teachers of religion. In sum, teachers are not sure how to continue to do religious education any longer.

These are formidable problems without simple answers. It is tempting then to respond with an easy way out, namely, that the days of teaching religion are over. It could be argued that, given the insurmountable difficulties of teaching religion in a multi-faith schoolroom, given the demise of Christianity as the public religion of consensus, and given the growth towards a relativistic and essentially secular world, religion as a category is behind the times and ought to be abandoned. Besides, so the argument continues, religion seems to produce so much conflict, dissent and intolerance. Would it not be better simply to eliminate it?

Why Bother to Maintain Religious Education?

One cannot but applaud the 1969 MacKay Committee for their Report. The members of that committee have obviously listened carefully to both teachers and parents. Their conclusions about the failure of the old course are sound. Their desires to be sensitive to all religions and to prevent any kind of indoctrination are just and valid. Yet in the end, one is tempted to ask the question, Why bother? Why, in a contemporary society that has obviously relegated religion to the sidelines (cf. Reginald Bibby, Fragmented

Gods) do Ministers of Education continue to preserve religious education in public schools?

Four answers may be offered. Firstly, there continues to be the need to educate young people in character and morality. It is certainly true that no longer does one hear any insistence that it is only religion that can educate morally, but the understanding persists that religion and morality are essentially connected and therefore, in today's world of education where people constantly lament increasing delinquency, vanishing values, family breakdown, and all too common violence, to maintain religious education is to strengthen in some way moral and character education.[1]

Secondly, religious education does have very strong historical roots and to uproot it entirely, especially in a province like Ontario, where at least in rural areas there are strong pockets of particularly Christian values, would disturb the soil of society in a manner too like an earthquake.

Thirdly, religion itself insists on remaining a human (and therefore educational) issue for it insists on remaining a phenomenological reality. Although Christian church buildings may be more and more empty on a Sunday morning, religion remains an item of interest, debate and conflict because people are, by human nature, profoundly religious. They deal with life and death; they question suffering and wonder about success; they work on

relationships and experience love and hate; they know something of worship and the mysterium tremendum; they share ecstasies and despair; they are transcendent creatures. They are, indeed, religious people, and therefore religion will not go away.

Fourthly, there is the hope that religious education can help youth move towards understanding and appreciation, that tolerance and acceptance are religious virtues at heart, and therefore religious education, if it is done sensitively and well, can develop attitudes that will help our fragmented society cohere rather than divide. In this sense, religious education is the best possible antidote to religious bias.[2]

What we might have in these two reports commissioned by the parliament of Ontario is a commitment to hope. It is a rejection of the old dictum that there are two subjects which must never be discussed at a party, (and by extension, at school) religion and politics. It is a commitment to a formidable and difficult challenge, namely the challenge to continue doing religious education because, in spite of all its hazards, it continues to provide young people, and therefore society, with a meaning making system.

The Challenge

There is a threefold challenge facing those who wish to continue to teach religious education in the public schools of Ontario.

Firstly, there is the challenge to place religion firmly on the curriculum of a school for the same reason that any other subject is firmly on the same curriculum - because it is educational in nature and intent. The justification for public school religion classes is that they provide students with religious **education.**

Secondly, religious education must become totally pluralistic, accommodating all religious beliefs and behaviours in a non-judgmental, accepting framework. This is a response to the contemporary commitment to philosophies of tolerance and relativism, and a response to the pluralistic realities of city life. Our schoolchildren are from all over the world, and they bring to school their own religious backgrounds.

Thirdly, any course in religious education must have good substance in religion; it must not merely be a course about religions, educational and "safe" though that might be; it must be a course that teaches religion, in a direct and educational and experiential sense.

Towards a Solution

(a) Religious education as education

On April 1st. 1974, the Catholic Committee of the Superior Council of Education of Quebec published their report "Religion in Today's Schools".[3] The introduction bore the title "Should Religion Have a Place in the School Curriculum?"

Such a question, the authors acknowledge, would have seemed preposterous until a short time ago, for, especially in the province of Quebec, church and school have been inextricably entwined. But now, in the mid 1970's, the question is keenly debated. Shouldn't religious education be left to the family and to the church? Does religion still mean anything to young people? What happens to religious education in a society characterized by religious pluralism? Do we have enough teachers to maintain confessional schools? Isn't the very concept of religious education an anachronism?

These are good, honest, searching questions. Later in their introduction, the authors seek to justify the continuation of religious education, and they do so by an appeal to its educational value.

The emphasis so far, writes the Committee, has always been on the first word of the phrase "religious education", meaning that one's view of religion determined whether one

valued its place in schools or not. But now they take a new turn:

> We believe, however, that the word "education" is equally important when it comes to passing judgment on the place of religion in the school. The determining factor here is one's general concept of education. Those who view it in a narrowly pragmatic way, as a mere process of acquiring knowledge for the purpose of earning a living, may consider religious instruction as unimportant. But those who view education as growth of the total person in order that he or she "may learn to be", may reach quite a different conclusion concerning the teaching of religion.[4]

The report continues to make a strong plea for including religious education as an integral part of the school's whole educational program.

(b) R.E. as Teaching Religion not Teaching about Religion

We can make much of the changes in nomenclature respecting the teaching of religion in schools. When I was a schoolboy in England in the early nineteen fifties, the subject was called "Divinity", and it was clearly understood to be a junior handmaid of that queen of the sciences, Theology. Later on, in that same English system, I taught a subject called "Religious Knowledge". In the main title of the 1969 Mackay Committee Report, we find the phrase "Religious Information", although the sub-title clearly refers to "Religious Education."

When, in 1988, the British Education Reform Act rewrote the form, content and purpose of religion in schools, the

term used was "Religious Education". However, from 1870 to 1944, Parliament had used the term "Religious Instruction." An editorial in Volume 11 of the BJRE claims that this move is significant. "Instruction is a content-centred process, which consists in the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the pupil. Education is a person-centred process which aims at human development."[5]

Yet what really is religious education? Long gone are the days when religious education was accepted as religious instruction, that its purpose was to foster religious faith of a particular denominational kind so that its graduates would fit obediently into the church structures currently in existence. Since the second World War, educationalists have made rapid if somewhat confused progress towards a religious education of an inclusive, transcendental and noncoercive kind. In Great Britain, in the nineteen sixties, Harold Loukes, Ronald Goldman and Kenneth Hyde did imaginative and influential research, leading to new curricula that emphasised an experiential approach to teaching religion. Another step forward was taken with the publication of Edwin Cox's Changing Aims in Religious Education (1966), Ninian Smart's Secular Education and the Logic of Religion (1968), and J.W.D.Smith's Religious Education in a Secular Setting (1969).[6]

All these works, and the host of experimental curricula which followed them, were an attempt to take a

critical look at the process of teaching religion, and to answer the question, "What really is religious education?" One sympathises readily enough with the cautions about proselytism and one understands readily enough the growing philosophical commitment to relativism. One comprehends quickly that changes regarding religious education were springing from a society of rapidly increasing secularism, with religious observances being pushed into the background where they could be tolerated only as an expression of a faithful minority, fine and acceptable as long as no-one is disturbed, no-one is judged. What this did to religious education in schools was to push the subject out to arms length, to distance it and make it safe. The main result of this was to hide religious education behind education about religions. That was thought to be safe territory. One could ignore truth claims or majority consensuses; all that could be presented in the classroom was information, relatively scientific, factual and objective, about the ways various religious people did various religious things. Education about religions had won the day. "At the same time, there is a suspicion that once again the problem of teaching **religion** may be avoided by an exaggerated emphasis upon the observable facts **about** religion."[7]

Yet many committed teachers of religious education want more than this. They want their students to learn from religion, learn from the real thing, the real phenomenology;

they want their students to learn the real transcendence that comes from experiencing reality in religious categories; they want to teach religious interpretations of, for example, the movement towards freedom in Eastern Europe.

(c) The Phenomenological Approach

One modern approach to religious education, developed through the seventies and eighties by scholars such as Ninian Smart and Eric Sharpe Understanding Religion (1983) and Jean Holm, Teaching Religion in School (1975) is to adopt the phenomenological approach. Built upon previous studies in the phenomenology of religion (e.g. Eliade, van de Leeuw, Kristensen and Wach), this method was particularly popular in Great Britain.

Nicola Slee, in Volume 11 of the BJRE (1989) writes,

> The phenomenological model of religious education is both a response to the plural and secular identity of British society and a reflection of a particular philosophical approach to the study of religion, characterized by its aim to initiate pupils into a sympathetic, descriptive understanding of religion through the study of a variety of religious traditions.[8]

This approach calls for a degree of maturity in students, for it means that each must somehow "bracket out" his or her own beliefs in order to "enter into" the beliefs and practices of another faith.

Adherents of this approach argue that it is much more than mere information-giving. Rather, this approach surpasses simple processing of information, not by

encouraging each student to adopt a strong particularised position of faith and commitment at the teacher's insistence but by encouraging each student to respect and value all kinds of other commitments and beliefs.

But the phenomenological model has weaknesses and its detractors are quick to point them out. Such a model of religious education can degenerate into a "kaleidoscope of shallow ideas about myriad belief systems", "a parade round a museum of religion", "a fruit cocktail of world faiths", or, less elegantly, "a mishmash of ideas which fails to do justice not only to Christianity but to any faith."[9]

Nicola Slee lists the following criticisms:

a. The phenomenological approach to religious education was first organised around teaching university undergraduates and there is little evidence that it works well with children or teenagers.

b. Despite the apparently humble and relativistic approach to the variety of faiths, with an attendant nod to equal tolerance and equal fairness, the approach is often covertly dominated by a typically western type of intellectual arrogance, a "consumerist attitude to knowledge", that presupposes that the most sacred truths of any religion can be easily understood and appreciated by a student after an hour's or so teaching.

c. Where profound relativism finds itself in a face-off against various conflicting truth claims of the world's

religions, strong, distinguishing particularities often have to be effaced and all that is left is a kind of lowest common denominator called "religion"; such reductionism offends believers, or possibly leads to a cynical atheism.

d. It is absolutely unrealistic to pretend that we can indeed "bracket out" our own faith commitments, and the instruction that we should do so is symptomatic of the whole failure of education to address the spiritual vacuum of our times; and it is not a fit preparation for religious people really to deal with pluralism or live within its contexts.

In her article, Nicola Slee argues for a kind of rapprochement between the old confessional model and the new phenomenological one, for she wishes to teach religion in schools in such a way that students actively develop their own religious behaviour at the same time as respecting others'. She ends by quoting the famous dictum of the Durham Report:

> The aim of religious education should be to explore the place and significance of religion in human life and so to make a distinctive contribution to each pupil's search for a faith to live by."

(d) Religious Education as Skill Development

As long as religious education is seen in terms of religious knowledge, there is a danger that it will be seen as primarily a cerebral or cognitive activity, and the success of a particular religion course will tend to be

measured in examination terms. Eric Johns, in a provocative little article in Volume 5 of the BJRE (1983) suggests that there is more to religious education than religious knowledge; he suggests that we can teach religious skills.

Such religious education, writes Johns, "implies making certain that the religiously educated person has the skills necessary to understand beliefs other than his own and to appreciate their importance to those who hold them."[10] He then continues to suggest six major skills involved in religious understanding: classification, evaluation, explanation, self-examination, empathy and epoche.

Classification

"The skill of classification is the ability to judge correctly which conceptual schema applies to an object, action or statement." This is the skill by which we place all others' activities and beliefs into the right context so that we can fully appreciate them for what they are. Thus, is the cry "O God" a fervent prayer or an expletive? Is the skull cap to keep warm or to cover the head in the sight of God as a sign of humility?

Evaluation

This skill is inextricably connected with the first, but its particular emphasis is on understanding the meaning of an activity or statement; what is it that gives the

activity or statement a religious significance? How do we measure historical statements against theological statements? Why does facing the prayer mat towards Mecca make a difference?

Explanation

Johns offers us two kinds of explanation: explanations from within the faith community and explanations from without. The former describe and justify actions and beliefs from the point of view of a prior faith commitment, the latter describe and justify the same actions and beliefs but from a point of view outside that commitment, e.g. from a sociological or psychological point of view.

Self-examination

"Unless we are clear about our own assumptions there is little chance of being able to understand the importance of another's assumptions to him."

Empathy

This is the skill required to understand the other, to appreciate the emotion, conviction, calling, duty or joy of the other's religious faith. "One should be able to feel what the words describe."

Epoche

"This is the ability to suspend judgment. In phenomenological terms, it is the practice of epoche, the bracketing out of one's own preconceptions in order to see

the essence of a religious phenomenon." It is the willing suspension of truth claims.

(e) Religious Experience as a goal of Religious Education

Father Brendon Carmody S.J., writing in volume 46 of Lumen Vitae (1981), argues that religious education is best understood by attention to its aim; and the aim of religious education is to teach religious experience.[11]

Carmody turns to Bernard Lonergan to define what he means by religious experience. More than simply sensory or empirical input, Lonergan's experience is a self-awareness; it is an awareness of the self in process, as, for example, in the process of understanding a puzzle, or of being in love. Further, there is a certain unrestrictedness in Lonergan's idea of religious experience. This would seem to be built upon William James' view of religion as a total reaction to all of life, and Rudolf Otto's idea of the holy, the numinous, the sublime. Such religious experience produces what Otto calls a sense of creatureliness. In it, we transcend ourselves and touch the wholly Other.

Carmody says that this is what traditional Roman Catholics have meant by "sanctifying grace," and declares that this kind of religious experience is not limited to any particular religious tradition. "Despite the importance of the Christian dimension of religious experience, it is only part of the quest of humanity for God."[12]

Using Rosemary Haughton's distinction between formation and transformation, Carmody continues to argue that the educational process is a matter of using all the cultural influences to help people understand themselves; this ought then to lead to transformation, which is a total personal revolution.

"Put in other terms, our concern will be with the evocation of the kind of wonder which Aristotle spoke of when he indicated that wonder was the fountainhead of all philosophy. In Lonergan's terms, we are speaking about the activation of what he has called the pure desire to know."[13] In this sense, writes Carmody, all human experience can have a religious dimension.

But mitigating against the development of an education that can help lead us towards transcendence are the kinds of features typically found in most modern educational systems: an emphasis on technologies, professional formation, business schools. Yet Carmody insists that religious education be at the centre of the educational endeavour. "we consider religious experience and its development to be closely linked to such things as moral, intellectual, and emotional development."[14] Carmody then applies himself to developmental models of education, drawing on the findings of Piaget and Erikson. Finally, towards the end of his paper, he gets to "The search for the meaning of life."

What Carmody adds to the discussion is a great emphasis on the importance of the community. As adolescents come to be ready to grapple critically with formal religious traditions, as they come to be ready to begin their own real self-owned journey towards reality and meaning, as the student reaches forward to personal autonomy, so the community can play a vital role. "In the setting of religious education or education towards religious experience, what seems crucial is that the adolescent feel part of a loving, caring, community where he or she has sufficient liberty to discover meaning in his or her own life."[15]

Carmody continues:

> At the same time, he or she is faced with the challenge of personal commitment. In a supportive community, the good teacher becomes the one who supports his or her students in a sustained groping, exploration, and eventual synthesis."[16]

Carmody is clear that he writes about a process when he writes about religious experience, and to him, it is a process that comes to its fullness at about age thirty. Yet all along the way, religious experience has its appropriate manifestations, and the aim of religious education is to encourage and birth those very manifestations.

The Major Contributions of Moran and Hauerwas

The insights offered by the authors mentioned above are valid and useful, helping teachers to approach the task of teaching religious education in a pluralistic society by

describing categories of religious experience and skill performance that encourage them and give them ways of handling their material. But I believe that it is Gabriel Moran who offers the most valuable contribution to the discussion about solving the problems of religious education. His works would include all the major thrusts of the works cited above, so to him we turn next.

After a presentation of his ideas, we will look at the work of Stanley Hauerwas, whose contribution to religious education of the task of developing character through narrative is lucid and substantial.

NOTES

1. The point is accepted by Emile Durkheim, the French sociologist who himself was no friend of religion, and quoted in Clive Beck, Better Schools: A Values Perspective (Toronto: The Falmer Press, 1990), 160.

2. The point is cleverly made by Clive Beck that we need religious education to eradicate religious bias. See his Better Schools, 157.

3. Religion in Today's School: Volume I (Quebec: Catholic Committee of the Superior Council of Education, 1974). Volume II was published in 1976.

4. Ibid., 9.

5. Editorial, "The Content of Religious Education and the 1988 Education Reform Act," British Journal of Religious Education 11 no. 2 (Spring 1989): 59.

6. John M. Hull, "New Directions in Religious Education," Religious Education 78 no. 3 (Summer 1983): 391.

7. Ibid., 396.

8. Nicola Slee, "Conflict and Reconciliation between Competing Models of Religious Education: Some Reflections on the British Scene," British Journal of Religious Education 11 no. 3 (Summer 1989): 128.

9. Ibid.

10. Eric Johns, "Some Skills for Religious Education," British Journal of Religious Education 5 no. 2 (Spring 1983): 69.

11. Brendan Carmody, "Religious Experience as a Goal of Religious Education," Lumen Vitae 36 no. 3 (1981): 267.

12. Ibid., 290.

13. Ibid., 290.

14. Ibid., 292.

15. Ibid., 305.

16. Ibid., 305.

CHAPTER 4

GABRIEL MORAN ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The writings of Gabriel Moran have helped give clarity and confidence to those involved with religious education in contemporary pluralistic settings. In this chapter, I attempt to explain as clearly as possible what Moran proposes when he writes of the task of "teaching religion". This material is essentially that found in Interplay: A Theory of Religion and Education (1981); Religious Education Development (1983); and Religious Education as a Second Language (1989).

Moran provides help in particular by his proposals:

1. That religious education be seen as a definite field of study

2. That religious education be approached and understood through the concept of development

3. That religious education be likened to the acquisition of a second language

4. That religion itself be taught as an academic construct.

Let us continue, then, to discuss Moran under these four headings.

Religious Education as a Field of Study

Interplay came out of Moran's realization that "there does not yet exist any clearly discernible field that can accurately be called **religious education**."[1] In this book in particular, he attempts to create that missing field.

Such a field would bring together the two component parts of its title, namely the religious and the educational. It would bring together two sets of languages, two sets of institutions. It would therefore have to include: (1) a respect for the concrete, particular, and sometimes mysterious practices of religious life, including what apparently are outrageous claims and (2) an application of the mind with all its critical capacity for the study, understanding, and teaching of religion.[2]

Moran argues that religious education is a justifiable field of study because it is a legitimate educational activity. In chapter two of Religious Education as a Second Language he places religious education firmly in the middle of education in general by discussing the question of meaning. To ask "What is the meaning of religious education?" is to presuppose a prior question "What is the meaning of education?" He sees education as a process of interplay between four different areas: family, schooling, job, leisure (or retirement). "Education consists in

developing the most fruitful relations both within each of these four forms and among the four forms."[3] Schools may have a conservative curriculum about literacy and numeracy, yet still lead to a liberating education. But schooling, he insists, is more limited than education. Schools cannot do everything; they must, quite legitimately, limit themselves to serve the ends of schooling. But it is religion that helps us to "de-idolize" schools, helping to "hold together the individual and the collective, what has already been attained and what is still to come, bodily life and a unity beyond bodily attainment."[4]

In the introduction to Religious Education as a Second Language, Moran puzzles over the relationship between teaching religion in a multi-religious society and the whole enterprise of religious education. He pinpoints how people perceive the difficulty, the improbability of the very enterprise, by this comment:

> A question I am regularly asked is, "How can you be a director of a program of religious education in a private university?" To the questioner there is no puzzle in what religious education is; the puzzle is in how there can be religious education when there are several religions involved."[5]

It is the very lack of a clearly understood and clearly defined field of study called "religious education" that makes people ask that kind of a question. People confuse religious education with Christian education, or Jewish education, or education in any kind of Big-R religion.[6]

At the same time as seeking to create a special field of religious education, Moran pleads strongly for its importance. "This book is written from the conviction that religious education is one of the most universal, most urgent, and most practical questions confronting our society today." And elsewhere he writes, "My thesis is that althougn religious education is somewhat alien to most speakers today, its development and spread are important to tolerance, understanding, and peace in the world."[7]

Religious Education as Development

A central theme of Moran's work is that religious education might take development as its conceptual model. Avoiding the stifling two handed grip of Aristotelian teleology on one side and biological determinism on the other, Moran argues for the language of development as a productive and useful metaphor for the process of religious education. At the same time, he acknowledges that his ideas on development are not new and he recognises his debt to Horace Bushnell and George Coe, calling the latter the greatest theorist of the religious education movement.[8]

In terms of psychological development, seminal work has been done by Jean Piaget (cognitive - though Moran prefers the word constructionist) and Erik Erikson (psycho-social), the former emphasising the "world pole" and the latter the "self pole".[9] Lawrence Kohlberg built on Piagetian developmentalism to construct his stages of moral

development; James Fowler took this theoretical understanding of stagism to construct his analysis of faith development. Moran's prime interest, though, is not to repeat this typical stagist framework but to use the model of development, to use its language, what he calls its grammar, to promote both a theory and a praxis of teaching religion.

Any sense that religion consists of a fixed code or a rigid set of precepts to be obeyed is inimical to the imagery of development. Moran therefore pleads for a dynamic understanding of religion. "A beginning way to define the word 'religious' would be to say that it refers to whatever keeps open the process of development."[10] Religious experiences, then, are those that challenge or expand our present limits of experience. While admitting that his outline is not based on the kind of empirical interview research of Kohlberg, Gilligan, and Fowler, Moran nevertheless offers his own preliminary pattern of religious development:

1. The simply religious
2. Acquiring a religion
3. The religiously Christian (Jewish, Muslim, and so forth).

At this stage in his discussion, Moran is anxious to preserve the distinction between religion (considered as a set of objects) and religious (referring to impulses within

experience). Faith is not the same as having a religion. Having a religion is good, but not enough. Being religious, having faith, is part of the language that leads us towards the infinite and the transcendent; at the same time, it is being religious rather than having a religion that preserves our traditions by constantly renewing them. It is being religious that allows us to build the city of development, the human city, the city that "reveals the God in whom we believe."[11]

In Religious Education Development chapter eight, Moran returns to the notion of teaching, offering what he calls a grammar of educational development. He quickly makes two points: (1) education needs the idea of development, and (2) development needs to be seen as educational.

Moran is critical of the paucity of true educational theorizing. Most have appeared content merely to package curriculum and send it, with the children, into schools; such classroom packaging ignores the fact that human beings are lifelong learners. He is encouraged, however, by three developments:

a. Jerome Brunner, who helped us move from what children could learn to what they should learn, and emphasised the need for a sound epistemology and a thorough theory of instruction (as opposed to learning)[12]

b. Lively educational writing in the area of curriculum development, cf. Tyler and Bloom[13]

c. Kieran Egan's four stages of learning theory, along with his desire to transcend education as simply training the child for later life.[14]

This diversion into curriculum theory allows Moran to re-emphasise the distinction between schooling and education. "We have to stop saying **education** when in fact we mean **school** or **schooling**." Similarly with the art of teaching, a false assumption can be made that teaching is always schoolteaching. But it is not, says Moran. "A teacher shows someone else how to do something . . . Schoolteaching is a peculiar kind of teaching, a limit situation in which the words are mainly about words."[15]

Moran's own concern as he writes about learning and teaching is to provide an overarching metaphor for the social endeavour known as education. He rejects the railroad train of John Dewey, the circle or pendulum of Lewis Mumford,[16] and reintroduces his image of the interplay of forms, the circling towards the centre of the sphere. This is an effort to choose journey over travel, to make room for production and growth. He considers next the four forms that are part of the interplay of education: family, job, schooling, leisure.

Moran concludes this chapter of his book by returning to Egan, but adding two extra stages of educational development to Egan's original four. Moran adds "physical" as a first stage, and "leisurely" as a final one. Perhaps

we can try to sum up this section with single sentence recapitulations of each stage:

1. Physical. "His intellect was at the tip of his senses."

2. Mythical. "The child embodies in language the contesting, the repetitive and the wondering: myths - stories of binary opposites."

3. Romantic. "The child has to make a commitment to language . . . and is fascinated with whatever exists, with names of things, with dates of all kinds of events, and with startling information of any sort."

4. Philosophical. "The young person is fascinated with ideas as the building blocks of an ideology."

5. Ironic. "The passage to irony is a kind of conversion, a willingness to circle back and pick up elements kicked out of the ideological system."

6. Leisurely. "This is the stage at which we situate a fully developed self in a calmly accepted cosmos."[17]

In Religious Education Development chapter nine, Moran re-assembles the ideas previously discussed, but does so once again around his central image of constantly circling back. Under the chapter heading "A Theory of Religious Education Development", he writes this:

> Education is concerned with finding or creating order in this world, while religion is a going beyond this world . . . Education needs a religious impulse, or else its concern to put things in order closes off further development . . . Religion needs educational restraint and challenge so that its impulse to transcend the world

does not lose touch with the world to be transcended.[18] This is excellent writing and provides a crystal clear summation of virtually the whole book.

Returning to his preliminary three stages of religious development, let us again try to give a single sentence summary of each stage:

1. Simply Religious. "Religious education of the young has little to do with instruction in belief; it has much to do with providing aesthetic form, stable environment, and personal warmth that protect the religiousness of the child's experience."

2. Acquiring a Religion. "Children ought to get a thorough immersion into the documents concerning the history of their people."

3. Religiously Christian (or Jewish or Moslem). "Adulthood needs a definite content and set of practices."[19]

In a final comment on the four forms of educational setting - family, school, job, leisure - Moran speaks to the issue of the family.

> Religious education is a clear-eyed affirmation of the ordinary, finite family in relation to something greater than the family. One definition of religious education could be: it is whatever affirms the family while at the same time reminding the family that it is not the final community.

He makes a similar point in his comment on job:

> Religious education in a second formulation is the relativisation of one's job or ordinary tasks towards one's work or vocation . . . Religious education is

> whatever affirms our job while reminding us that there is something greater to be accomplished in our lives.[20]

His final emphasis as he talks of religious education in the school is to reiterate his desire that it be seen as a rigorous and formal academic discipline. His final comment on the fourth stage is to tie leisure in with wisdom (reflection, meditation, prayer), an obvious and essentially religious goal.

In the ultimate section of Religious Education Development Moran expands on his three stages and six moments of religious education. They are:

1. Simply Religious Education
   a. Physical
   b. Visional/Mythical
2. Christian (Jewish, Moslem) Education
   a. Narrative
   b. Systematic
3. Religiously Christian (Jewish, Moslem)
   a. Journeying/Inquiry
   b. Centering

Let me once again try to provide a brief encapsulation of Moran's final writing on these stages.

1. Simply Religious

a. Physical: The task here is to ensure that all the experiences of the infant are educational, designed to protect safety and encourage wholesome growth. In this sense, all education is religious for it fosters

development. "The religious principle, once again, is to destroy the destroyer"[21] i.e. protect the child against any kind of harm.

b. Visional/Mythic: This is the stage of stories, of imagination, of dreams. It is also one of inevitable conflict, as is the religious experience itself. "Some stories do attempt ready-made solutions, while other stories are profound enough to let the child bear with inevitable conflict, the story having made anxiety bearable." Here, Moran affirms the value of Bruno Bettelheim's work The Uses of Enchantment.[22]

2. Christian (Jewish, Moslem) Education

a. Narrative: Now is the time for the child to grasp a sense of the past, through the scriptures and the activities of the practising community. The difficulty for the teacher of a Big-R religion is to avoid becoming an authoritarian indoctrinator or merely the animator of neutral discussions. I find Moran's paragraph on this struggle to be exceptionally fine, so I quote it at length. He says that the attitude of the teacher should be as follows:

> I and my people are not wrong. My way is not a false way. I know it is true for me because I have experienced it. I am going to show you a world that does exist. I want you to see that world because it is worth seeing. I want to invite you to join that way. You can help this people by discovering ways to resist the inevitable bias that is part of every tradition. There is an adventure to join in finding close approximations to the truth.[23]

b. **Systematic**: Here Moran makes a plea for the right and proper place of theology, the attempt to create the grand scheme, using all the advantages of the breadth and depth and historic scope of the intellectual tradition that theology encompasses.

3. **Religiously Christian (Jewish, Moslem)**

a. Journeying/Inquiry: This is the movement beyond one-of-a-kind moments of adolescent conversion towards the struggle against injustice and the search for love and peace. "Religious education is a process of de-absolutizing answers, even the best of religious answers that can be learned in school."[24] Questions of origin and destiny, of life and death, will be at every turn of the journey. We will not have to look for religious ideas; they will find us. This is a journey of compassion and tolerance, recognising and loving all the fellow pilgrims on the face of the earth.

b. Centering: There is no substitute, says Moran, for age in acquiring the characteristics of this stage. Life teaches much. The religious journey is a centering, a rediscovery that education and religious education converge. The final moment includes waiting for death, and helping those who wait. Moran's last sentence is this one: "Religious education development is the inner/outer journey that leads to the center where peace and justice reside."[25]

Religious Education as a Second Language

"I compare the development of religious education to an individual's learning a second language."[26] (1989 page 23) This is how Moran states his thesis in Religious Education as a Second Language. Second language acquisition is the running metaphor of the book, which, although eventually "limping" (Moran's word - see his page 23), provides a sustained image for his ideas.

If we approach religious education in terms of language development, two benefits surface immediately. Like any second language acquisition, religious education helps us understand others better. Secondly, it helps us understand our own religious self better. Religious education therefore becomes a means towards harmony among all peoples. "Religious education can be seen as the attempt to bring into one conversation many religious languages."[27] It is the language bridge between different faiths and cultures.

Too narrow a definition of the meaning of religious education, all too frequent perhaps, fails to allow the bridge even to be built. So Moran argues against preliminaries that will try to define, hence limit, the religious language involved. "We need to break open the words, not define them."[28] We need to include all classes, all races, both genders, all ages in the language learning; therefore we must use inclusive language. We must make sure that no voices are excluded.

Continuing with the metaphor, Moran's final chapter in Religious Education as a Second Language is aptly called "Towards a Wider Conversation." He makes the point that in real conversations, people listen to each other and make changes. But those changes are rarely around giving up one's own convictions; they are more often about enriching the convictions that we already have. "Religious education has to do with the religious life of the human race and with bringing people within the influence of that life."[29] It has nothing to do with proselytism or indoctrination; they violate the boundaries of conversation. It has everything to do with consent.

Adult participants in the conversation can choose whether or not they join in; they can choose whether or not they change. But what of children? And what of the family influence upon children? Does the family influence count as religious education, or is it almost by definition, indoctrination? Moran acknowledges this as an "insoluble problem"[30] He states that the school's mandate is much narrower than that of the family, but he hopes that even the most religiously committed family might still nurture their children in freedom, and in regular, healthy, intellectual criticism of their own traditions.

Finally, Moran broadens the conversation around four categories, all beginning with the prefix "inter". The wider conversation should first of all be international,

teaching us that we are all remarkably similar and yet startlingly different. Secondly, the conversation must be inter-religious. In a pluralistic setting, we need increasingly to understand our own religious position in relation to other religious possibilities. Thirdly, the conversation needs to be inter-generational, bringing together the voices of the very young and the very old, and ensuring that the age differences between the extremes do not drown out their voices. Fourthly, the conversation must be inter-institutional, at the touching point of family, school, job and leisure (retirement).

> Religious education will then be seen to emerge at the centre of education not at the periphery. Religious education would be a place of both passion and tolerance, a place to stimulate the deepest intellectual search and invite a personal choice to follow the best way one has discovered through conversations with one's ancestors, with the generations of human travellers, and with the nonhuman lives that speak to us."[31]

The Teaching of Religion as An Academic Construct

Religion is the direct object of the verb "teach"; this is the statement with which Moran keeps us constantly on track in this discussion. But religion appears to be a concept that is ignored or even mistrusted by educational and even religious institutions. Why is this?

Religion is often the word and the construct that religious groups use when labelling outsiders. So Christians or Jews or Buddhists or Moslems see themselves as the true people of God, the uniquely faithful receivers of

revelation, practitioners of the true faith, while those who are outside their tradition are the practitioners of religion; they are perceived as nefarious and suspicious, the adherents of ritual and rite, of relativism and syncretism. Although the word **religion** comes from its Latin root **religio**, referring primarily to "respect for what is sacred" or, more generally, to "moral scrupulousness, conscientiousness", by our day and age it has developed its modern, rather derogatory meaning.[32]

The problem then - perhaps, as always - is the relationship between religion and Religions. Moran is wanting to teach the former. How might that be done?

In the face of a reality in which several religious groups throughout the world claim to be the one and only, true and unique Way, Moran sees only two possibilities. The first one is honestly, courteously and respectfully to recognise the differences and similarities, to study and understand them, and in a challenging way to honour them. The second is to leave any kind of union to "scientists with a rationalistic bent; when that does not work, the job will be left to politicians and generals." It is precisely through the teaching of religion that the second course can be avoided and the first course be maintained. "Religion signifies the willingness to use the mind to understand one's own religious tradition and that of other peoples."[33]

Committed, obviously, to the first option, Moran sees the school as precisely the place where religion belongs, and where it belongs as an academic subject, a distinct field of study, a proper scientia (cf. Interplay chapter three). There will be allowance for people to live out their own faith - to follow the words of Christ or the Buddha (for religion *per se* is distinct from what is lived); but the schooling will concentrate on the teaching of religion.

Moran now has an alternative way of asking his prevailing question, "What does it mean to teach religion?" He re-phrases his question in these terms: "What does it mean to show a person how to use words and concepts so as to understand a field called religion?"[34]

Moran has an admirably simple first aim in teaching religion. It must make the material intelligible. This involves taking the sacred books of major religious traditions and interpreting them to the students without being caught up in useless arguments about objective religion vs. subjective religion and unbeliever vs. believer. The very task of teaching religion speaks to objectivity; yet the understanding of religion is conveyed through the subjective experiences of its adherents. How then should the sacred books be viewed?

"The appropriate framework is to view a religious text as a mediator between a community of the past and a

community of the present."[35] The chief criteria of this multidisciplined exploration are fullness and fairness. Moran seems to plead for a suitable "entering in" to the text as mediator, for one has to participate in religious meaning somehow to begin to understand it. Is that possible for students in a classroom? Can they really participate in the meaning at the same time as they are exploring religion as an academic field? Moran offers an answer by describing the differing experiences of teaching and learning at a public school and a parochial school.

The parochial school offers a greater contextual meaning. The students are already aware of more symbols; they are already experienced in church worship; they possibly have a home background that reinforces the contextuality of their own schooling as one that is set into a whole religious tradition. The public school will at the same time be more diverse - a multitude of religious symbols from a multitude of beliefs - and shallower, for the contextual background of religion as a classroom subject is slimmer. Although there will always arise differing opportunities for students to share their own religious experiences, Moran insists that the teacher's main attention has to be symbols and text.

> The homilist comments on a New Testament text: "This is what we believe; let us put it into practice." A schoolteacher has a different set of assumptions, procedures, and expectations; certainly, the work is not to tell people what the truth is or tell them how to act. The schoolteacher's modest task is to explore what

> a text means and to help students to articulate their own convictions.[36]

He also takes to task those Christian educators who would like to see students learn nothing but the Bible, making the point that education in religion must precede education in Christianity; book learning must precede Bible learning.

Finally, he squares off against indoctrination and sentimentality.

> In the past, religious bodies have often been accused of substituting indoctrination for teaching and sentimentality for scholarship. Teaching religion, especially in the context of the public school, has to avoid these deficiencies.[37]

To evade those pitfalls, we will need teachers of a particularly fine calibre and a particularly sensitive spirit. But that does not mean they have to be neutral, so to speak, without convictions and beliefs of their own.[38] All they need is a well developed sense of responsibility and the beginnings of an understanding of religion as an academic construct.

However, teaching can be viewed as a negative activity. Moran quotes from Carl Rogers, Philip Jackson and Leonardo Boff as authors who imply that teaching is one of the great obstacles to learning. But what these three quotations share is "an image of teachers and teaching in which one person exercises powerful control over others."[39] Moran says that this understanding of teaching simply will not do. He brings us back to basics.

Moran has a wonderfully down to earth definition of teaching. "To teach is to show someone how to do something . . . The act of teaching is captured in that wonderful Americanism, 'know-how'".[40] A teacher not only knows something, she also knows how to impart that knowledge to another, and possibly the student will then far outdistance the teacher in performance. Such simplicity contrasts appealingly with other people's attempts to define schooling in complex and erudite sentences that seek to capture every possible nuance of every possible classroom. (See e.g. Moran's comments on Cremin's definition of education, in Interplay page 41).

Acknowledging the insights of our own personal experience of growth plus the research of Piaget (see Religious Education Development chapter three), Moran recognises that developmental psychology has aided school administrators in developing curriculum. He then draws our attention to the history of teaching, which has regarded early schooling as nurturing - hence the work of women - and university teaching as lecturing - hence the work of men. Though called a "masterpiece" by Moran, Horace Bushnell's work Christian Nurture, is cited as a major culprit in feminising the teaching of religion because Bushnell presented a family-oriented nurturing model of religious education, and his thesis, so pervasive in influence, dominated American schools thereafter. At the university,

the actual act of teaching goes largely ignored. Content and research dominate. "In summary," writes Moran, "teaching in the school setting ought not to forget its roots outside the school. Primary and secondary schools have to avoid letting teaching be absorbed by nurture, universities have to accept teaching as a responsibility distinct from scholarship."[41]

Early in Interplay Moran has been anxious to dispel a common misunderstanding, namely that education and schooling are synonymous. He insists, quite rightly of course, that they are two different endeavours. Equally rightly, he chastises educational authors for constantly assuming that they are the same, and writing of schooling when they mean education and education when they mean schooling.[42]

In Religious Education as a Second Language, Moran examines the differences between schooling and education more carefully. Schooling plays a critical role, he argues, critical on two levels. Although its aims are narrower than those of education in general, (education is "the reshaping of life's forms with end and without end")[43] schooling is vitally important. Secondly, schooling is the process that continually shines the light of criticism upon traditions, truisms, accepted practices and conventional beliefs.[44]

It would seem that the obvious thing to do at the beginning of an exploration of teaching religion would be to

examine those places where religion is being taught. That is not as easy as it seems, writes Moran, for there are few places in the United States where such a thing is being done. In fact, it is precisely one of his major criticisms of American schooling that religion is not being taught.[45] That leads him to consider the question: Is it possible to teach religion in the public schools? Could it be that the dearth of places where religion is being taught actually reflects the sheer impossibility of the task?

Moran declares that the Supreme Court of the United States, drawing unhappily on the religious education literature of the 1940's, has answered the initial question in the negative. No, public schools cannot teach religion; they can only teach about religion. Further unhappiness surrounds the implicit assumptions that the direct teaching of religion is somehow offensive, unwarranted and unwanted; and that it can, and should, be safely left to others because the churches are doing it anyway. But according to Moran, they are not. Churches, suspicious of religion as a category, merely practice catechetics and denominational formation. "In summary, the idea of teaching religion does not fit smoothly within either the public school or the religious organization."[46]

A Critical Response

In the final part of this chapter, I want to discuss critically Moran's teaching in the four areas already mentioned.

Rescuing religious education as field of study

I appreciate Moran's plea for religious education to be regarded as a separate field of academic study, as a "scientia". I, too, would like to see religion be as acceptable an academic category as physics. But given that great intellectual sweep from the Enlightenment onwards that has divorced questions of fact from opinions of value, raising the former to a pseudo-divinity and relegating the latter, including religion, to a privatised fancy for the few,[4/] I would not be hopeful that Moran will get his way. The teaching of religious education in schools occupies rather a Cinderella place, not to be taken seriously, not deserving of real effort or financial backing, never to be thought of as being on the same level of seriousness as her ugly sister Mathematics.

Yet having declared my doubt, I am encouraged by the occasional article or book that re-argues the importance of a classical education, or a moral education, or a specifically religious education. Increasingly, I think, the morally critical voice is being given a hearing; increasingly, educators and parents are lamenting the iconoclasm of the sixties; increasingly, perhaps, attention

is being drawn towards the spiritual nature of humankind and the physical fragility of our environment.

Approaching Religious Education via the Model of Development

I find Moran's model of development both persuasive and freeing, persuasive, because it fits well with empirical evidence regarding human development and our own, intuitive sense of personal growth, and freeing because it removes the straitjacket of a rigid understanding of religion as a fixed body of knowledge and behaviour demanding conformity.

It seems, then, that given the acceptance of development as an accurate model, what we need in the schools is curriculum that is built around this model. Following the expanded understanding of Moran's model, school curriculum for religious education should commence in the earliest stages of primary education with material that is physical, moving on to material that is visional/mythic.

As we move into the second stage, the Christian or Moslem or Jewish or Hindu education, we need materials that can help students to share each other's stories and experiences. Such materials will increase our understanding of each other's religious history, sacred texts, worship, rites and rituals.

The third stage begins with the task of journeying and inquiry. This is when curriculum materials will encourage critical inquiry and challenging questions. A variety of resources will help students to "de-absolutise answers". To

gain Moran's final stage, we will have probably left the school far behind, at least in terms of the ages commonly connected to secondary education. Moran calls this stage "centering", and it really refers to the ongoing religious education that takes us to the point of our own death.

Comparing Religious Education to Teaching a Second Language

I find it most helpful to consider conversation as a primary metaphor for the endeavour of teaching religious education. In the context of the public school, we must stand against one sided proclamation, the declamatory shouts of the partisan. There is no conversation in attempts to convert.

But likening religious education to the process of acquiring a language gives us immediately the happy metaphor of conversation to describe the manner in which we will conduct the classroom sessions. We will allow all sides to speak; we will hush the ones who seek to monopolize or shout the loudest; we will encourage the quiet and shy to verbalise their thoughts. Each will be given equal and ample opportunity to verbalise his or her own religious beliefs and understandings. Then, possibly, the benefits of such a religious education will broaden into the "wider conversation" of the pluralistic society surrounding the school.

Attempting to teach Religion as an Academic Construct

If religion is to be accepted as an academic construct, suitable for the curriculum of the public school, it will need to be separated from some of the passion surrounding it. This is difficult, for adherents of a particular religion are usually committed to that religion with fervour and even abandonment. This is because people following a particular religion claim that it is the true one, and it is on questions of truth that religious factions collide.[48]

What is to be done, then? It is intellectually dishonest to deny that religions make truth claims. It is intellectually dishonest to pretend that all truth claims can be of equal value.[49] The only way, it seems to me, to maintain honesty and keep religion as a viable academic construct for the public school classroom, is to acknowledge the fact that truth claims collide with each other, but state that they will be set aside in order for the conversation to continue. We will continue the "interpretive turn" of modern religious studies.[50] There is a place for religious passion, but if it comes into the public school classroom, it will make the task of the religious educator impossible.

NOTES

1. Gabriel Moran, Interplay: A Theory of Religion and Education (Winona: Saint Mary's Press, 1981), 10.

2. Ibid., 11.

3. Gabriel Moran, Religious Education as a Second Language (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1989), 43.

4. Ibid., 58.

5. Ibid., 2.

6. By "Big-R" religion, I mean those religions which have a definite corpus of holy writings, beliefs and behaviours; which have a defined community demonstration of their rituals; and which have a name. For example, Judaism, Hinduism and Christianity are Big-R religions. By "little-r" religion, I mean the existence of religion as an abstraction, a universalization and a generalization; little-r religion is an anthropological reality, a cultural entity, that bespeaks humankind's search for the spiritual, the transcendent and the divine.

7. Interplay, 9 and Second Language 23. Compare also Robert Durback ed., Seeds of Hope: A Henri Nouwen Reader (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1989), 47-48, where Nouwen talks of teaching religion as "first of all the affirmation of the basic quest for meaning."

8. Gabriel Moran, Religious Education Development (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1983), 21.

9. Ibid., 24.

10. Ibid., 129.

11. Ibid., 135.

12. Jerome Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1971).

13. Ralph Tyler, Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1950); and Benjamin Bloom, The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives Handbook 1: Cognitive Domain (New York: Longmans Green, 1956). Handbook 11: Affective Domain (New York: David McKay, 1964).

14. Kieran Egan, Educational Development (New York: Oxford, 1979).

15. Development, 160 and 161

16. Ibid., 164.

17. Ibid., 175-181.

18. Ibid., 184.

19. Ibid., 188-190.

20. Ibid., 192-193.

21. Ibid., 197.

22. Ibid., 199. Note also Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment (New York: Knopf, 1976).

23. Development, 200.

24. Ibid., 204.

25. Ibid., 207.

26. Second Language, 23.

27. Ibid., 26.

28. Ibid., 10.

29. Ibid., 218.

30. Ibid., 20.

31. Ibid., 242.

32. Cassell's New Latin Dictionary, (London: Cassell and Company, 1953). But note the following definition of religion:

> By its very nature, religion constitutes a meaning system. Semantically, the word **religion** remains perplexing, but a hint about the role of religion is found in its etymology, the word being derived either from **relegere** (to re-read the world and to discover its meaning) or from **religere** (to bind the world together, to give it meaning by setting up networks of significance).

From: The Catholic Committee of the Superior Council of Education Religion in Today's Schools (Quebec: Minister of Education, Government of Quebec, 1974), 33.

Note also the discussion in Clive Beck, Better Schools: A Values Perspective (New York: The Falmer Press, 1990), 157ff.

33. Interplay, 73.

34. Ibid., 74.

35. Ibid., 75.

36. Second Language, 156.

37. Interplay, 77.

38. Clive Beck, Better Schools, 73 and ix no.4. in the Introduction.

39. Second Language, 62-63.

40. Ibid., 64-65 and Interplay, 68.

41. Interplay, 71.

42. Clive Beck, Better Schools, 1ff.

43. Second Language, 89.

44. Ibid., 51-57.

45. Note in the United States the formation of the Williamsburg Charter Foundation which is seeking to produce the nation's first national curriculum on religion and religious liberty. See Kim A. Lawton, "A Fourth 'R'", Christianity Today (December 9, 1988), 53.

46. Interplay, 67.

47. See e.g. Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Colin Gunton, Enlightenment and Alienation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

1985); and Lesslie Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) and The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (Grand Rapids: Eeerdmans, 1989).

48. See a helpful discussion in Donald Berry, "A Strategy for Considering Truth Claims in Teaching Religion," Religious Education 78 no. 2 (Spring 1983), 218.

49. Though far beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that non-Aristotelian logic would not have the same problems with conflicting truth claims.

50. The work of Paul Ricoeur and his hermeneutical philosophy casts illuminating light on the task of religious education as interpretation. See e.g. Mark Wallace, "Paul Ricoeur in the Classroom: Hermeneutics and the Teaching of Religion," The Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin 18 no.3 (September 1989), 53.

CHAPTER 5

STANLEY HAUERWAS ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND THE USE OF NARRATIVE

We have acknowledged already that all educators involved in religious education in the public schools of Ontario face a formidable and daunting challenge. They wrestle continually with their task. But it is a task of no small significance, for religious education must inevitably be connected with the education of the person, with character education, with the growth of people as moral agents. John Silber, the President of Boston University, catches the point in an interview published by the New York Times. Explaining his personal convictions about education, he says, "To know what was required to be a good person or a just person seemed to me the fundamental question that a person ought to ask;" and from that stance he declares that religious literacy is basic to his understanding of education. For him, education is religious before it is secular.[1]

As Socrates comments, about moral philosophy, "We are discussing no small matter, but how we ought to live."[2] Even if they ever arrive at a clear and concise definition of their task - the religious education of the young, the teaching of how one ought to live - those involved in religious education rarely arrive at an equally clear and concise definition of their methodology. In the face of a generally accepted and publicly acknowledged lack of success, religious educators have sometimes appeared to be scrambling frantically for a better technique, a more effective way of performing their task.

This chapter discusses the work of Stanley Hauerwas, whose use of narrative theology to teach character formation is, I believe, a most valuable addition to the field of religious education, and a pertinent attempt to teach the Socratic "how we ought to live". Hauerwas will take us considerably further than an instant solution for the problem of the moment. His understanding of the use of story, and his understanding of the development of human character will equip religious educators, and all those involved in moral education, with a purpose and a methodology to do their work consistently well.

The Understanding of Character

A. The debt to Aristotle.

Hauerwas acknowledges that he finds the roots of his understanding and use of the term character in the work of

Aristotle, and that his task is partly, therefore, to fill out, with a contemporary understanding of theology, ethics and psychology, what is given to us incipiently by Aristotle. Thus Hauerwas writes, "I have employed the concept of character to develop the full dimension of a classical Aristotelian conception of ethics."[3]

That classical Aristotelian conception, as Hauerwas records and defines it, is much more concerned with the moral agent than with the moral act. "Ethics for Aristotle (and Aquinas) is not concerned primarily with how the observer determines whether specific actions are good or bad but rather how the agent becomes good or bad through his activity."[4] In a phrase often quoted, the interest here is in the acquisition, possession and expression of the "bag of virtues." How does a man become virtuous? How does he become a good man?

Hauerwas points out that a virtue becomes fully ours when it is the result of deliberate activity and appropriate manner; "the just man must do the just act in the way that just men do them."[5] In Aristotle's ethics, it is never sufficient merely to do the right act, for a man might do the right act unconsciously, without knowing, or maliciously, with an evil motivation. So the man of true virtuous character must be complete; he must do right (i.e. action) for the right reasons (i.e. motive).

There is obviously a dimension of choice to the acquiring of virtues and the building of character. Hauerwas reminds his readers how important the idea of choice (Greek proaireses) was to Aristotle. The good man choosing the good act for a good reason is an example of what Aristotle called "practical wisdom". Yet that practical wisdom is not solely the product of an educated, informed and disciplined reason; "for Aristotle, a man's character is as much the result of his passions and desires as of his reason."[6] Choice, then, is a blended thing, an admixture of rationality and passion, a blend of reason and desire, "involving not only our intellectual decisions but also our self's commitment to act in terms of its desire."[7] Therefore, in educating character, both reason and desire must be formed and moulded by the teaching. The bag of virtues must be hung around the necks of both intellect and passion, for both are employed in the formation of character and character is crucial to the creation of the good. "For an act to be good, it must be the result of our character, for our character is the locus of the beliefs and descriptions through which I perceive my obligation."[8]

From Aristotle, then, we might say that Hauerwas has taken the following ideas regarding the concept of character: the importance of the agent; who acquires virtue by determining his actions; whose actions involve reason and

desire; which, to be truly good, must involve right motivation.

B. The Debt to Aquinas.

Hauerwas turns to Aquinas to emphasise the free self-agency of man. Quoting from the Summa Theologica, second part, opening sentence, Hauerwas records these words: "Man is said to be made in God's image insofar as the image implies an intelligent being endowed with free choice and self-movement."[9] Man is a self-agent, free to choose, and consequently bearing the moral responsibilities of his free choice.

According to Aquinas, man chooses by an exercise of his will, a will that possesses an inclination to be moved or not moved. For Aquinas also, the will is a blend of reason and passion. "For Aquinas, this means that choice is the result of man's intention, for intention (in-tention) is the inclining of the will towards its object."[10]

Aquinas, like Aristotle, emphasises the idea that man must act if he is to be a moral being. Man must choose if he is to be a man of moral character. Aquinas writes, "Human virtue cannot belong to the body, but belongs only to that which is proper to the soul. Therefore human virtue does not imply reference to being, but to act. Consequently, it is essential to human virtue to be an operative act."[11]

Equally important to Aquinas is the argument that man must be able to give reasons for his moral choices and that those reasons in and of themselves must be morally good. This is essentially the same argument offered by Aristotle when he wrote of motivation. A virtuous act must be accompanied by virtuous motivation, and that motivation must be self-conscious within the agent. "For Aristotle and Aquinas, the ethics of character is bound up with the ability of men to give reasons for their actions. For them, the reasons given for an action cannot be incidental to the action."[12]

From Aquinas, then, we might say that Hauerwas has taken the following ideas regarding the concept of character: the free self-agency of man; who chooses by an exercise of his will; who knows the necessity to act; and is able to give reasons for his actions.

Critical Questions on Aristotle and Aquinas

The first problem encountered is that of circularity. For it appears that the good man is the one who does good acts for the right reasons. He does this, apparently, because he is a man of good character. But how has he become a man of good character? By doing good acts for the right reasons. Hauerwas himself acknowledges this circularity when he writes, "Thus the man of virtue is formed from repeated acts of deliberate decision and, when formed, issues forth in deliberative decision."[13] The

circularity of the argument seems inescapable, and consequently less than totally helpful as a philosophy of moral or religious formation. Where does the teacher break into the circle? Presumably the teacher breaks in either by educating the prior moral stance or moral judgment of the individual, or by affecting the actions of the individual. This highlights the importance of critical thinking, of teaching content and process, and of being involved with the learner in praxis, in the performance of the ethical act.

The second problem is that of determining how exactly the choice is made (Aristotle) or the will is moved (Aquinas) given that both are the results of that blended admixture of reason and desire. Is there a sort of mathematical formula in any given situation (say 40% passion, 60% reason)? In any single act of choice, does one or the other dominate? How do reason and passion interact? How are both educated, formed, trained, disciplined? It is all very well to laud the free self-agency of men and women, but our human experience tells us that any actual moral choice is far from being a simple, neat, coordinated combination of body and mind. Often, in fact, we are surprised at our choices, seeing them alternately as over emotional and irrational, or over intellectual and coldly calculated. We reflect upon them in phrases like: "I don't know what came over me". Again, as with our first objection, the moral and religious educator can be left

hanging in mid air as she ponders just how to begin the whole educational process - with the mind, or with the body?

The third problem, vitiated by changes in the English language, concerns the use of the terms **virtue** and **habit**. The moral man, according to both Aristotle and Aquinas, is the one who has acquired certain virtues, and these virtues are often referred to as habits. So the man of character is the man of good habits. But the word **habit**, though possibly more contemporaneous than the word **virtue**, is quite misleading. For it summons to our minds qualities that are picked up in an offhand manner, qualities that are seen as automatic responses to various stimuli, qualities that can be either good or bad. I think it is important to quote Hauerwas at length here, as he helps to clear up most of the misunderstandings and confusion:

> Aristotle and Aquinas were using the word **habit** in quite a different way than current usage dictates. For Aristotle, a habit is a characteristic (Greek hexis) possessed inwardly by man, defined as "the condition either good or bad, in which we are, in relation to our emotions." These characteristics which form the virtues are dispositions to act in particular ways. They are not to be thought of, therefore, as passive or merely potential forms; rather they are a "sort of **actuality** of that which has and that which is had, as if it were an **action** of a sort, or a motion. These habits are then a kind of "readiness for action", but a "readiness for" that is not momentary but lasting. Far better than our modern term **habit** is another term **ability** which comes from Aristotle himself by way of scholasticism and is only another form of the same word.[14]

Summary of Hauerwas' Use of Character

Leaving Aristotle and Aquinas behind now, having acknowledged Hauerwas' indebtedness to them, we move forward to summarise the essential aspects of his understanding of character and the ways in which he uses and develops that understanding in his writings.

In Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics, Hauerwas offers the reader a definition of his meaning of character. "By the idea of character, I mean the qualification of man's self-agency through his beliefs, intentions, and actions, by which man acquires a moral history befitting his nature as a self-determining being."[15] Immediately, we can see the importance that Hauerwas himself applies to self-agency. Character, then, must be self-chosen, self-made, self-created, self-formed. Granted the obvious relationship between a man and his world, the formation of that man's character is the result of active, intentional and purposive behaviour. Although Hauerwas admits the necessary experiences of suffering and destiny[16], he argues against any idea of man as being passive and merely responding to things around him, as being one on whom character is imprinted as by a marker on a piece of plasticine.[17]

It is probably in chapter three of Character and the Christian Life that we find the clearest exposition of Hauerwas' idea of character. This chapter is called "The

Idea of Character: A Constructive Proposal" and again, like a dominant theme in a symphony, Hauerwas returns to the roots of self-agency:

> The idea of agency refers to anything that has the power of producing an effect. To attribute agency to a person is to assume that he is capable of changing the circumstances around him.[18]

And again, in the same chapter on page 88:

> Men are beings who, because they can envisage, describe, and intend their action, initiate change in themselves and the world around them in such a way that they can claim to be the cause of the change.

The question begging to be answered at this stage is the connection between self-agency and character formation. If men and women are generally accepted not to be passive receptors, are they then really able to create their own characters? Can we make ourselves?

The question as posed is too simple, and Hauerwas is careful to guard against over simplification. But in essence, the answer he gives to that question is Yes. In his words, "Our character is a qualification of our agency, not simply the passive acceptance of a peculiar combination of societal 'roles'".[19] Hauerwas adds subtleties to the answer as he considers the understanding that character is at the same time the determination of our choice and its result. Character is a dynamic concept, symbiotically sponsoring our decisions and being moulded by them.

Where, then, does the idea of stability come in? For surely it is basic to a man of character that he display a

certain steadiness, continuity, even predictability with respect to his actions. Indeed, if he were to act in an extraordinary, unpredictable or unstable manner our comment would be that he was acting "out of character."

Hauerwas addresses this problem on page 118 of the same book, and sees the answer in terms of direction and consistency. While a few men might be incredibly single minded, of a single purpose in life, all stable men display a "consistent set of intentions and descriptions variously interrelated in some hierarchy of priority in a way that produces a general orientation."[20] Character is therefore best understood as a direction, a set of the sails so to speak, that provides overall consistency to moral purpose and ethical intent.

Thus character is the determining factor of our lives, expressing itself in the concrete decisions of daily existence. Yet it is not to be construed as something we "have" but as something we "are". Granted that character is something we acquire; granted, too, that in common parlance we often talk of "having character"; nonetheless, Hauerwas is keen to emphasise that character cannot be a static possession, something that we pick up and put on like a suit of clothes. (Note how this connects with Moran's developmental model). It is fundamental to our living identity, "the very reality of who we are as self-determining agents."[21] In this sense, our character always

has a public and a private aspect to it. Inasmuch as all behaviour is empirical, character is public. Inasmuch as motivation and intent, the inner psychological and religious reasons why, are hidden, character is private.

Critical Questions on Hauerwas' Use of Character

The word "character" is common coinage in our vocabulary and that raises some problems for the reader of Hauerwas, who is using "character" in a rather specialised sense.

Firstly, there is the confusion between "character" and "temperament". We have very little control over our temperament: whether we are nervous or artistic, sanguine or choleric, is more likely the sum total of genes and upbringing than anything else. But how does our temperament affect our character formation? Does the man who is happy by temperament really make free choices in the same manner as the man who is surly by temperament? Presumably there is a dynamic tension between temperament and choice, but how exactly do the two interface?

Secondly, there is the problem of flawed character. Some are unable to make the right choices by reason of weakness of resolve; others apparently freely choose the bad. What kind of education or training is necessary to promote all the good tendencies within a person and inhibit all the bad ones? How can character training overcome wickedness?

Hauerwas calls character "morally significant because, if rightly formed, it provides a proper transition from our past to our future."[22] But what does "rightly" mean? He continues to argue that character leads us into making good and proper decisions about the future rather than unconditionally accepting anything that comes. If character is to do this, and to be morally significant, then it must raise the complex question of what is a good character. Vital educational ramifications are hanging on the predetermined answers to that question, made especially difficult by the relativistic pluralism of our own culture.

Hauerwas pleads that we ask and answer these foundational questions about goodness and calls the reader to the underlying theme of all moral philosophy - that the unexamined life is not worth living. Therefore, he says, we must apply ourselves to choosing one set of beliefs, actions, or values as preferable to another. "The idea that the moral life is the examined life is but a way of saying that we can choose to determine ourselves in terms of certain kinds of descriptions rather than others."[23]

The Understanding of Narrative

A starting point for understanding Hauerwas' use of the concept of narrative might be the popular metaphor that for all of us our life is a story; yet not just a story, but **our** story, or even more to the point, **my** story. Hauerwas wants us to see ourselves as the central character (in the

literary sense - the protagonist, the hero) in the story of our own lives. Looking at our lives in this literary fashion helps us to unravel the narrative of our experiences, to comprehend the symbols and phenomena of our religious lives, and eventually to act more effectively as the agent of the making of our own character (used in its technical sense above).

The idea of using story for religious education has been popular for some time now, but Hauerwas is anxious to deny that he is attempting merely a theology of story or a story theology. He is using story to forward his calling as a moral educator and ethicist; he wants a totality of meaning to the concept of narrative, a well rounded, full bodied getting to grips with story so that ethical understanding and ethical character will be shaped and formed.

> I have found the concept of "story", or perhaps better "narrative", to be a suggestive way to spell out the substantive content of character. But I am also trying to use the language of "story" in a carefully controlled sense. I am not trying to do "story theology" or "theology of story", as if this represented some new theological position. Rather I am convinced that narrative is a perennial category for understanding better how the grammar of religious convictions is displayed and how the self is formed."[24] (Note how this idea connects with Moran's second language metaphor).

Hauerwas accuses ethicists of ignoring the power and presence of narrative because they have been overly anxious to seek a thoroughly rational basis for morality. Similarly, he accuses Christian moralists of the same error.

> Contemporary ethics has paid little attention to character, vision, stories, and metaphors as part of our moral experience. Yet these aspects of our moral life provide the basis for our claim about the particularity of the Christian moral life.[25]

He, on the contrary, wisnes to restore the place of narrative and establish its significance as a means for effective ethical reflection; indeed, he sees us as being formed by the stories and metaphors by which we learn to interpret experience.

> By the phrase "the significance of narrative", we mean to call attention to two points: a) that character and moral notions only take on meaning in a narrative; b) that narrative and explanation stand in an intimate relationship, and therefore moral disagreements involve rival histories of explanation".[26]

In a sense, then, Hauerwas nas made the idea of narrative into an epistemology; he insists that narrative teaches us how to know.[27] But, in the same essay, he goes further and argues that the knowledge obtained through understanding story actually helps us to act right. Not only does narrative reveal to us what is moral, it also provides us a certain power or motivation to perform the moral deed.

There is though, as I read Hauerwas, a middle stage between the knowledge that comes through narrative and the power to act rightly and justly. It is the formation of right and just character. "Our character is the result of our sustained attention to the world that gives a conerence to our intentionality. Such attention is formed and given content by the stories through which we nave learned to form the story of

our lives."[28] Hauerwas is critical of what he calls the "standard account" of ethics, because it failed

> to deal adequately with the formation of a moral self i.e. the virtues and character we think it important for moral agents to acquire. But the kind of decisions we confront, indeed the very way in which we describe a situation, is a function of the kind of character we have. And character is not acquired solely through decisions, though it may be confirmed and qualified there; rather it is acquired through the beliefs and dispositions we have come to possess.[29]

If narrative can help us grow in our understanding of ourselves, it is important to Hauerwas that it not be seen as a passive activity, as an activity of pure self-reflection and nothing more. It must be story in the sense that something happens; it must move us to a point of action. "Let narrative be the connected description of action and of suffering which moves to a point."[30] He underscores his emphasis by referring to our typical response to exciting suspenseful literature: "What happens next?" is our demand. That is the excited query about action, about narrative as the unfolding of a plot.

As we see the fascinating way in which narrative draws us in, so it becomes possible to understand Hauerwas as he claims that stories can assist us in becoming.

> It is less a matter of weighing arguments [about which stories are best - i.e. suspending truth claims] than of displaying how adopting different stories will lead us to become different sorts of persons. The test of each story is the sort of person it shapes. Any story which we adopt, or allow to adopt us, will have to display:
>
> 1. power to release us from destructive alternatives
> 2. ways of seeing through current distortions
> 3. room to keep us from having to resort to violence
> 4. a sense for the tragic: how meaning transcends power.

> To live morally, in other words, we need a substantive story that will sustain moral activity in a finite and limited world. Classically, the name we give such stories is tragedy.[31]

Critical Questions on Hauerwas' Understanding of Narrative

Any philosophical analysis that seeks to reinforce the essential majesty of the "I" - the ego - tends to lay itself open to temptations to arrogant solipsism or narcissistic self-indulgence. In seeking to reinforce the "I" as the centre of life's narrative, as hero and chief story teller, how does Hauerwas avoid the temptations just mentioned?

He is certainly anxious to. In Truthfulness and Tragedy, he argues cogently for the way in which his idea of narrative reinforces the self, but he hopes to do this without allowing the self to bow before the universal stance of complete subjectivism. He is opposed to the self-centred choices of the "because I want to" ethics.[32] He guards the self against a sort of abstraction into relativity by constantly reinforcing the ways in which self connects with its own and with others' histories, with the classical virtues, with traditional ways of intending and behaving, such as Christianity.

Educational Implications of Character and Narrative

I find it personally refreshing in Hauerwas to move away from quandary ethics with its stultifying and inconsequential scenarios of ethical dilemmas, where moral

education seems to be nothing other than endless and futile discussions about irrelevant problems within the pages of the text book. I note this recent comment on Hauerwas in a review of his work in Christianity Today:

> Since the Enlightenment, popular Christian ethics has focused on resolving moral quandaries such as whether capital punishment, or abortion, or lying are ever justifiable. But Hauerwas points out that it is persons, persons with certain character traits, who decide about such matters. That is why the **being** of the moral self is prior to the **doing**. And that is why, without denying that the quandaries must be attended to, we should consider the development of character to be basic.[33]

At the same time, though, I would not want to make too grand a claim for the usefulness of Hauerwas, as if his notions of character and narrative were to be regarded as a universal panacea for all problems of moral education.[34] But I do believe he is a good way out of the cul-de-sac of Kohlbergian stagist categories set to 300 word dramatic scenarios.

I also appreciate my attention being returned to the consideration of men and women as acquirers and bearers of moral character. Sometimes the emphasis upon people as decision makers seems to regard them as disembodied wills, forcing meaning and shape onto the world around them in a post enlightenment, Kantian or Nietzschean manner: man as super will, in charge, dominating and imposing. Moral education is much more concerned with moulding men and women as they are and as they are to be - acquirers of virtue, of

beliefs, inter-relating with one another and with themselves in a dynamic symbiosis of character and action.

I want to begin the final section of this chapter by referring to a crucial distinction mentioned by Moran in his Interplay: A Theory of Religion and Education. He makes the point that education and school are not synonymous (see his page 13). However, many educational writers fail to make or maintain consistently that distinction. Lest I fall into that trap, let me state that I will first address educational implications for the school, and secondly address educational implications for education.

At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted Socrates' comment on moral philosophy: "We are discussing no small matter, but how we ought to live." That sentence has enormous educational implications. It reminds us that the task of the school is still connected with teaching children how to live. So, too, religious education, whatever it may be conceived to be, is absolutely connected with teaching children how to live. I believe that Hauerwas has given us two useful tools for moral and/or religious education in his ideas of character and narrative.

The essential offering that Hauerwas makes to the schooling endeavour lies in the use of narrative to produce and develop good character in children. Stories become plausible and powerful as their plots - their series of actions - unfold in such a way that the character of the

people in the stories is formed and unfolded. "Stories themselves attempt to probe [character] and discover its inner structure by trying to display how human actions and passions connect with one another to develop a character."[35] In other words, as the plot unfolds, so does the character of the people in the story. "It is that ordering, that capacity to unfold or develop character, and thus offer insight into the human condition, which recommends narrative as a form a rationality especially appropriate to ethics."[36]

So how can we get stories onto the curriculum and into the lives of children in schools? Well, they are, of course, already there, in five helpful ways:

1. Every curriculum has a language arts component, and basic to that is the use of literature. Through books, dozens and dozens of narratives are being read and taught. The task of the moral and/or religious educator is to use the books that are already being read, helping children to see how the narrative plots of those stories help to unfold the character of the heroes and villains in those stories.

2. Children are surrounded by contemporary media. It is easy to bring into the classroom the photographic, or verbal, or televised stories of just about anybody in the world, from Anne of Green Gables to Martin Luther King Jr. The worlds of politics and sport are constant narratives that reveal character. The world of movies and documentaries does the same.

3. The school itself is a story. I believe that there is a golden resource available here just in the ongoing day to day life of the school. In this sense, all the children are actors; all the children are characters; they both witness and create the story each and every day. Granted that there are subtle sensitivities to re-telling the school story - one must be careful of names sometimes, careful of embarrassments, careful of shames, careful of prejudices- the advantage is that the school story is real and immediate, and, with good teaching, can be used to bring out the developing characters of its protagonists and antagonists.

4. The child brings to the school her own personal story. As with point #3 above, there are similar - perhaps accentuated - sensitivities in telling and re-telling the child's story. But once again, the potential for excellent and powerful teaching as the child's story is developed and her character unfolded - is enormous.

5. There are also the great stories of the world's sacred texts. Although, understandably, it was the stories in the Bible that a Hollywood film mogul put into "The Greatest Story Ever Told", the point still holds that sacred texts, holy scriptures of the world's religions, do contain much narrative material. These great stories can all be told and re-told in the classroom.

In passing, I must acknowledge that the reading and study of religious texts raises the problem of hermeneutics; I refer the reader to the introduction to Why Narrative? for a comment on the relationship between narratives and scripture, and to the work of Paul Ricoeur regarding narrative hermeneutics.[37]

Yet what exactly is the teacher of religious education to do with this excellent material? How does a teacher actually teach character through narrative? More to the point, perhaps, and certainly more difficult - how does a teacher use narrative to develop good character?

I would suggest two ways. The first way is to use narrative so that children become aware of the self-agency of the men and women in the stories, which is a sample of their own self-agency. Awareness of self-agency is crucial. Children can be taught that they are choosers, free to steal or give back, free to lie or tell the truth, free to hate or love, free to seek evil or goodness. It is important that children see themselves as the authors of their own stories, the chief actors in their own dramas, but ones who are simultaneously writing their own scripts and deciding their own stage directions.

Of course there are mitigating or invidious forces at work in any good novel. Thomas Hardy's devastating use of bad luck and predestination in his Wessex novels overarches all his characters. Yet Jude is free; so is Tess. And

children can be made aware of their own moral freedoms; in spite of an impoverished home, in spite of a divorced parent, in spite of a mediocre intelligence, children can be made aware of their freedom as moral agents, as people making up their own story. The first thing, then, is to make children aware of their self-agency, and that this self-agency plays a part in the realm of religion also.

The second thing to do is to use the power of imitation. Here are characters in a story. Which one shall we imitate? Who do we want to be like? Who do we want to become? What do we want to do?

It has been popular for some time now to talk of role models. The sadness of our particular day and age is that role models in moral and religious terms are few and far between. At least we still have Mother Theresa and Jean Vanier, and Desmond Tutu and Vaclav Havel. But those models are far removed from the children of a grade four classroom. So what of a model nearer to home? What of a model in the story we just read? Or in the story of our school?

Hero worship is largely a thing of the past. Romantic idolatry of larger-than-life heroes was never particularly healthy in the long run. But there is still a powerful teaching tool in imitation. The good teacher can use story telling - and discussions etc. - to offer to the children morally good people to copy and imitate.

From the use of narrative to educate character within the formal setting of a school classroom, I turn now to the larger sphere of education - the home, the neighborhood, the workplace, the leisure arena. Immediately, I believe, we are in a realm that is simultaneously more profitable for genuine moral and/or religious education and more depressingly denuded of any tree of life. "Where have all the soldiers gone?" was the sad lyric of the sixties. "Where have all the parents gone?" might be the updated version in the eighties.

Yet while parents appear to have absented themselves from much of the arduous, time consuming labours of child rearing, at the same time they have placed impossible and unrealistic demands on teachers. The school is expected to do all the moral and religious education that the parents eschew.[38] As Clive Beck points out, the schools are paradoxically successful and terrible at responding. Teachers can be blamed for some things, but not everything.[39]

Yet children are still born into families - be it single parent or two. They are still nurtured by someone- be it single father or grandma or daycare worker. Children are still growing through the life cycle. They are still playing hockey at the arena, graduating from schools, getting jobs, getting married and divorced, having their own children. And amidst all that, there is some powerful moral

and religious education happening. It is unavoidable; it is irrepressible; but often it is not towards goodness or God.

There is such a need for moral and religious education throughout the total experiences of life in society. And in the old adage, goodness is caught, not taught. The models that children need to find and imitate are better when they are not the literary ones of fictional narrative but the live ones of the people at home. Cornelius Van Der Poel writes:

> The indispensable need of education becomes rather obvious. However, education is not indoctrination but the imparting of human values. These values will not be imparted by merely being mentioned, but most of all by being lived in the family. The personal life and honest convictions of parents and educators have a much more formative influence than their commands and theoretical explanations. It is the task of the people around the child to present a meaning of life in its total perspective. This means to present life in its material reality with all the respect it deserves, but its transcendent value should simultaneously be presented.[40]

That gives us perhaps the biggest single clue. For children to learn to play a good part in a good story, the narrative of moral character around them must be more than read to them in books, it must be lived.

NOTES

1. Helen Epstein, "Crusader on the Charles," New York Times Magazine, 23 April 1989, 27. Note also the themes of character and virtue in Lewis Smedes, A Pretty Good Person (San Francisco: Harper, 1990).

2. As quoted in James Rachels, The Elements of Moral Theology (New York: Random House, 1986), 9.

3. Stanley Hauerwas, Truthfulness and Tragedy (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 1.

4. Stanley Hauerwas, Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1975), 37.

5. Ibid., 39.

6. Ibid., 53.

7. Ibid., 55.

8. Ibid., 61.

9. Ibid., 65.

10. Ibid., 66.

11. Ibid., 71.

12. Ibid., 67.

13. Ibid., 71.

14. Ibid., 70.

15. Character and the Christian Life, 11.

16. Stanley Hauerwas, Vision and Virtue (Notre Dame, Indiana: Fides/Claretian, 1974), 57.

17. Character and the Christian Life, 18.

18. Ibid., 83.

19. Ibid., 104.

20. Ibid., 120.

21. Ibid., 115.

22. Ibid., 125.

23. Ibid., 128.

24. Truthfulness and Tragedy, 8.

25. Vision and Virtue, 71.

26. Truthfulness and Tragedy, page 15.

27. Ibid.

28. Vision and Virtue, 74.

29. Truthfulness and Tragedy, 20.

30. Ibid., 28.

31. Ibid., 35.

32. Ibid., 27.

33. Charles Scriven, "The Reformation Radicals Ride Again," Christianity Today, 5 March 1990, 15.

34. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, eds., Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1.

35. Truthfulness and Tragedy, 29.

36. Ibid., 30.

37. Why Narrative, 2 and especially Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, ed. and tr. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981).

38. This point is made, for example, in Orland French, "Class Struggles," The Globe and Mail (Toronto), 7 October 1989, D1.

39. Clive Beck, Better Schools (New York: The Falmer Press, 1990), vii-viii and 41ff.

40. Cornelius Van Der Poel, The Search for Human Values (New York: Paulist Press, 1971), 135.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A PERSONAL RECOMMENDATION

Ultimately, one's personal recommendations concerning any endeavour stem from one's personal convictions. One would hope that the convictions of a university student writing a thesis are the result of education rather than the product of prejudgment or bias. So as I move into the final chapter of this thesis and presume to conclude this study with my own recommendations regarding religious education, I trust that they will be viewed as genuine conclusions based on study rather than merely the personal preferences of an interested party.

I am fully persuaded that the religious dimension is an integral part of the nature of all humankind. Men, women and children, to admittedly varying individual degrees, take part in the great drama of religious rite and ritual that denotes the search for meaning and transcendence.

Therefore education must touch the religious dimension of people's lives if it is to be fully human and truly

comprehensive. Schooling, that small part of education confined to certain ages and certain institutional forms, must also include a religious component.

It is a disservice, I believe, to omit religious education from the curriculum of public schools. It denies the reality of people's religious experience. It is an educational retreat, I believe, to suspend religious education because it is too difficult or too sensitive or too provocative. It is foolishness to pretend that in withdrawing religious education from the public schools, what is left will be a non-religious environment of the best of traditional values. What will be left is the religion of secular man.[1]

Tom Harper, a popular Toronto based commentator on religious affairs, writes as follows:

> I concur with those parents, preachers, teachers and educational administrators who say that anyone who thinks that, having got rid of Christianity in the public schools, public education is now religiously neutral, is living in a dream world. Moral relativism, the view that right and wrong are merely a matter of opinion, and modern secularism, with its worship of science and its faith in humanity's ability to go-it-alone (no need of God, thank you very much) -these are certainly the tenets of a religious point of view. It is the prevailing religion of technological man. To leave Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i or any other children to have this secular faith imposed on them willy nilly by a public system is to do what the good judges have banned. However subtle at times, this is the coercive imposition of a state-sanctioned, religious worldview on the children of parents who definitely don't want it. What's more, it's a denial of the basic rights of parents, as upheld by the United Nations Charter of Human Rights, to have their children educated in the cultural and religious traditions of their own choice.[2]

Now although, in principle, this thesis has tried to address the whole challenge of doing religious education in a pluralistic society, it has focused on Ontario for reasons we have already mentioned. (See my chapter 1). Therefore I restrict my personal recommendations to that province.

My recommendation is that we continue to maintain a place on the curriculum of Ontario's public schools for a subject called "Religious Education."

However it is very clear that religious education in Ontario's public schools must henceforth be multi-faith and voluntary. Christianity is no longer the dominant or majoritarian religion. Although it might be favored as a major partner because of its place in Canada's history, it is clear that the world's other classical religions must be given places of worth and dignity.[3] There must be overt honour for all recognised faiths and practices. Although large numbers of students opting out from the program would be disappointing and divisive, it does seem obvious to me that we cannot coerce any student to take part in a lesson on religious education, and we must be responsive to those students - and parents - for whom any kind of religious education is intolerable.

Yet I do not recommend a course in comparative religion. I do not recommend teaching **about** religions when

we can, with the help of Moran and Hauerwas, actually be much more direct. We can teach religion.

To my mind, this is the best way to respond to the fact that religion is a genuine category of experience for all humankind, and that for those who involve themselves with any degree of seriousness, religion is an overwhelming and powerful quest. Small-r religion in general, and big-R Religion in particular, cannot be diluted down to a slim byproduct of culture, to be dismissed with a peremptory thirty minute discussion once a semester.

Therefore I believe it is important to take Moran and Hauerwas seriously as they provide us with tools to put real life content into the religious studies curriculum. In this way, teachers can nurture the religious life of their students in similar manner to the ways they nurture the intellectual or physical life of their students. We don't teach children **about** being knowledgeable, we teach them to **be** knowledgeable; we don't teach children **about** being skilled athletes, we teach them to **be** skilled athletes.

It will be difficult. There will always be teachers who try to be preachers and students who try to be evangelists. There will always be parents who are offended because they perceive a greater emphasis being given to some other religion. There will always be partisan, unilingual religious leaders in the community who cannot understand the conversation that good religious education seeks to provide

in the classroom. There will always be educational administrators whose courage fails them as they seek to provide a religious education that truly frees students to be religious in a variety of ways. There will always be those who simply cannot enter the conversation because they cannot free themselves sufficiently from the clash of arms over truth claims.

But there is enough good research to get us all past possible paralysis. The scholars whose work is briefly mentioned in chapter three will help us. Journals and bulletins containing much excellent material from others wrestling with the pluralistic environment of religious education will help us.[4] Above all, I do believe that Gabriel Moran's attempts to teach religion as an academic construct and rescue religious education as a field will help us most in terms of content; and Stanley Hauerwas' work on developing character through the use of narrative will help us most in terms of form.

NOTES

1. Note the defence of secular humanism in Clive Beck, Better Schools (New York: The Falmer Press, 1990), 170 ff.

2. As quoted in Catalyst (Toronto: Citizens for Public Justice), May 1990, 4.

3. I recognise that there might be difficulties in deciding just exactly which ones **are** the world's "classical religions" but leave this discussion for another time and place.

4. I especially recommend the British Journal of Religious Education, and the American Religious Education.

APPENDIX

Under present law, students are allowed to receive religious instruction in school, according to their own wishes. Students may not be compelled to read or study from a religious book, or to join in religious exercises, against the wishes of their parents or guardians, or, in the case of adult students, against their own wishes.

For elementary public schools, the regulations stipulate that religious education be given, unless the Minister grants exemption to school boards making a written request offering reasons. Such instruction is to be offered in two periods per week of one half-hour each, either immediately after the opening of school, or immediately before closing, in either the morning or afternoon sessions. The regulations stipulate that religious education be given by the teacher unless the teacher notifies the board that he or she wishes exemption, or unless the board makes a resolution that a member of the clergy, or some person selected by the clergy, teach the subject. If the teacher claims exemption, then the board must make some other provision to satisfy the regulation. No pupil is required to take religious education if his or her parent applies to the principal for exemption. If exempted, the pupil may remain in the classroom (on the condition that behaviour is "decorous"), or leave, according to the wishes of the parent.

For secondary schools, the regulations permit a school board to authorize members of the clergy, of one or more denominations, or lay persons selected by the clergy, to conduct classes in religious education. This instruction is not to exceed one hour per week, at times allotted by the principal. No student is to be required to take a religious education class, and no teacher is to be required to give one. Provisions for exemption are similar to those for the elementary schools.

While "religious instruction" is not explicitly defined in the statutes and regulations, the context strongly indicates that the religion in which the instruction is to

be given is Christianity. In the subsections dealing with religious exercises, for example, reference is made to the Lord's Prayer and to the Bible.

The foregoing regulations describe the policy put into effect by the Conservative government of Premier George Drew, in 1944. By 1945 the Department of Education had developed guides for Grades 1 to 6, and a pattern emerged in which teachers taught these grades, while clergy taught Grades 7 and 8. No guides were available for Grades 7 and 8 until 1959 and 1961 respectively. The course introduced in 1944 was fairly widely accepted at the time, though controversial. The provision for exemption for school boards, however, allowed the policy to fall into desuetude by 1960 or so. A commission was set up in 1966 to study the matter, which produced in 1969 what is popularly known as The Mackay Report, after the name of the chairman. This commission recommended that the regulation prescribing religious instruction in elementary schools be repealed, and that the program be abandoned. It held that denominational teaching should not be permitted within the public system, and that the clergy should not be given explicit permission by law to enter the schools. The present regime has elected to allow religious education to lie fallow, as it has since before the Mackay report, but not to follow its recommendation to officially abandon the policy. This is probably the least controversial action to take.

One of the twelve recommendations of the Mackay report was that a formal course of study dealing with the principal religions of the world be offered as an optional course in Grades 11 and 12. The report was careful to distinguish this from confessional teaching. The Ministry of Education did implement this recommendation, and published, in 1971, a curriculum guideline entitled World Religions. In 1980, there were 2,920 students in Grades 11 and 12 taking this course, out of a total of 255,709 students in those grades (i.e. a little more than 1%). There are no Ministry-approved text books for the course. Any texts for the course provided by the school are to be selected by the principal, in consultation with the teachers. The selection must be approved by resolution of the board. There are many resources recommended by the guide.

From Andrew Blair, The Policy and Practice of Religious Education in Publicly-Funded Elementary Schools in Canada and Elsewhere - A Search of the Literature (Toronto: Ontario Minister of Education, 1986), 10.

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