

**A Critique of the
Protestant Secondary One Religion Programme for Quebec,
Based on a Study of Religious Maturing**

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In memory of my loving parents

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of the religious phenomenon can be organized into five overlapping historico-religious stages based on an analysis of concrete verifiable achievements. It delineates the religious and educational paradigms of each societal evolutionary stage as it considers that what applies to a society as a whole applies also to its education. Education plays an important role in the evolution of the world, and is directly affected by the changes of the image which human beings have of themselves. Religious maturing does not only take place in society but is also an integral part of any individual process of human development. The analysis of the various stages of personal religious development shows the inclusive nature of the religious development in any human educational enterprise. The study of the societal and individual process of religious maturing with the analysis of the contemporary tapestry of education and religious education stand as the various elements needed to formulate a critique of the current Quebec's secondary one Protestant moral and religious education curriculum. The significant role of teachers as active and necessary agents of pupils' maturing process emerges from the evaluation of the present curriculum.

RÉSUMÉ

L'évolution du phénomène religieux à travers les âges peut être structurée en cinq stades qui utilisent comme facteur de classification l'analyse des réalisations humaines. Cette dernière permet d'établir les paradigmes religieux et éducationnels de chaque stade, en considérant que tout ce qui s'applique à une société s'applique aussi à son système éducatif. L'éducation joue un rôle important dans l'évolution sociale et est directement influencée par les changements de perception que les humains ont d'eux-mêmes. Le processus de maturation religieuse n'est pas seulement un processus social, mais il est aussi un processus inhérent à tout développement humain. L'analyse des différents stades de développement individuel démontre bien la nature inclusive du processus de maturation religieuse dans toute entreprise éducative. L'étude du processus de maturation religieuse de la société et des individus, jumelée à l'analyse de la situation actuelle du système d'éducation sont les éléments nécessaires pour formuler une critique du programme actuel de sciences morales et religieuses protestantes au niveau de secondaire un dans les écoles du Québec. De cette analyse ressort le rôle essentiel du professeur comme agent actif et nécessaire au processus de maturation religieuse des élèves.

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CHAPTER ONE

Earth cannot escape heaven,
Flee it by going up,
or flee it by going down,
Heaven still invades the earth,
energizes it,
makes it sacred.¹

Meister Eckhart

INTRODUCTION

Moral and religious education is a compulsory course in Quebec schools, and teachers have been duly presented with a revised programme of moral and religious education effective January first, 1986.² As educators teach to meet the stated objectives while respecting the provided content, they are expected to select materials adequate for their students' needs, to foster a positive learning atmosphere and to live up to students' challenging inquiries of often unanswerable questions. Under these circumstances, it becomes imperative for teachers to be able to formulate a critique of the existing religion programme in order to understand why certain things are being done, to discover what philosophy lies beneath the programme, to ask if what they are transmitting is worth passing on, and finally to discover the assistance available which can provide the support for what needs to be accomplished.

To elaborate a valid critique requires solid foundations: the first element needed in the elaboration of a critique of the Quebec religion programme is the study of the history of religious education³ as it will naturally emerge throughout the broader phenomenon of religious evolution. As teachers become aware of this historical continuity, they become better able to understand the present situation and to clarify their conception of the teaching role so as to participate productively in the creation of a meaningful dialogue between religion and the school.⁴ The study of the past reveals the wisdom of the great mystics and of other religious thinkers, their erudition remains perpetually valid even when probed from a modern perspective.⁵ Not only does the wisdom of the past increase teachers' chances for a deeper analysis of the programme and of its implications, but it also provides insights as to how to face the challenges that tomorrow will bring.⁶

As educators teach within an historical framework,⁷ respecting "the premise that there is a wisdom in historical religious communities of people,"⁸ they also experience the fact that even though trying to be objective in their study and teaching, teachers cannot be neutral: "This asking and searching and possibility of finding are done within the context of some faith-tradition."⁹ It is therefore to be understood that "religious education presupposes and depends upon people's experience of mystery,"¹⁰ and that human beings are religious in nature. From Calvin who wrote in The

Institutes of the Christian Religion that God had sown the seed of religion into people,¹¹ to Niebuhr who considered faith as a human universal,¹² people's natural spiritual tendency emerges in creative patterns since it is in our creativity that the full meaning of humanity's being an image of God resides.¹³ The study of the world's religious evolution offers a first encounter with the process of religious maturing.

The stages of group religious maturing and the stages of individual religious maturing reflect one another,¹⁴ leading to the second element needed for a sound critique of the moral and religious education programme: the study of the process of individual religious maturing. Religious maturing is perceived in part through the historical study of the evolution of religious phenomena,¹⁵ but it also appears as part of the natural process of human maturation.¹⁶ Just as we recognize specific portions of history as the manifestation of the Holy,¹⁷ particular actions in the life of an individual, will reflect humans' transcendent nature.¹⁸ While "sciences can predict some patterns of biological/psychological maturation,"¹⁹ human beings are greater than the sum of those aspects.²⁰ Maturing means achieving wholeness of personality.²¹ Spiritual maturity will appear as a dynamic harmony that comes from having lived a full life.²² Gabriel Moran's study of the stages of religious development is significant in this area and will be used as a reference.²³

The purpose of this work is to offer a critique of Quebec's Protestant

secondary one moral and religious education programme based on the study of the process of religious maturing. To accomplish this task, an historical overview of the evolution of the religious phenomenon will first be linked to the developments of education and religious education, in trying to demonstrate the ever-presence of people's religious quests or how meaning-making was dealt with by our ancestors. Second, the study of individual religious maturing, including the various stages of personal religious development will be presented with an attempt to show the inclusive nature of the religious development in any human educational enterprise. Third, the various components of contemporary society will be analyzed to prepare for the discussion and the evaluation of the existing Quebec religious education curriculum. The list of evaluative criteria will be proposed before they are applied to the existing programme. Finally, as the importance of the teachers' role seeps through the study, the conclusion of this work will invite a reflection into teachers' endeavours.

CHAPTER TWO

The history of religious ideas and beliefs
is one with the history of civilization.
Each technological discovery,
each economic and social innovation,
is, it would seem, "doubled" by
a religious meaning and value.¹

Mircea Eliade

EVOLUTION OF THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON AND OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THROUGHOUT THE AGES

Human history surveyed from the dawn of creation to our technologically advanced world, reveals the unfolding of a continuous process of development, from a simple order to a more complex one. As a matter of fact, "despite all mutations, the history of culture shows a remarkable continuity... The process is less one of displacement than of accumulation and orchestration."²

Classical anthropology teaches that human beings have attained their present state by surviving numerous previous stages which have allowed people to evolve within a definite progression.³ Within this progression, close connections have been discovered between the socio-cultural development of individuals and the evolution of their religious growth,⁴ as well as between the establishment of socio-cultural groupings and the advent of education.⁵

Education presents a dualistic character: it is both conservative, as it is rooted in the past, and evolutionary as it leads into the future, "its very steadiness guarantees human evolution."⁶ As education mirrors society's values⁷ and is subordinate to the economic, political, social and religious components of history,⁸ it is necessary to retrace the various stages of human evolution and be concerned with the totality of the human experience⁹ in order to establish a global vision that will facilitate a better understanding of the situation of religious education in today's Protestant schools, in Quebec.

Human history represents a lengthy time frame and requires some form of subdivisions for any proper study. Effective historical classification systems need to take into consideration the basic assumption that sociological developments and religious achievements have evolved along parallel paths in a dialectic way: each one influencing and shaping the other as they unfold.¹⁰ Though evolution rarely follows an ideal path, the establishment of a sequence of stages becomes a handy framework to analyze the general patterns of life of particular groups. Robert Bellah has elaborated such a theory, proposing a series of classification in order to "apply the evolutionary idea to religion."¹¹ His theory will be used as a matrix in the following analysis of the various historico-religious stages.

HISTORICO-RELIGIOUS CLASSIFICATION

"L'histoire se fait à partir d'hommes-mythes et de leurs sbires,"¹² said Marc de Smelt. Similarly, Robert Bellah believes that universal history can only be understood if it is linked to a consciousness of the spiritual history of humanity,¹³ because historical evolution is based on a reorganization of symbolic acts.¹⁴ Though specific portions of history are easily recognizable as manifestations of the Holy¹⁵ research continues to reveal the fundamental unity of religious phenomena and cultural developments.¹⁶

Robert Bellah elaborated five historico-religious divisions based on three presuppositions: first, religious symbolization changes over time in a direction of more differentiated, comprehensive and rationalized formulations; second, the conceptions of religious actions, the religious nature of the human person, the structure of religious organizations and the place of religion in society tend to change in ways systematically related to the changes in symbolization; third, religious evolution is related to a variety of other dimensions of change in other social spheres which define the general process of any socio-cultural evolution.¹⁷

Based on the preceding presuppositions, Bellah devised five overlapping historico-religious stages which are based on his analysis of concrete verifiable achievements such as technological occurrences and include a dominant collective picture of people's values. Every division overlaps the next one and contains in a more sophisticated form the wisdom

previously acquired.¹⁸ It will become clear how "stage by stage, from primitive to modern, the numinous has taken on new forms and faces."¹⁹

Each stage proposes new approaches for solving problems, while seeking to respond adequately to the ever-changing socio-cultural needs of people: a crisis of some kind is usually the catalyst that brings about the mechanisms which ensure society's flexibility, challenge the established referential models and propose a new interpretive reference.²⁰ This means that a change in how things are perceived occurs: some items which were overlooked are now noticed and others leave people's line of sight.²¹ The replacement of established referential models is a difficult process since institutions, whether scientific or religious, are apprehensive towards novelty. Convincing arguments and objective statements are needed to "convert" people to the new paradigm. Most often, only a small nucleus of ardent "believers" approve of the new model. Time allows this new idea to be perceived as the norm within the growing population. As the old "bastion" is replaced by younger members, the acceptance of the new model gradually prevails.²² It is important to remember that these changes do not consist of entirely new material or human creations, but rather present more sophisticated reformulations of already existing phenomena, in the light of a new and different framework. Robert Bellah warns that social evolution must not be taken as an axis to establish a qualitative judgment. He does not speak of religious progress and "it is clear that a complex and differentiated religious symbolization is not therefore a better or a truer or a more beautiful one than a compact religious symbolization,"²³ it simply is different.

Though religious phenomena in general are easily accepted by empirical analysts as a part of the total cultural matrix of any society,²⁴ their incorporeal nature requires a definition of religion as used in this work in order to avoid any ambiguity: religion will be understood not only as an anthropological pattern guarding against the unexpected,²⁵ but also as the ability of all human beings to deal with their probing of the mystery of living, with their consciousness of their feelings of awe, wonder and fear.²⁶ In other words, religion will be defined as any expression of the innate predisposition of every human being to connect with transcendence, and his or her capacity for symbolization, a predisposition which stems from all-sense experiences and is pressured from within while being incited from without.²⁷ "Like a language, a religion provides a framework through which the adherents of that religion interpret experience."²⁸

PREHISTORY: THE PRIMITIVE RELIGIOUS STAGE

The first of the five historico-religious stages is called the Primitive Religious stage. It refers to the period beginning with Prehistory till the advent of Antiquity. Throughout history, every human societal grouping has shown beliefs in some sort of transcendence.²⁹ It is widely accepted that all peoples have elaborated some concept of supernatural dimension or powers greater than themselves.³⁰ Furthermore, innumerable myths describing the origin of the world before the creation of human beings, show how religious "history" is often understood as having begun before human prehistory.³¹ This reflects some invisible or spiritual dimension of reality, mana, in productive tension with the visible dimension: "Primitive existence is crowded with mana and spirits."³²

The emergence of modern humans or Homo Sapiens, probably dates around 450 000 B.C., in the Pliocene era.³³ With the appearance of human beings comes the emergence of religion:

"If the Palaeolithians are regarded as complete men, it follows that they also possessed a certain number of beliefs and practiced certain rites. For, as we have stated before, the experience of the sacred constitutes an element in the structure of consciousness."³⁴

Today, there is a general agreement on the fact that Paleolithic people had a religion but the opaqueness of prehistoric documents renders difficult the determination of the religious content.³⁵ The affective side of religion was not and could not be written down, therefore, it cannot be recreated with any accuracy,³⁶ nevertheless all early forms of religious

practices are haunted by a common numinous element which is easily identifiable.³⁷ The two main features of the Primitive Religious Stage are the high degree to which the mythical world was related to the real world and the fluidity of their religious organization.³⁸

There are within the structure of human beings, certain modes of mental functioning that have been noted throughout the history of the human species, which have not been significantly altered since the period of the Stone Age and can still be easily identified today. Whether in the peoples of the rain forest or the peoples of the concrete jungle, the unity of the spiritual history appears.³⁹ The human condition, with its suffering, its struggle for survival, its capacity for joy and ecstasy, as well as the finality of death, pushes individuals to seek meaning in the face of the manifestations of mysteries.⁴⁰ This search for the meaning of one's life, of one's place in the universe and of one's adequate answers or responses in the face of life's irrationalities, is part of the human spiritual quest. Primitive people were the least self-conscious about who they were, life was a "one possibility thing": "they take it for granted that it is right for them to be as they are, to do as they do, to maintain their traditions."⁴¹

The mythico-religious beliefs of the Paleolithic period as displayed through the art forms which have survived, present a very complex configuration, of which many symbolic elements seem to have remained till today: magic, superstitions, omens and divination are still delved into in the hope of limiting the everlasting irrationalities of life and probing into their deep mysteries.⁴² The Paleolithic era, as depicted through its art form, was

dominated by the mystical relations between human beings and nature, between hunters and victims.⁴³ Hunting and the passing of the seasons were connected with special stories. These special stories or myths were probably shared during religious meetings and most certainly were an integral part of the prehistoric reality, as the numinous blended into all aspects of reality.⁴⁴ Rituals enacting the myths were likely used to gain control of the mysterious forces that dwelt around prehistoric humans and to reinforce the solidarity of the primitive society.⁴⁵ It seems plausible that there would not have been religious organizations.

For many sociologists, such as Durkheim and Weber, society begins with religion. They see religion as "the symbolic celebration of the values, ideals and hopes that bind society together."⁴⁶ Religion is often considered to be the primary element of the earliest human communities and the source of their social organization.⁴⁷ A person cannot possibly exist outside of a community and free of a specific time frame; therefore, "the authentic individual is neither an end nor a beginning but a link between ages, both memory and expectation. Every moment is a new beginning within continuum of history."⁴⁸

Awe and its response, reverence for the sacred, are universal in time and space, though their expressions vary from culture to culture, from era to era. During prehistoric times, people and spirits coexisted in the universe; this early form of religious practice may appear crude, yet it nevertheless already contains a numinous element easily identifiable and represents an older form of religious wisdom.⁴⁹ The primitive person had an

unthinking faith in the universe as it appeared.⁵⁰ They also had "an overall concern to live correctly and thereby make life go smoothly."⁵¹ Customs and myths contained what constituted living correctly and were thought to be enforced by the spirits.⁵² These customs and myths were to be the content of prehistoric education. In this context, "Curriculum meant the experiences of life lived in the group and handed on."⁵³

With the first human communities came education: "Human beings may be born with certain potentialities for cultural life, but certainly they are not born fully adapted to life in a particular culture."⁵⁴ During the prehistoric period, survival was the goal of education and survival depended, as it does now, on people's ability to control their environment. The aim of prehistoric education was very concrete in seeking adequate preparation for all children in their difficult fight for survival:

"Une éducation implicite visait chez eux une fin capitale: préparer l'enfant à la lutte pour la vie. De la réussite ou de l'échec pouvait dépendre la perpétuation ou la disparition du clan....Déjà, pour tous c'était le règne de l'obligation scolaire et de l'accessibilité à une instruction avant tout pratique touchant toutes les fonctions d'une société fermée et stable."⁵⁵

All of education then, like now, was religious⁵⁶ and provided learners with the tools with which they could deal with reality. Education imparted to every individual a language with which to communicate with the spirits through rites and rituals.⁵⁷ Education also passed on the "mythe fondateur" which guided all the socio-cultural attitudes of the tribe.⁵⁸

The Primitive Religious stage can best be summarized by Michael Barnes' comment on Primitive Religious Community:

"Religion, community, and individual identity are inseparable in primitive society. Each person learns his or her identity by learning what the tribe sees as proper behavior, thoughts, and feelings. A given individual will, of course, have a unique personality, a special name, perhaps a singular role such as elder or warrior, but these must be within the bounds defined by tribal tradition."⁵⁹

ANTIQUITY: THE ARCHAIC RELIGIOUS STAGE

The second historico-religious stage is called the Archaic Religious stage and it marks the emergence of the gods.⁶⁰ As cavemen settled themselves and established sedentary modes of living, they also developed a social order reflecting their new lifestyle. Societies grew more complex and needed new communication skills and specific regulations to help their elaborate newly formed organizations function properly.⁶¹ The art of writing, mathematical skills and the art of literature are among the innovations of Antiquity. Not only did our ancestors organize their societies, but they also organized the spiritual or invisible dimension around their gods.⁶² As they created a formal social hierarchy to ensure social stability, they similarly endowed their spirits with a likewise framework.⁶³ The spirits became the gods, some taking on greater attributes than others, but all having a clear line of authority.⁶⁴

At this stage, people were no longer hoping to control the spiritual or invisible dimension of life which was perceived as too powerful to be manipulated by magic. Respectful persuasion became the norm, as people wished to be on the good side of these moody divinities who peopled the invisible.⁶⁵ In order to do so, dwellings were erected where individuals could go to persuade these gods. These first man-made shrines were houses people built for their gods.⁶⁶ These were projections into earthly space of relationships held in myths.⁶⁷ Often, the locations of the temples were chosen where natural sacred places had stood in earlier times: near a brook, the

center of a forest or the site of godly visitations.⁶⁸

As civilization developed, a distancing of the gods occurred.⁶⁹ Sacrifices, rituals and public prayers became a new communication system between the distant gods and people.⁷⁰ With the creation of this new system, the need for experts in communication arose and professionals appeared: the priests and priestesses.⁷¹ From this stage, modern individuals derived the institution of official priesthood and retained the need for built shrines. In modern times, Saints often replace the gods in name while retaining their attributes.⁷²

Education evolved with the growth of antique societies, and a shift in educational paradigms occurred as the states needed trained personnel to deal with governmental, religious, and economic affairs: "Curriculum began to mean bodies of knowledge imparted in formal education, rather than immersion in daily experiences."⁷³ Education in the archaic period also introduced specialized religious instruction for the newly appointed priestly caste.⁷⁴ Just as archaic religion was expected to support the social patterns of archaic society,⁷⁵ it also dominated the educational arena as "the works studied included myths and epic tales in the form of narrative poems...wisdom compositions, including proverbs, fables and essays."⁷⁶ The religious element within the educational framework is quite evident.

Judaism stood apart from the world of the Gods, as it tried to live according to the covenant established between God and the patriarchs (Gen 12:

1-3) (Gen 15: 1-21) (Ex 6: 2-8). Jewish history can be understood as the process of education toward unity with God.⁷⁷ Due to the moral obligations stipulated in the terms of the covenant, and to the frequent gentle reminders by Prophets of the need to incorporate one's search for God in the rituals or gestures, "it cannot be surprising that the Jewish people developed an elaborate system of guiding the young... Apparently, no difference was made between religious and secular wisdom."⁷⁸ The ethical side of Jewish education stressing the fear of God (Prov 1: 7) and the development of the basic virtue of charity (Eccles 11: 1-2) was much emphasized. Children were considered the greatest blessing but at the same time were regarded as a religious responsibility.⁷⁹ As in all other archaic civilizations, Jewish education was contained within a strict ritual framework.⁸⁰ The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus summarizes well Jewish pedagogy as lived in the archaic period:

"Above all we pride ourselves on the education of our children, and regard as the most essential task in life the observance of our laws and of the pious practices, based thereupon, which we have inherited.

All schemes of education and moral training fall into two categories; instruction is imparted in the one case by precept, in the other by practical exercising of the character.

Our legislator Moses,...,took great care to combine both systems. He did not leave practical training in mortals inarticulate, nor did he permit the letter of the law to remain inoperative."⁸¹

The earliest schools were organized in Sumer,⁸² while Egypt was the first kingdom to establish a system of national education.⁸³ Education was considered an important factor for social advancement and was reserved for the children of the ruling class. Prehistoric survival skills were the only teachings passed on to the children of the lower class.⁸⁴ Craftmanship greatly developed with the increased trading between societies⁸⁵ Only the Israelites

and the Spartans saw fit to educate their girls.⁸⁶ The main goal of education for most of the children in Antiquity was their development of practical skills to become qualified craftsmen.⁸⁷ For the children of the ruling class, education aimed at forming knowledgeable minds through the learning of sciences such as mathematics, astronomy, physics medicine and natural sciences.⁸⁸

Greece introduced a humanist view of education which transcended utilitarianism and this was to be a major influence on future developments in education.⁸⁹ Greek education conveyed a religious interpretation of the universe.⁹⁰ Plato saw education as a means to gain happiness through the teaching of a refined religious content.⁹¹ Plato also suggested in the Republic that the guardians of the State should "turn upwards the vision of their souls and fix their gaze on that which sheds light on all,"⁹² illustrating that Greek religious consciousness permeated all of Greek life and therefore had a direct influence on Greek archaic education.

Rome, influenced by its Greek subjects, valued Education. The Roman government encouraged the creation of schools for all children because it felt that education was one of the important sources of its power and control.⁹³ "But there was no state-controlled system of education such as we have today."⁹⁴ Yet, "as schooling grew dominant, curriculum became more clearly a plan for learning. Areas of content turned into textbooks that walked students through the learning process."⁹⁵ The Greco-Roman period of Antiquity also witnessed the beginning of intellectual instruction paired to the

development of the body; its aim was summarized by the saying: "Mens sana in corpore sano."⁹⁶

LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES: THE HISTORIC RELIGIOUS STAGE

The third stage is called the Historic Religious stage or the axial age. The absoluteness of God and individual salvation characterize this stage.⁹⁷ As religions in the archaic period demanded more and more scrupulous observance of rites in a search for effective communications with the gods, a severe depreciation of the human person was experienced.⁹⁸ Alongside this phenomenon, there arose the platonic religious idea that objective knowledge is possible because it is based on preexisting eternal models.⁹⁹ As well the promise of individual salvation by mystery religions such as the cult of Osiris and Mithra,¹⁰⁰ created the proper environment for the rapid growth of monotheistic religion; and so it was that God upstaged the gods.¹⁰¹

As the superiority of one God upstaged the powers of the others, so did the tendency to universalize religious beliefs. From then on, there would be only one way to be religious, only one correct way to act humanly and therefore only one valid and morally proper way to behave.¹⁰² Since monotheism was based on compassion, individuals felt "it would be ungenerous to keep that truth to themselves,"¹⁰³ and different groups proceeded to conquer the world religiously. Missionaries travelled the world to bring the good news of Buddha, Jesus and later Mohammed. "In all of these cases, the outsider can perceive an arrogance and perhaps even a religious imperialism, but the believer can do no less than share what he or she takes to be a true blessing for all peoples."¹⁰⁴ Monotheism offered an all-encompassing plan to

order reality,¹⁰⁵ and it sought "to maintain an identity between church and state as primitive and archaic religions also"¹⁰⁶ did. In other words, there was no real distinction between society and religion.¹⁰⁷

With the emergence of Christianity in the western world, education was seen for the first time as a process of personal growth, since it was linked to the new concept of personality and community which appeared with Christian religious consciousness.¹⁰⁸ Childhood became an ethical notion representing faithfulness, innocence and openness to the wonders of the world, which adults were encouraged to retain.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, the Christian concept of people's "fallen" nature, as suggested by Paul in the letter where he wrote that individuals who follow the desires of their body and mind are by nature the children of wrath (Eph 2: 3), coloured the Christian concept of personhood, and at times led to some educational hardships:

"Thus the history of Christian education has been not only one of love, justice and discipline, the three of which, according to the Old and New Testaments, should always go together. It has also served as an excuse for cruelty...Of the two verses in Colossians 3: 20: "Children, obey your parents in all things for this is well pleasing to the Lord," and 3: 21: "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger lest they be discouraged," the first was remembered, and the second often forgotten."¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, Christianity and Christian religious consciousness were responsible for the broadening of historic education; from then on, "the literature of Rome and Greece would not be expunged from the curriculum...but it would no longer be regarded as an expression of religious realities."¹¹¹ Educators recognized a certain value in the ancient bodies of knowledge but discouraged the faithful to engage in such "pagan"

learning.¹¹² It was the first time that a cleavage occurred between sacred and secular learning, a conflict which grew in the course of time.¹¹³

Christianity developed: under the Emperor Constantine, Christians were granted the right to worship and Christianity was recognized as one of the official religions.¹¹⁴ As Christians attracted more individuals from the ruling class, the reality of a greater social responsibility appeared. In accordance to Christian doctrine, it was decided that

"the religious authorities have God's sole and universal truth, including divine laws governing all aspects of life, then of course (it stands that) the government should be guided or ruled by the church."¹¹⁵

That idea was implemented in 380 A.D., "when the Emperor Theodosius declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Empire."¹¹⁶

The same period saw the advent of Augustine, who would in time become one of the most important churchman and whose second book, The Christian Doctrine, discussed the relation between Christian wisdom and Greco-Roman knowledge. Though Augustine recognized like other Christian authors that all truth had its source in God, he objected to secular learning even if it proved helpful, and preferred catechization to general instruction.¹¹⁷

With the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D., occidental life regressed. Christianity, in the midst of this social upheaval proposed a transcendental religious consciousness which suggested a dualistic world view: "Not only is the supernatural realm 'above' this world in terms of both value and control but both the supernatural and the earthly worlds are themselves organized in terms of a religiously legitimated hierarchy."¹¹⁸ Individuals

were taught that they had an identity and people were presented with the concept of "a responsible self."¹¹⁹ Since human beings were conceived as basically flawed because of the original sin, "the religious goal of salvation is for the first time the central religious preoccupation,"¹²⁰ and education with its highly religious content reflects this consciousness.

While Christianity preached perfection as the ideal, the world around was presented as a valley of tears, a theme easily acknowledged considering the hardship of everyday life in the Middle Ages. The focus of Christian life became life in the other realm which would be infinitely better.¹²¹ Detachment was thought to be the proper Christian attitude,¹²² and the ideal of religious life became separation from this life.¹²³ Asceticism became a sign of Christian devotion and people were encouraged to protest the growth of wordliness.¹²⁴ Monasteries became the best place to lead a Christian life, and many sought refuge in the newly established monastic orders.¹²⁵ Whether to truly aspire to a holy life or to escape the very real horrors of life in the Middle Ages, monasticism became popular, and what had started as a fringe movement in the third century became a religious movement for the masses during the Middle Ages.¹²⁶

Education had blossomed under Roman rule and though it had kept a private school status, it had nevertheless fostered the creation of a three level system: the ludus, grammaticus and rhetor, which was spread over a period of approximately 10 years and had produced literate Roman citizens.¹²⁷ Unfortunately, schools built under the "Pax Romana" were closed or destroyed

during the Middle Ages, in accordance with the edict of Justinian in 529 A.D.¹²⁸ As a consequence, education for the masses regressed to the prehistoric level of survival techniques and extensive knowledge for the masses was not desired; rather an emphasis was put on the appropriate experiences needed to help people behave in a certain way and learn their role in society.¹²⁹ People also displayed great indifference towards children and their education during that period,¹³⁰ mainly because of a high mortality rate.

In rural European districts, only the clergy could read and the only books available were liturgical.¹³¹ Yet, some books on education surfaced. For example, Hugh of St.Victor wrote Didascalicon and promoted "that education is one of the means by which a sinful man can attain salvation, for it helps him... to understand his place in the order of nature and to harmonize it with the order of the Spirit."¹³² During the Middle Ages, most lay individuals were illiterate and were taught orally only the basic elements of the creed, and then most understood them in a magical sense rather than in a truly religious sense.¹³³ "C'est ainsi que l'alchimie, l'astrologie et la magie connurent leur plus grande faveur populaire. L'éducation s'éclipsa faisant place à l'analphabétisme, à l'occultisme, à la cruauté et à la bestialité."¹³⁴ Between the period of the Church fathers and the time of Charles the Great, the monasteries and their schools saved at least a degree of learning.¹³⁵ Medieval education became a religious monopoly offered through the monasteries and nunneries, based on a system elaborated by Cassiodorus in the beginning of the sixth century,¹³⁶ and conducted mainly for those destined for the Church.¹³⁷

The Middle Ages witnessed Charlemagne plan and start the reconstruction of the Frankish educational system where teachers were trained for the first time in a normative fashion.¹³⁸ Charles the Great "insistence on the foundation of schools was motivated by the desire to procure a somewhat literate clergy that would be able to teach everyone - young or old, man or woman - the Lord's prayer and the fundamentals of the creed."¹³⁹ He believed that the whole lay population should be acquainted with the basic elements of Christianity,¹⁴⁰ as well as be able to read and write.¹⁴¹ Charles the Great's educational concerns were closely related to his religious consciousness. Unfortunately, his renewal lasted only fifty years and was completely dismantled under Charles II.¹⁴²

The first universities were created in the beginning of the 13th century (University of Paris 1200, University of Oxford 1206), and "took learning and theological education out of the narrow walls of monasteries where there was little chance for further development."¹⁴³ The curriculum in the universities offered knowledge selected and organized for religious purposes.¹⁴⁴ At the time, formal education was seen as inevitably leading to theological studies.¹⁴⁵ Paris with its university became an important center of scholastic learning.¹⁴⁶ The Crusades had broken European isolation and had broadened the horizons of thought of European learned men with Arabic wisdom and knowledge:

"Scholasticism was the attempt to support the Christian creed by a philosophical structure of sufficient strength to withstand the ever rising doubts among Christian theologians who, partly because of Arabic influences, no longer felt safe in their faith as did their predecessors of earlier centuries."¹⁴⁷

In their search for reason, the scholastic philosophers undermined the firmness of tradition by enlarging the gulf between sacred and secular learning; thus, they planted the seed of the reformation that was to come during the early modern religious stage.

Throughout this dark period, the Church, with the help of a dedicated clergy, kept education alive.¹⁴⁸ All education during this historic stage was religious and its teachings were used to ensure the survival of the Christian faith.¹⁴⁹ Christianity, as all historic religions, performed the functions of legitimation and reinforcement of the existing social order, but it also provided the ideology and the social cohesion needed to encourage the social changes and reforms to come during the Renaissance.¹⁵⁰

RENAISSANCE: THE EARLY MODERN RELIGIOUS STAGE

The fourth stage is called the Early Modern Religious stage and is based on a single major element: the Reformation.¹⁵¹ This stage features an open confrontation between secular and religious realms, and the rise of critical thinking.¹⁵² One of Luther's principle stating that "the finite cannot contain the infinite"¹⁵³ summarizes well the radical change in attitude toward worship during the Reformation. The religion of immanence which had prevailed during the historic period, no longer satisfied the minds of the Renaissance, and became perceived as improper and false.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, during the Reformation people sought to free themselves from the subjection of what they considered to be an irrelevant ecclesiastical system. As the nature of the sacred 'was redefined, a religion of transcendence emerged and inspired social actions as well as educational changes. It can be said that "the original Protestant vision was of a society of religiously enlightened laymen who were no longer burdened by traditional superstition and tyranny."¹⁵⁵

The end of the Middle Ages witnessed the disillusionment of the masses with the pomp of the Roman Church,¹⁵⁶ and the degradation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.¹⁵⁷ "Christianity was accessible only through the priests and monks,"¹⁵⁸ who dispensed all Christian teachings since most people did not know how to read, and even if they had, all the available religious documents were in Latin and not in the vulgate language understood by people at large. This dependency on an unworthy clergy for enlightenment eventually brought the masses to cry out for reforms, as the

abuses perpetrated by clergymen seemed worse than the regular offenses committed by lay people.¹⁵⁹

The need for changes was not perceived in general but rather fed itself on public outrage on the occasion of particular events: "Too many scandals; too many inconveniences; too many injustices; too much inefficiency unremedied and apparently irremediable - these lent force to the cry...for reformation."¹⁶⁰ The reforms people sought were social, administrative, legal and moral, not doctrinal.¹⁶¹ Disillusioned by the clergy, people looked for leadership in other areas, such as politics and erudition to remedy the obvious inequalities and social injustices they perceived. The problem with the situation at hand, was that in denouncing the abuses, it created doubts in the mind of people and it left public opinion restless and critical, but not necessarily practical or aware of the consequences of the changes requested. As a result, people became open to new religious ideologies.¹⁶²

Feeling the growing menace by the burgeoning heresies, the Roman Church defended itself by granting power to the Inquisition which originated in Toulouse,¹⁶³ and which quickly spread to most of western and central Europe where it dictated and violently enforced uniform religious beliefs.¹⁶⁴ The Catholic Church also tried to undertake internal reforms but public unrest was such that the schism of the Reformation could not be averted.¹⁶⁵ The Reformation happened not because people were irreligious but because they were deeply religious.¹⁶⁶

While the Church tried to tighten the grip on its flock, the spiritual teachings of the late fourteenth century mystics promoting a direct union between individuals and God, flourished in the doctrinal pluralism of that era.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, a symbolic shift from visual representations to linguistic representations started to take shape.¹⁶⁸ The atmosphere was pervasive with religious ambiguity because "What one honest man believed to be an abuse, another honest man defended. Everyone wanted reform, or professed to want reform. How to reform and what to reform was not so clear."¹⁶⁹

The intellectual movement of the Renaissance evolved closely with the newly discovered religious consciousness of the reformation. Humanism and its individualistic self-assertion against tradition gained grounds,¹⁷⁰ it also influenced education towards secularization.¹⁷¹ God and human beings were then conceived in a new way: aesthetic qualities and an autonomous concept of personhood emerged.¹⁷² The role of art was viewed as a means of expressing divine depth and divine fruitfulness, in being similar to God.¹⁷³ With this new consciousness, the purpose of education moved toward elevating and perfecting the mind, which had been received from God in a state of crudeness and imperfection, to a higher degree similar to God.¹⁷⁴ The teaching of the Christian faith and creed lost its place as the all-encompassing aim of education, instead it became "only one of the several components in the growth of the harmonious personality."¹⁷⁵ While religious teachings receded, secular learning developed.

The spirit of the Renaissance fostered a renewed popular interest in the progress of general knowledge,¹⁷⁶ and encouraged the learning of sciences, ancient languages and philosophy.¹⁷⁷ During the Renaissance, universities diversified their teaching content but continued to be under the scrutiny and control of the Church. With the discovery of printing, books became the most important tool in education.¹⁷⁸ Education during the Renaissance period offered a new direction, pointing towards the respect of personal value realization.

Two important figures dominate the educational scene of the time. The first innovator was Martin Luther. Luther promoted the idea of universal public schooling in order to democratize the accessibility of education.¹⁷⁹ Luther encouraged not only the reading of the Scriptures but also secular learning. He emphasized the importance of the inquiry process and method.¹⁸⁰ He was also responsible for the founding of chairs of ancient tongues in the universities and the cultivation of those ancient languages at the secondary level.¹⁸¹ Luther also furthered the cause of education by providing a translation and an interpretation of the Bible, by making several appeals to establish schools in order to give a better education to the masses, by publishing a Large and a Small Catechism, and finally by creating Protestant hymns.¹⁸²

The second figure to play a key role in the development and progression of education was John Amos Comenius. Comenius was a Moravian minister and teacher who admired the works of science of Bacon and Descartes, and believed that a scientific method for education would bring about peace in

the world.¹⁸³ For the first time in history, Comenius presented education as a life long process.¹⁸⁴ He also thought that "all studies must be ordered so that pupils would have goals... and along with ways of reaching these goals; sequencing and connections were established to lead from one subject and level to the next."¹⁸⁵ Comenius also maintained that honest morals should be formed and guided by the educators,¹⁸⁶ but most important of all, he believed in the universality and the essential identity and the equality of the minds of all people, because everyone is the of the same divine creation.¹⁸⁷ Comenius recognized "the necessity of basing concepts on experience,"¹⁸⁸ and tried to resolve the still existing problem of the split between the sacred and the secular in education.

The Early Modern Religious stage occasioned a breakthrough in the mediated system of salvation taught by the Roman Church which led in turn to the modern belief that salvation was an individual affair available to all.¹⁸⁹ At this stage, the reformers concentrated their efforts on preaching the direct relation between individuals and the Transcendent which made it possible for people to avoid the life rejection pattern in fashion previously.¹⁹⁰ The Early Modern Religious stage is characterized by its effort to eliminate the great chasm between heaven and the earthly world, by its promotion of individual freedom, by its belief in the value of pluralistic religious ideas and by its open-mindedness to change.¹⁹¹ Early modern society gave rise to a new religious consciousness which in turn created new societal and educational structures in its image, which harboured secular tendencies.¹⁹² The Early Modern Religious stage witnessed the first occasion when pressures for social changes

were the result of a greater realization of religious values within the existing structures of society and resulted in the construction of "social systems with a built-in tendency to change in the direction of a greater value realization."¹⁹³

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT: THE MODERN RELIGIOUS STAGE

The last stage in the evolution of the religious phenomenon is the modern religious stage. Human consciousness has evolved through time, and from the one possibility world of the primitive stage, to the dualism of the historic stage, human beings have stumbled into an infinite possibility world.¹⁹⁴ Modern religiousness is the product of the accumulation of all the previous religious stages.¹⁹⁵ Today, individuals can benefit from the knowledge of ancient wisdom with its universality and permanence.¹⁹⁶

The study of the contemporary religious phenomenon is difficult because of the closeness and the abundance of data, and because a selection within the available material must be made. Analytical objectivity becomes harduous: "Le codage des données suppose leur définition; leur définition implique un certain nombre de choix et d'hypothèses... Ainsi tombe le masque d'une objectivité historique qui se trouverait cachée dans les faits..."¹⁹⁷ Another fact that increases the difficulty of analyzing the modern religious stage, is that in many instances, some groups are still thinking at an historic level with a dualistic view of the world,¹⁹⁸ while others think in narrow archaic ways about the status and value of other people's thought and beliefs.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some characteristics of this last stage.

At the beginning of the modern religious stage, during the period of the Enlightenment, confidence in the power of the human reason, usage of the inductive-empirical approach to scholarly research, comparison of different

methods and cultures, abhorrence of superstitions and the concept of freedom of choice constituted the basic elements of modern consciousness.²⁰⁰ From this new spirit of openness, the idea of tolerance developed.²⁰¹ As world travel became more popular, the frequency of religious and cultural encounters with different groups increased, and this condition set the stage for the pluralism experienced today.

Contemporary consciousness demanded profound structural changes, because modern human beings no longer restrict their search for meaning to religious environments; rather, they explore the various spheres of life in their quest for meaning-making.²⁰² Individuals are challenged to become aware of their religious symbolism and to take responsibility for its choice.²⁰³ Membership within religious organizations has become open and flexible. Standards of doctrinal orthodoxy have been relaxed, and church members are considered by many religious organizations as responsible for themselves.²⁰⁴ "Every fixed position has become open to question in the process of making sense out of man and his situation."²⁰⁵ Religious organizations are not expected to give up traditional religious symbolism, but they are asked to develop their religious symbolism in new directions relevant in a search for personal maturity.²⁰⁶ Pluralism has become accepted as the best way of living, and one-sided opinions are no longer respected when taking secular or religious decisions.²⁰⁷ Basically, what has taken place is the establishment of the right to privacy in personal and religious matters.²⁰⁸

The modern tendency to evaluate every component and to decide for

oneself what is right, has had some short comings as every element of society becomes revisable.²⁰⁹ Modern experiences have shown that religion and culture can at times contradict one another, and that the continuing conflict between the sacred and the secular has become more noticeable.²¹⁰ Modern individualistic attitudes have caused a social destabilization "characterized as a collapse of meaning and a failure of moral standards."²¹¹ An ever widening gulf has lodged itself between science, technology, philosophy, others forms of advanced learning and popular culture, myths and everyday experiences.²¹² "Prisonnier du cercle impitoyable de la production et de la consommation, l'homme n'est plus qu'un rouage dans l'énorme machine économique et dans l'état-entreprise."²¹³ Modern human beings in search of their true self, at times perceive themselves as robots performing meaningless tasks, because they have forgotten their innate predisposition to religiousness.²¹⁴ Yet, the whole situation should not be viewed in a negative fashion but rather, should be seen as a source of infinite opportunities for creative responses in every human sphere.²¹⁵

Protestantism, in keeping with "Luther's original idea of the freedom of the Christian Conscience,"²¹⁶ might offer with its various denominations, an answer to the modern religious quest. This does not mean that other ways, religious or secular, do not offer valid alternatives, but as the range of views among Protestants widens and adapts to the modern fast-changing environment, Protestantism provides a great variety of choices.²¹⁷ As the religious phenomenon evolves, education needs to adapt.

Education has often tended toward conservatism, and this might explain why there often is a chasm between schools and the real world,²¹⁸ but education can be a preserving force in keeping ancient wisdom, while the superficial and the fashionable elements of culture are shed.²¹⁹ Religion and religious education, which are based on individual experience and personal motivation, have a social role to play: both are guiding-lights on the path of meaning-making,²²⁰ and both can make an indispensable contribution to society.²²¹

The wind of secularization that shook the modern world, also swept the schools: Pluralism, having become an accepted way of life that even includes respect of a possible disbelief in God, has rendered administrators and educators reticent to educate religiously in public schools.²²² Yet, "there is a deep historical foundation - for considering the school as a legitimate and needed partner in religious education."²²³ After all, education is indispensable for the maturing of individuals,²²⁴ and religious maturing is an intrinsic part of any global human development.²²⁵ In other words, religious development is inclusive in any educational enterprise.²²⁶

In Quebec, contemporary Protestant moral and religious education has adopted the principles of modern psychology and methodology in an attempt to offer the best education possible.²²⁷ The works of Erickson, Piaget, Kohlberg and, Fowler have been consulted during the elaboration of the current curriculum.²²⁸ The individual process of maturing has also been studied in order to present its implications for the curriculum.²²⁹ As a result

of the studies and analyses undertaken, the Protestant Committee created the existing Protestant moral and religious education programme. The aim of the programme at the secondary one level is: "to develop an awareness of the relationship between values and standards of behaviour in the story of the Old Testament, in the lives of outstanding individuals, in the life of the individual pupil."²³⁰

Protestant religious education could not remain unaffected by the sweeping changes that have taken place in modern society. The different perception that human beings have about themselves has altered the course of Protestant education. As it thrusts into the twenty first century, Protestant education remains committed to the promoting of the advantages of the contribution that holding religious beliefs makes.²³¹

CONCLUSION

The presentation of the various stages of religious evolution has portrayed the diversity of the religious maturing process throughout history, and is summarized in Appendix A. The description of the religious consciousness and its transformations has underlined the fact that they do not exist as isolated elements, but rather that they are interwoven into the basic social matrix of the world.²³² Social conditions and religion have been characterized as having evolved on a dialectical path, influencing one another as each evolutionary stage reveals a different series of concepts and symbols that flow out of the profound transcendent urge of humanity.²³³ As history continues to be written with each passing day, changes still occur and religious evolution continues.²³⁴

Movement through the stages comes about abruptly when a crisis challenges living at the existing stage. Entering a new stage does not imply that the preexisting elements are discarded but rather that they are adapted to new realities, and are reorchestrated to satisfy the changing needs of the individuals.²³⁵ Through the evolution of the religious phenomenon, a continuity can be perceived,²³⁶ as new stages build on the accumulated knowledge of the previous ones.²³⁷

This accumulation of knowledge has produced our contemporary society. Today, people live in an extremely complex system which allows a multitude of religious symbolizations to exist simultaneously and to permeate each other's boundaries. It is tempting to think that our more complex stage is

better than the earlier ones, but the evolution of the religious phenomenon is not to be analyzed in terms of progress for judging other societies,²³⁸ instead it should be considered as a tool to be used in the construction of the future.

Throughout the religious evolution, education has played an important role as both a preserver of the past and a guarantor of evolution.²³⁹ The importance of literacy has originated during the Reformation,²⁴⁰ and continues to play an important role:²⁴¹ "L'essor de l'éducation a eu un impact direct sur l'épanouissement des sociétés."²⁴² Literate beings are considered to be in a better position to understand the meaning of life and its implications.²⁴³

Contemporary society is often misjudged as being secular, materialistic and dehumanized.²⁴⁴ In reality, what happens is that people are facing the mystery of existence from a different perspective, and as such, modern life is no longer secular but takes on a religious dimension.²⁴⁵ Modern minds are involved in an intense search for a new relevant religious symbolization that would enable people to deal with the situation at hand, to identify their reasons for acting the way they do, and to find out how to be considerate of others, especially the ones who are affected by their actions. The current dissatisfaction of modern individuals is similar to the one experienced during the Reformation and equally requires radical actions: what is needed today is to find an answer to the modern search for meaning. This answer might be a rediscovered religious life which would be understood in terms of responsibility in daily living and constructive participation in

community life, in order to recreate satisfaction and harmony for people.²⁴⁶

In many places, a movement toward a new religious symbolization has already begun: "L'apparition des mouvements de renouveau religieux est non seulement planétaire, mais aussi quasiment simultanée. Elle se situe en gros vers le milieu des années 70."²⁴⁶ This initiative needs support if it is to bring about a post-modern religious stage that will satisfy modern individuals. Religious education can be a significant ally in the achievement of a post-modern stage, because it has the capacity to instigate social changes.²⁴⁷ What religious education must do is create an attitude of respect of others, and guide students toward a balance between progress and tradition, while being faithful to Luther's call for critical thinking and responsible autonomy.

"Bellah's theory claims that religions generally pass through a progression of forms, from primitive and archaic to historic and modern. It also appears that each of us repeats this developmental pattern in our own lives."²⁴⁸ The following chapter will present a study of the process of individual religious maturing, including the analysis of the various stages of personal religious development, in an attempt to show the inclusive nature of the religious development in any human educational enterprise.²⁴⁹

CHAPTER THREE

To live is to change,
and to have lived fully
is to have changed often.¹

Cardinal John Henry Newman

INDIVIDUAL RELIGIOUS MATURING PROCESS

Chapter two linked an historical overview of the evolution of the religious phenomenon to the developments of education and religious education throughout the ages. The first section underlined the ever-presence of people's religious quests, or how meaning-making was dealt with by our ancestors. Though the religious phenomenon appears in a series of varied embodiments, there exists a unity of religious essence that permeates all religious manifestations,² rendering it possible to find the seed of God in everyone of us.³

As different people reach varied levels of religious consciousness during their lifetime,⁴ stages of development become a handy framework to describe particular modifications that individuals go through. These developmental stages allow an understanding of the many challenges people face at each stage of their maturation.⁵ Different theories are available to study the process of human development, but none seem as comprehensive as

Gabriel Moran's. Gabriel Moran is recognized as a preeminent figure in the field of religious education.⁶ His theory of religious educational development offers a practical matrix for the classification of the various stages of human educational and spiritual maturing.⁷

The analysis of the individual religious maturing process provides clues for moral and religious education teachers who are concerned with the whole learner,⁸ as they attempt to focus on the transcendent to guide their students' spiritual development.⁹ Understanding the process of individual religious maturing is essential to the formulation of a critique of the existing Protestant moral and religious education programme because this understanding helps assess the adequacy of the programme regarding the needs and capacities of growing adolescents.¹⁰ Chapter three presents a study of the process of individual religious maturing, including the analysis of the various stages of personal religious development, in an attempt to show the inclusive nature of the religious development in any human educational enterprise.¹¹

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

With the first signs of a new life, development begins. A foetus bears the seed of potentiality that will grow into a mature being as the organization of the body increases in complexity.¹² The maturation process of every being involves seeking a wholeness of personality as individuals interrelate with the rest of the creation.¹³ The study of human growth reveals the existence of patterns of development,¹⁴ and brings into light the fact that people are perpetually undergoing changes.¹⁵ As the physical and cerebral human evolutions are realized, in due time the spiritual development takes place in a parallel manner.¹⁶ A basic religious element or an inner drive towards self transcendence is to be found in all people.¹⁷

It is a fact that proper human development does not occur without an active interaction between a growing person and the environment.¹⁸ As children need a proper balanced diet to develop their body to its fullest, proper instruction to master their environment in order to forge for themselves a useful place within their society, and some form of schooling to become literate, children also need to be properly guided towards spiritual enlightenment to reach a full dynamic harmony.¹⁹ Maturity actualizes the synthesis of all the knowledge that is gathered throughout life, similarly, a mature religious person will actualize his or her religious maturity by the way he or she behaves.²⁰ Spiritual maturity will show not in a single action,²¹ but will manifest itself regularly in human creativity and

fruitfulness.²² Since the goal of moral and religious education should be to help people develop into religiously mature persons,²³ meaning a person who understands his or her own religious history, who lives by its enlightenment and who holds some understanding of other religious groups,²⁴ it is important for teachers to recognize the stages of the process of religious maturing, so as to adequately shape their courses and trigger in students the desired reactions.²⁵ "(A) teacher needs to impose an organization on knowledge that will ensure it best feeds the educational development of the young."²⁶

THE IDEA OF RELIGIOUS MATURING

Physiological developments are easily noticed and have been observed for the longest time. On the other hand, spiritual development is not self-evident and is particularly difficult to conceptualize because of our human limitations.²⁷ Notwithstanding, the idea of spiritual growth is not as new as may be imagined, and appears in the New Testament (Col 1: 5 & 2: 2-3). Later, the idea of spiritual development resurfaces with Hugh of St Victor, a twelfth century thinker, who spoke of the five steps towards spiritual perfection.²⁸ The idea of spiritual growth appears again in Cardinal Newman's Essay on the Idea of the Development of Doctrine,²⁹ and in the twentieth century theorists like Fowler and Kropf have analyzed the stages of faith development. While it is important to be familiar with religious maturing theories in order to avoid the pitfalls of educational fads,³⁰ it is equally important to avoid placing more importance on what is written than on what is lived.³¹

The study of any form of human development implies an analysis of the nature and the direction of the various changes that take place,³² and should be based on observation and reflection, as well as on the study of research findings about development.³³ The religious maturing process of individuals is an intrinsic part of any global human development since "the question is not whether a child...shall or shall not be religious, but rather what kind of religion he shall cultivate and exercise."³⁴ the religious maturing process displays numerous complexities and is a life-long

endeavour.³⁵ Human spiritual evolution stops when one dies, but there are potentially no limits to a person's spiritual growth;³⁶ the only spiritual limits an individual encounters, are the ones he or she has created for himself or herself.³⁷

The global development of human beings and their spiritual growth are partly reflected in the use of imagery and language.³⁸ Images spark varied reactions and bind everyday experiences to a transcendent reality.³⁹ These human experiences include more meaning than can be grasped by any given individual.⁴⁰ Images are often expressed through symbols and metaphors which seek to access and probe the expression of difficult religious or secular concepts.⁴¹ A person's religious development revolves around these fundamental metaphors that connect this person and the universe.⁴² With time, these symbols and metaphors become woven into stories, often referred to as myths, and provide models for meaningful human action.⁴³ Therefore, any theory of religious maturing must take into consideration the images which guide and transform each stage of life.⁴⁴

MORAN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Gabriel Moran elaborated a theory that delineates personal religious maturing as a three-stage process.⁴⁵ His theory is founded on his understanding that all life is religious, that being religious is a condition native to every human being and that this religious condition plays a major role as people orient their actions and, thus shape their destiny.⁴⁶

Moran first elaborates an educational theory which he uses as the canvas for his religious educational development theory. His educational theory illustrates Piaget's works on the development of formal thought and also Kohlberg's theory of moral development.⁴⁷ Though Moran feels indebted to both writers, he thinks that the stages of neither Piaget nor Kohlberg completely describe an individual's journey through life.⁴⁸ Moran finds Kohlberg's theory negligent of feminine experience and culturally biased toward North-American ideologies.⁴⁹ Moran indicates that Kohlberg's ethics of justice offers little to young children as well as to older adults.⁵⁰

Moran presents Piaget's system of stages, Piaget's concern for the social dimension of an individual's personal development, but questions Piaget's notion of a pre-moral stage.⁵¹ According to Moran, the person in a process of knowing the relationship between an individual and the environment makes meaning, a meaning which everyone must evolve for himself or herself. This knowing process develops from birth and is not one that is developed at a later stage as suggested by Piaget.⁵²

Another theorist whom Moran cites significantly is Kieran Egan. The elaboration of Moran's educational theory reflects Egan's work, but Moran found it to be incomplete as he wrote: "I rely here on Egan's Educational Development, although, as I indicated, his stages are missing a first and a last. (The physical and the leisurely stage)."⁵³ This addition reflects Moran's conviction that any educational development proceeds all through life.⁵⁴ Moran also considers the contribution of James Fowler's theory of faith development,⁵⁵ and acknowledges Fowler's foundational notion that "faith is an irreducibly relational phenomenon,"⁵⁶ but indicates that this appears subjective and needs the element of beliefs brought in as an objective element.⁵⁷

Moran speaks of a lifelong moral development⁵⁸ and divides it into three religious maturing stages, each one being in turn subdivided into two moments when he wrote: "I will expand on the three religious stages previously named. Each of these stages can be divided into two moments that suggest a movement within each stage."⁵⁹ These stages do not show a linear progression but rather display a spiral or circling movement which indicates the various levels reached as the next stage is entered.⁶⁰ Moran is not the only one to speak of a religious spiralling evolution: Matthew Fox compares the spiritual journey of an individual to a spiral that returns to its starting point, compassion.⁶¹

Moran suggests an age range as typical but stipulates that each individual will move at his or her own pace, a pace which varies depending on

an individual's experiences and his or her environment.⁶² Moran also mentions that an individual will continue to revert from time to time to levels of previous stages since personal development is based on a constant circling back motion.⁶³ The movement throughout the different stages is a matter of emphasis and reactions rather than an actual progression. When an individual enters a new stage, he or she refines and reintegrates in a new form what was previously acquired, previous acquisitions are not discarded.⁶⁴ Moran suggests that a new stage provides more adequate answers, imagery and language, previous meanings no longer being sufficient and satisfactory in the resolution of life-problems. With his or her entrance into a new stage, an individual lets go of a past simpler security in thinking, to strive to establish a new more sophisticated process.⁶⁵ Progress within any given stage is demonstrated by the elaboration and the refinement of religious developmental categories: it represents a qualitative step in a person's religious development.⁶⁶ Moran specifies that transitions between stages show continuity despite temporary reactions which at times give some evidence of discontinuity.⁶⁷

This section has focussed on a general presentation of Gabriel Moran's religious developmental theory. His theory proposes a coherent structure which allows a sound understanding of human spiritual growth. Moran's religious maturing theory demonstrates that humans can continually surpass where they are spiritually, to achieve their human spiritual potential and live fully, by increasing people's consciousness of what being spiritually mature means.⁶⁸ Moran's theory is not only theoretically descriptive but also practical in explaining how an individual deals with his inner invisible

dimension in search of finding meaning to life.⁶⁹ The following section will analyze the development and learning that individuals meet on their path towards maturity.

1. THE SIMPLY RELIGIOUS STAGE

"The first primordial stage of religiousness begins at birth, or some months earlier. It lasts until about five to seven years of age."⁷⁰ This stage is called simply religious because during this period, the "primordial religiousness suffuses the whole physical organism."⁷¹ This stage provides an aesthetic form through a stable environment and personal warmth, so as to foster and protect the religiousness of a small child. "What happens to them early in life affects their orientation to life as a whole."⁷² Since adults educate children from the time they are born,⁷³ and since "a child's first experience of the world is religious,"⁷⁴ religious education and education in a broad sense become indistinguishable during the simply religious stage. What contributes to a child's education, provides the foundation for a more complex form of religiousness in later life.

A. THE PHYSICAL MOMENT

The age reference is 0 to 2/3 years. The dominant characteristic at the physical moment is that the divine is everywhere and manifests Itself in life's daily experiences which are perceived as miracles. "The religious life of the small child is one of unending mystery and unalloyed wonder."⁷⁵ Human affection received at this time establishes the base for the development of trust, care and love. The realization of these attitudes to their full human potential will affect life as a whole, and underlies the images a person carries throughout a whole life time. These images also shape a person's vision and capacity to wonder, which form the foundation for all human religion. Being religious is a condition native to every person: Horace Bushnell, an influential religious educator, speaks of the "supernaturalness" of humans.⁷⁶ Therefore it is a grave mistake to try to force religion into children, since this can often cause adverse effects.⁷⁷ George Albert Coe said: "Education is not to press the child into any prearranged mold, but to bring out his normal powers in their own natural order."⁷⁸

B. THE MYTHIC MOMENT

The age reference is 2/3 to 5/7 years. This stage is the age of brilliant imagery and powerful stories.⁷⁹ This moment is called mythic because at this level an individual's way of thinking is similar to the way of thinking of myth using people, with a world alive with powers and deities: "The second moment of this first stage when the child is delighted with dragons is an age of... powerful stories. God or gods are alive in the universe."⁸⁰

A myth has its own logic and coherence allowing it to be true on various levels.⁸¹ Myths help to identify the powers which surround people, "powers may be characterized as being good, bad and neutral."⁸² The child does not yet formulate a concept of the personal God, but perceives God through the manifestations of divine power present in all intense experiences.⁸³ As myths provide absolute accounts of why things are the way they are, they create a climate of intellectual security.⁸⁴ "Religious experience can be joyful and also terrifying. If the child's fear can be put in the form of story or image, then the fears become bearable."⁸⁵

The dominant characteristic of this stage is the fact that the child perceives the world as an extension of him or her, the world becomes an extension of the self. "The child is in touch with the whole cosmos through mythical stories."⁸⁶ The child needs to establish a personal affective relationship with what is learnt. At this level, a child judges according to

polarized binary opposites.⁸⁷ As he or she will learn to mediate and establish in between categories, the mythic structure dominates the child's mind in a dualistic fashion: good and evil, black and white.⁸⁸

Education and religious education at this stage need to make sense of the unknown world in terms of self. The child connects affectively the known categories to the outside world and fits the world to those. "What children know best when they come to school are love, hate, joy, fear, good and bad. That is, they know best the most profound human emotions and the bases of morality."⁸⁹ Progress will show that the clearer the connections between the categories and the world, the more successful the learning will be. Human emotions are the tools the child uses at the mythic stage.

Educating at this stage should organize knowledge by providing access to the world through emotions and morality if knowledge is to be meaningful. The religious life of a child at the mythic stage is one of wholeheartedness and of the desire to be on the side of God, good and life.⁹⁰ At this stage, a child is still not ready for acquiring an organized system of beliefs, but the child can enjoy religious stories and the pleasant experiences of community worship. It is too early to require the child to obey all the observances related to the particular religion of his family, because religious education at the mythic stage is not the apprehending of a faith by abstract modes of thought.⁹¹

2. THE ACQUIRING A RELIGION STAGE

This stage is called acquiring a religion because it is at this time that the child acquires literacy about a particular faith through conceptual learning and the complementarity of experiential learning. "The child at this stage begins differentiating between profane and sacred."⁹² At this stage religious education needs the stimulus of an articulate intellectual content, as children show a great capacity to store information and develop their ability for abstract thinking. Children are fascinated "with whatever exists, with names of things, with dates of all kinds of events and with startling information of any sort."⁹³ The child needs objective information to acquire a sound knowledge of the nature and influence of religion in his or her life.

A. OUR PEOPLE'S BELIEF MOMENT

The age of reference is 5/7 to 14/15 years. The dominant characteristic of this moment is the perception of God as a person and as nothing else.⁹⁴ The child seeks out to construct a system of ideas which will provide him or her with an inner security. Religious education at this level must be set up in a concrete and particular framework in order to be meaningful.⁹⁵ In the event that such a solid base is missing, the child will experience great trauma during his or her adolescence and may never reach an adult stage of religious maturity.

At this level, the child begins to form a synthesis of his or her acquired knowledge.⁹⁶ Every child learns a specific religious language where he or she feels in possession of God.⁹⁷ This in turn, gives the child the assurance that the world can be understood and that it is acceptable to trust one's thinking.⁹⁸ The child at this level feels he or she has a religion and that God is only found in this particular segment of reality.⁹⁹ The specific beliefs and the regulated practices gather concrete religious images in the child's mind. All trusted adults, not just the religious "teacher", play an important part at this stage, be he or she a clergyperson or any other religious professional.

"It seems that young people, in their efforts to become their own persons, especially need other persons to act as role models, mentors or even heroes. In a world that increasingly lacks these....the role of the group or class or even gang becomes even more exaggerated."¹⁰⁰ Belonging to a group

takes on a vital importance at that stage. This belonging can help or impede the formation of the religious outlook on the world for the child. This outlook will enable the child to figure out how to get along in life and also pass on the proper worship parameters of his or her religious affiliation. The vagueness of the religious feeling of stage one is replaced by the concreteness of this second stage.¹⁰¹

Stories at this level take the form of historical narratives. The story transcends the individual and allows self-discovery.¹⁰² The world is perceived as autonomous and a separate entity from the self, but as the world is perceived as being autonomous and having its own set of rules, it also becomes a threatening force. Children at this level of development use the world to think with. They associate with the best in the world in order to transcend the threat the world creates on their ego. They transform the threats into adventures, imagined or experienced.

As children develop a sense of their distinct identity, they almost deify themselves. This quasi-deification is not a fault to be frowned upon but rather must be understood as a normal and natural stage of development. To help children outgrow healthily this stage it is necessary to expose them to a large body of knowledge in as many fields as possible. These encounters with knowledge will allow the children to feel the power and the glory of the real world and of God's work.

It is important at this stage not to present the Bible as the summary of all the truths to be believed in or as the Book with all the answers.

Religiousness should not be equated with a book.¹⁰³ Because the vagueness of being religious is transformed into a concreteness of being a member of a specific group with specific beliefs, educators should provide material that will grip the children's imagination and help them establish a secure identity. As the children explore the world from the outermost limits and work their way in, only when the outer boundaries will feel secure will they be ready to analyze their inner world and delineate a scale adapted to reality to find out their own identity.

B. THE DISBELIEF MOMENT

The age of reference is 14/15 years till the end of adolescence. This moment is called the disbelief moment because at this stage a person searches for the truth through logical reasoning rather than factual observations. At this stage, adolescents elaborate philosophical theories to englobe all spheres of activities and thoughts. "There is a moment at which building the philosophical system with an accompanying anti-religious attitude seems to be the answer to all problems."¹⁰⁴ Adolescents search for an ideology which will serve as a canvas to analyze all the world, that is: the actions, the beliefs, the concepts and the attitudes of society. It is a stage of generalizations. "Those who seemingly worshipped hard facts a few years previous may now be enthralled with grand system of ideas."¹⁰⁵ At this level, the adolescent pushes aside the magical superstitions and the religious practices in favour of a calculative and instrumental rationality. He or she is looking for measurable things with reasonable explanations.

At this level, adolescents begin to disbelieve the beliefs recently acquired, because these beliefs have become too limiting both in forms and content, on the journey towards adulthood. "Childish beliefs do not work any more, and yet no one can live without believing in someone or something."¹⁰⁶ Adolescents are caught between their need to rebel and the need to believe, but "society provides little space for individuals to rebel against their religious upbringing and yet hold on to their underlying love of family and friends."¹⁰⁷ This explains in part the fascination adolescents have for sects, cults and other groupings.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, "genuine faith may not be really

possible until some 'crisis of faith' has been undergone."¹⁰⁹

For adolescents, "the central issue is that of emerging individuality."¹¹⁰ Throughout their journey towards self-discovery, adolescents feel the need to alienate their parental codes of ethics and religion. "It is then that youth feels most secure in pursuing his life's ambition,"¹¹¹ just like Zeus had to kill Chronos, his father, before he could rule the world. Adolescents value their independence and want to master their environment. This apparent step back is necessary and enables a person to ask more profound questions of his or her religion.¹¹² "Disbelief is directed at the external, verbal side of faith."¹¹³ At this stage, confusion clouds the mind. From a religious perspective, a definite movement toward a philosophical perspective takes place, especially for bright students. This system of ideas is often separated from the emotional upheavals the adolescents experience: "Under the facade of a kind of blithe cynicism, there actually may be budding idealism- in fact, the overlay of the tough exterior is usually an instinctual defense of the more vulnerable core."¹¹⁴

At this level, adolescents will organize knowledge within a chosen scheme in order to establish a sense of the main features of the world to be mapped. "At this age boys and girls must make sense of things and must criticize."¹¹⁵ The meaning of particular events is now derived primarily from their place within the chosen general scheme, and so knowledge of the world is reduced to manageable philosophic proportions and thus, creates a sense of security. At this stage, adolescents feel their system explains it all.

Because particular bodies of knowledge will challenge the soundness of the system chosen by the adolescents and force them to rearrange the order to include this new knowledge, educators should try to generate irregularities to force the adolescents to reassess their position. "The sympathetic adult might gradually introduce anomalies and dissonances into the cherished system of ideas. Adults can thus provide a safety zone where ideas can be played with rather than overpowering the young with an alternate ideolog."¹¹⁶ Often, adolescents will be adamant about not modifying their general scheme because the stability of their scheme ensures their intellectual security. At times, adolescents will reject facts that do not fit within their theory. Yet, these encounters with disturbing factors will eventually lead them to an increased level of sophistication. The learning process which characterizes this stage is the dialectical process between the general scheme and particular knowledge. Educators at this stage are seen as regulators of the process of disbelief within development.

The story form has a major advantage at this stage in that it proposes an end to a particular reality. A story creates a unit out of several disparate pieces. In a story, "we directly make sense of all kinds of new knowledge by fitting it to our abstract schemes."¹¹⁷ Adolescents need the imposition of a beginning and an end in order to conceptualize a process and thus, determine the meaning of all the elements that make up that process. Adolescents generally value a literature of ideas. It is important for educators not to try to force adolescents' beliefs into a particular system, or to admonish them and tell them that their own scheme is false. Educators must show patience and let the adolescents outgrow at their own pace, their simplistic

mode of thinking.¹¹⁸

Indoctrination at this stage, or at any other, can cause long-lasting negative effects. Teachers are expected to inform and to influence their students towards the acquisition of a wholesome broad world view, but not to indoctrinate them. "Education is a method of awakening, not a method of manipulation and indoctrination."¹¹⁹ Indoctrination is influence carried to excess. It is the desire to force students to believe a certain notion regardless of the evidence. "For the educator, the beliefs are always secondary to the evidence: he wants his students to end up with whatever beliefs the evidence demands."¹²⁰ Teachers are mandated to enlighten their students, not to condition or brainwash them in a coercive manner. After all, "the aim of religious education is a greater appreciation of one's own religious life and less misunderstanding of other people's."¹²¹

3. THE RELIGIOUSLY CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM OR JEWISH STAGE

It is important to note that even though Gabriel Moran called this stage "The Religiously Christian Stage", he stated that it could refer to the adherence of individuals to alternate religious journeys besides Christianity.¹²²

The passage into the last stage can occur at any given time during adulthood, but "sufficient experience and a degree of openness"¹²³ are required to reintegrate with a childlike attitude the worthwhile elements that were kicked out during one's years of rebellion.¹²⁴ The third stage creates the context needed to be religious in a particular way, since no one can be religious in general.¹²⁵ The same holds true for religious education "religious education cannot be totally ecumenical if this means blending into one identical organization,"¹²⁶ "the religious in religious education has to be concrete, particular, nearly unique. The religious cannot consist of a lowest common denominator or abstract generalities."¹²⁷

In this last stage, individuals come to realize that life and people cannot be reduced into a neat rational system.¹²⁸ A religiously mature person will be able to hold in tension the rational and the non-rational, actions and receptivity.¹²⁹ "This final stage, because it is an acceptance of diversity within unity, allows unending development."¹³⁰ It becomes evident in the analysis of the last stage that the whole process of religious maturing has proceeded in a circling back motion, which in turn creates a spiraling

effect.¹³¹ Religious maturity is not "a peak but a journey toward the center of oneself and of the universe."¹³²

A. THE PARABLE MOMENT

This age reference is from young adulthood to the mid-thirties. During this moment, an individual will rediscover the values he or she learnt in his or her childhood, the virtues of religion and will become religious in a definite and particular way.¹³³ A religiously mature adult will recognize the validity of others' religious quests though his or her own way will be the one he or she values most.¹³⁴ A person's narrowly defined set of beliefs and practices are thus placed in an ecumenical setting of religious dialogue. The fact that someone else believes differently, is no longer perceived as a contradiction or a threat, it becomes simply a coexisting religious pathway.¹³⁵ Everyone "can be enriched even further with the wisdom and rich insights from a number of the great religions and, especially from creative dialogue with traditional religions."¹³⁶

The dominant characteristic of this moment is the individual's realization that no general scheme will ever fully accomodate all particulars or reflect the wealth and complexity of the cosmic reality and God. "The limits of any philosophical system can now be seen as the system is tested against the particularities of everyday existence."¹³⁷ At this stage, the particulars find coherence in a concrete scheme but it is the particulars that are really true. At this level, individuals will often reject the religious imagery that seeks to divide God's world and ordinary life. Individuals will "realize that their abilities and probable accomplishments are, after all, not likely to equal their aims and pretentions."¹³⁸

At this level, an individual goes beyond the negative stance of disbelief which prepared an empty space that can now be filled. Should an individual not fully assume this new stage, it will often cause a person to follow a succession of idols and no adult wholeness can result.¹³⁹ During the parable moment, a person feels "the need for religious integrity",¹⁴⁰ a person ponders on life's paradoxes and inequities, while at the same time, learning to live with reality and beginning to accept what cannot be changed. This does not presuppose that a person gives up trying to correct the injustices which exist in his or her environment, it merely indicates that a person finally has come to the realization that the universe and its mysteries as well as God cannot be simplified, but can be tolerated in their paradoxical existence.¹⁴¹ During this moment, "the infant's sense of unity, the child's sense of duality and the adolescent's sense of rational system all come together in adult religiousness",¹⁴² while individuals understand that religious languages reveal a deeper side to reality.¹⁴³

During this moment, "life itself is understood as a story."¹⁴⁴ Stories capture best the adult mind in a parable form.¹⁴⁵ A parable awakens the imagination by twisting back the premises one brings into the story.¹⁴⁶ The understanding of the parable will be guided by the belonging to a particular religious tradition, its creed, its rituals and symbols as well as its history. No single answer will issue from a parable, but it will lend itself to many levels of interpretation. An adult must learn to live with tension just like the parable presents a tension.¹⁴⁷ Living in tension demands an active participation, and so the religiously mature person becomes "engaged in acting the best way he

or she can discern."¹⁴⁸

A religiously mature adult should be able to recognize injustice and should risk opposing it, even though he or she knows that the world we live in might not be made right and just in his or her lifetime. It is not sufficient not to do evil; it is necessary to do good and to actively seek the obstruction of injustice.¹⁴⁹ God granted stewardship to humans (Gen 1: 29-30). Ultimately, human beings will be held "responsible to God for their management of human affairs and of creation,"¹⁵⁰ which implies that with religious maturity, an understanding of the interdependence of the Creation comes into actualization.

B. THE DETACHMENT MOMENT

The age reference is later adulthood because the detachment moment is prepared for by the accumulated contributions of the previous stages. To reach religious maturity, an individual must have passed through, and fully experienced all the previous stages. The detachment moment presents a vision of unity which "is a synthesis of all of life's elements."¹⁵¹ During this moment, individuals show a calm acceptance of what cannot be changed.¹⁵²

Religious maturity is recognized in the significant variety of imagery individuals use to sustain themselves throughout everyday experiences.¹⁵³ At this level, people act without looking for the fruit of their action.¹⁵⁴ Religiously mature adults demonstrate a willingness to wait and let shine the serenity of wisdom. At this stage, a person experiences the determination and the patience to stay where he or she feels called to be. The greatest life individuals can live is "in being true to their personal roots and struggling with real, limited communities."¹⁵⁵ There comes a reimagining of one's relation to the universe and to God,¹⁵⁶ while "the de-absolutizing of idols remains the constant religious vocation until death."¹⁵⁷

With religious maturity, one learns to be satisfied with partial answers as one has learnt to ask better questions. The last moment rounds the maturing process spiral into a final centering on one's life, the Creation and God.¹⁵⁸ Education at this level becomes a cooperating experience between the

religiously mature persons and the others, to find the common good in light of all the previously acquired knowledge.¹⁵⁹ Religious growth will have evolved through a long series of adjustments, which are not revealed in a succession of studies or diplomas but rather are perceived in the appearance of new attitudes towards reality.¹⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Gabriel Moran's theory of religious maturing has demonstrated first the existence of a framework which encompasses all of life,¹⁶¹ and second that a division by stages though overlapping, can be a very useful source for religious educators who seek to adapt their teaching to the changing needs of their pupils.¹⁶² Moran's concern lies not so much in the structure of faith or morality but rather in the study of the complex religious factors which contribute to a person's spiritual journey.¹⁶³ People's spiritual growth can be divided into a sequence of several progressive stages but one fact stands out: no one can reach the final stage of wisdom without some religious education. "Religious education is of urgent and practical necessity in an unjust world,"¹⁶⁴ where "we are in danger of forgetting the person to be educated - and the demands that his or her own unique nature makes upon the nature of learning"¹⁶⁵ in favour of valuing the economic and utilitarian purposes of modern society.

Religious education must be continuous throughout people's life and must englobe both formal and informal forms of teaching. It is important to remember what George Albert Coe said: "religious education is not a part of general education, it is general education. It is the whole of which our so called secular education is only a part or a phase."¹⁶⁶ Education must be understood for what it really is: not just instruction but global and total enlightenment, "l'éducation étant (un) cheminement vers la

lumière."¹⁶⁷ Total education could be defined as a

"système ouvert à l'environnement et composé de ressources, d'activités et de connaissances, inspirées des autres savoirs fondamentaux et appliqués, et conçues par elle, de façon à harmoniser les situations pédagogiques devant permettre aux êtres humains de développer au maximum toutes leurs facultés potentielles et d'atteindre progressivement l'autonomie dans la recherche du sens de leur existence au contact de leur milieu."¹⁶⁸

Humans are more than animals. Besides having innate tendencies (automatic responses in strictly patterned ways to specific signals flashed by the environment or others),¹⁶⁹ individuals also have a personal consciousness made of impressed traditional elements united into a complex system of learned responses.¹⁷⁰ So, the role of religious education can be defined as teaching young people to care for what comprehensive insights have shown to be dear to humanity. Every person needs to realize that "perhaps it does matter which path we choose to follow,"¹⁷¹ and that being faithful to one's personhood means taking responsibility. It is important to pass on to the younger generation a cosmic awareness, a love of beauty and the art of savouring it.¹⁷² Appreciation for life and Creation is an important lesson, and it is best expressed in one of Meister Eckhart's meditations: "If the only prayer you say in your whole life is thank you, that would suffice."¹⁷³

Religious education in a formal setting must reinforce what has been established at home.¹⁷⁴

"The religious climate of the family... is the determining factor in religious development... What is engendered in early childhood is a general attitude toward religion that may be a receptive attitude or a rejecting attitude. All later experiences touching the person encounter this attitude and either strengthen it - the more likely tendency - or weaken it. The basic attitude is always very difficult to change."¹⁷⁵

Attitudes towards religion are rooted in the experiences a person has gone through and the choices a person has made in the past.¹⁷⁶ An upbringing that neglects the spiritual dimension presents the risk that a void will reside within a person's inner structure: "The mystical dimension of our psyches is part of our true self but our culture teaches us to deny it and thus educates us for depression which eventually leads to despair."¹⁷⁷ The emptiness humans feel needs to be filled, but modernity neglects the spiritual and "actually promotes negative addictions: drugs, crime, alcohol, consumerism, militarism. It encourages us to seek outside stimulants to provide meaning for life... because it is so woefully out of touch with the power inside."¹⁷⁸ Religious education is the tool adolescents have at their disposal to steer themselves toward their spiritual home, whichever that might be, as long as it is life-promoting.¹⁷⁹

It goes without saying that religious education must be sensitive to the changing needs of growing persons, and must not choke them with conformity or drown them in anonymity.¹⁸⁰ Religious education must emphasize the importance of personal fulfillment, must insist on individual personal responsibility and must develop a person's ability for compassion: "Compassion is not merely a moral norm. It is a consciousness, a way of seeing the world and responding to the world."¹⁸¹ As religious education guides students toward an understanding of their prophetic role, adolescents must learn to recognize the spirit of God in the ever-changing occurrences of daily living.¹⁸²

Religious education should offer insights into religious language:

once students learn religious language, they gain new knowledge that in turn affects their understanding of life: "language, it seems, shapes domains of human existence and action that are preexperiential."¹⁸³ Suggesting the usage of a religious language to students does not imply that they must use it rather, just like for any other language "the student is invited to take part in a conversation and discover ways of speaking that he or she may choose to adopt."¹⁸⁴ Enriched by this new source, students can then continue their search for meaning and attempt a personal reflection to be able to detect "signals of transcendence, which make the question of the nature and purpose of God a relevant question for all persons."¹⁸⁵

The analysis of the stages of religious maturing has revealed that students need intellectual security,¹⁸⁶ and so it is the role of educators to help students find inner peace and stability, to enable students to escape the deafening noises of society and in so doing, allow themselves to be open to transcendence:¹⁸⁷ "we need silent spaces and silent times...silence should not simply be taken literally to mean absence of speech or noise. Silence is also letting other images go."¹⁸⁸ Once people let go they become open to transcendence.¹⁸⁹ "The listening for the divine and the recognition that we are not the final measure of things are the marks of a religious education."¹⁹⁰ This movement towards interiority should first lead the students to recognize the "sacredness in every phenomenon of life, in man's relation to his fellowmen and his relation to the universe."¹⁹¹ Second, this interiority should lead to action taking. "Social action is not the preserve of some special-interest group. It is an imperative of faith."¹⁹²

The analysis of the stages of religious maturing have provided an understanding of the fact that "the modern idea of development contains within itself a religious meaning and an educational meaning,"¹⁹³ besides establishing parameters that will help to analyze and evaluate the existing programme of moral and religious education of Quebec's Protestant schools in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Le premier pas vers une éventuelle thérapeutique, c'est l'établissement d'un diagnostic correct. En éducation, on soigne sans diagnostic, peu surprenant qu'on guérisse rarement.¹

Arthur Koestler

A CRITIQUE OF QUEBEC'S SECONDARY ONE PROTESTANT MORAL AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The historical overview of chapter two discussed how previous generations found meaning in their life. It elaborated the religious and educational paradigms of each period. Through the historical progression, the role of the school as a legitimate and needed partner in the religious education of children was clarified.² The third chapter traced the search for meaning of individuals. It described the spiritual journey of human beings towards religious maturity, and, in so doing, outlined the role of religious education as an essential factor for reaching any form of spiritual maturity.³ Chapter four will analyze the contemporary tapestry of education and religious education. A set of evaluative criteria will be suggested and applied to the present, secondary one, Protestant MRE curriculum, in order to discuss the possible direction that religious education could take in the future.

Keeping in mind that the social fabric of society is the matrix upon which the educational system is built,⁴ it is important to understand the global situation in order to establish relevant criteria to evaluate the current programme of moral and religious education in a realistic way.⁵ There needs to be a balance between abstract theory and concrete teaching. When we look at the contemporary state of religious consciousness in our society through what is taking place in our schools, the tug-of-war between religious traditionalists and progressive secularists seems to dominate the situation.⁶ In order to guarantee that education continues its active role in human evolution, and does not stagnate as the result of the on going conflict, there is a need to create a perspective that will enable teachers to question their teaching while educating constructively. The analysis of the contemporary situation is to be understood as a sign of concern for objectivity in assessing the programme.

Before analyzing the current situation, it is important to keep in mind that this study presents special difficulties: First, as we live and are concerned by the very actions we are trying to analyze, there is no historical distance between us and the events which are taking place; therefore, no buffer zone exists to allow a clear perspective. The world is changing at an incredible pace,⁷ and we cannot grasp the whole of the situation until all active tensions have balanced one another and until the issues have been resolved,⁸ in other words, until the present has become the past. Second, the

incredible quantity of available data creates confusion, and since no researchist is passive,⁹ the selection of data and its sorting out are in themselves a value judgment.¹⁰ Of course, it could be argued that an in-depth comprehension of a situation is often more valuable than cold objectivity.¹¹ Third, all other historical periods knew only one accepted religious paradigm for a given society. It is the first time, that one group faces many religious paradigms, all claiming absolute truth.¹²

This multiplicity causes confusion, for it is highly difficult for anybody to see clearly through all the available options of today. Ecumenical movements, dialectical theology, existentialism, hermeneutical theology, political theology, liberation theology, feminism, black theology and third world theology all seem to oppose one another in their efforts to grab a piece of the Canadian religious market.¹³

ORIGINS OF THE QUEBEC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Canada has an educational system that is under provincial jurisdiction. In 1867, Section ninety-three of the British North American Act stipulated that provinces were to have full power to make their own laws governing education;¹⁴ at the same time, provisions for the safeguard of the religious minorities were also included in that agreement. Since each province was allowed to decide its own educational direction, the educational paths taken by the provinces were quite varied. As a result, no clear focus to education is to be discovered in Canada as a whole.¹⁵ Decisions on curriculum and didactic material are made ten times over, though most of the time accidental parallel developments do not go unrecognized.¹⁶

In Quebec, education reflects the mentality of the two founding nations: English Canadians perceived education as the motor for a healthy economic growth and highly promoted education for all;¹⁷ French Canadians were under the tutelage of the Catholic Church, which thought it best to keep education as a privilege for a select minority of children.¹⁸ Only youngsters who were intended to become doctors, lawyers or priests received an education: the others remained with a few years of schooling, quite illiterate.¹⁹

In 1846, two school commissions were set up and they were designated as Catholic and Protestant.²⁰ At the time, most Protestants were English speaking and most Catholics were French speaking. The poor souls

I who did not fit these categories often opted for a language change or apostasy, a difficult choice in either case.²¹ Quebec public education, having been government funded since the early 19th century, has seen governmental policies control the content of its curriculum and its aim of education.²²

In modern times, governments all over the world stand as a tool of social change,²³ and their policies accordingly affect the schools which mirror societal values. Unfortunately, schools often have had to put up with political pollution and have been obliged to serve the interests of a few by becoming an effective agent of ideological control.²⁴

While it is of utmost importance that schools take reality into account in order to be efficient,²⁵ they should not become instruments of domination, control or manipulation.²⁶ As the twentieth century unfolds, a wind of secularization is blowing. This tendency towards secular education and the idea that schools should abstain from educating religiously, are a recent phenomenon and they both have affected the Quebec educational system.²⁷

QUEBEC'S SOCIETAL CANVAS

Today, in Quebec's society ideological contradictions abound, and conflicts between society and religion are highly noticeable.²⁸ No single system of thought, moral code, or religious tradition is the accepted paradigm,²⁹ and often the sacred has been completely camouflaged and identified with the profane.³⁰ Quebec's society sees the need for individual personal fulfillment, but it favours "la formation scientifique, technique et professionnelle, au détriment de la formation spiritualiste et humaniste."³¹ Quebec's modern society is full of individuals who deny the vital role of religion³² while continuing to have a strong interest on the subject.³³

What follows these denials can only be termed unfortunate occurrences: while people might decide to overlook the spiritual dimension of their life, their basic need for organization and their thirst for meaning has not diminished. No society anywhere or at any time can exist "without rules or government, operating simply on the basis of continual spontaneous desire."³⁴ When religion does not serve as the appropriate instrument for social stability and personal development, the void is filled by other means: means that do not necessarily imply ascent, respect, justice and compassion.³⁵ The constant neglect of the spiritual dimension in Quebec's modern secular society is catastrophic, because it renders individuals, and society as a whole, quite powerless.³⁶

Misleading movements posing as religious substitutes are rampant

in Quebec: many hop on any ideological band-wagon only to realize when it is too late, that it was the wrong thing to do. Atheism is a movement that has become increasingly popular as Quebecers shake off the hold the Church used to have.³⁷ Atheism presents an idealistic illusion: it suggests that intelligence, knowledge and secularization alone are sufficient to change human reality. Atheism promotes the complete denial of any transcendent dimension and the denial of possible mystical links to a numinous being or force.³⁸ Most atheists perceive religion as a negative force, as a repressive instrument of control or as an oppressive way to promote societal domination and accumulation of wealth by religious organizations, at the expense of people.³⁹ Atheists distort people's consciousness in negating the spiritual mission of religion, and fall into reductionism.⁴⁰ Matthew Fox believes that "to ignore and deny the mystic inside encourages the idolatry of technology,"⁴¹ while at the same time, denying the existence of the true human self. Atheism can lead to despair and a lack of vitality as it proposes the dictatorship of reason over faith.⁴² As knowledge and technology fail the modern world, and individuals still experience sorrow, loneliness, pain and injustice, men and women look beyond the experiences of their utilitarian materialistic and pleasure-seeking society, in search of a soothing that is only found in authentic mysticism.⁴³

The vacuum left by the popular atheistic ideology leads many Quebecers on a quest for mystical experiences, feeling thirsty for communion with the numinous, for visions and for inner peace. Many pseudo-mystical movements such as animism, pantheism, new-ageism and other varied exotic

cults, prey on unsuspecting victims.⁴⁴ It must be realized that the products of human imagination and cogitation are not equal to true mysticism though they are definitely valuable. The Bible warns against false Messiahs: these pseudo-mystical movements because they often lead to the severe underestimation of people's responsibilities and opportunities and do not meet the justice-making and compassion criteria that are the gauge of authentic mysticism, could well qualify for the false Messiah category.⁴⁵

Nationalism is another popular secular movement that often serves as a religious substitute. Quebec is presently witnessing an upsurge of nationalism that almost stands as a new religion; perhaps supplanting even the religion of "hockey".⁴⁶ Quebec's nationalism seems to be a determining influence in the meaning-making process for the majority of people. Excessive commitment to any nationalistic doctrines can lead to political oppression and other varied forms of abuse.⁴⁷ Hunger for nationalism often stems from personal dissatisfaction and more often than not, reveals inner imbalances and insecurities.⁴⁸ Spirituality which could enlighten nationalists towards a greater self-realization and the building of a better society, is often missing among nationalistic platform:⁴⁹ futile materialistic claims monopolize large sums of money which could be better used if employed to eradicate unemployment, hunger, social inequalities and poverty.⁵⁰

Consumerism is another very popular pitfall that lurks in Quebec's society. When people are unhappy they often go on buying sprees or amass all kinds of goods but "the human race cannot in fact buy its way... out of the

boredom that results when true mysticism is lacking."⁵¹ When spirituality is denied, there is a loss of grounding for values. A cleavage then occurs between what is considered personal good and society's well-being. When this separation takes place, individuals strive towards their own advantage at the expense of the communal well-being. This partly explains greed, the irresponsible use of power, the irrational quest for acquiring material goods, the opportunism and the unscrupulousness that is often encountered in our callous contemporary society.⁵² People sometimes think they can also buy or sell God, but a merchant's mentality destroys all compassion: "A monied soul is a dead soul."⁵³ While religion appears in regular TV programming and conveniently becomes a lucrative source of revenue,⁵⁴ "the worldview of advertizing has become a national philosophy of life,"⁵⁵ which supports the objectivation of people and denies the worth of human beings.⁵⁶ In our technopolis, individuals are often related to as if they were machines or objects.⁵⁷ As people are conditioned to relate to each other as objects, they often perceive others as obstacles or obstructions to be eliminated: this harsh quirk in turn, partly explains the growing violence of our cities.⁵⁸

Atheism, nationalism and consumerism are some of the important factors contributing to Quebec society as it is today. Increasing immigration is another determining factor of Quebec's societal structure, a factor which will be mentioned in the following section. Though the situation in Quebec is serious, it is no worse or no better than the situation in the rest of North America. The provincial government has sensed Quebec's changing societal structure and has tried as best it knew how, to adapt to the situation.

Modifications are however difficult to enforce and take time to be implemented 59 Therefore, the role of religious education will be that much more important, as it tries to complement governmental efforts towards a better and a more responsible society.

THE NEW QUEBEC EDUCATIONAL OPTION

Quebec has witnessed a profound mutation as to how people conceive their relationships towards the environment and towards others.⁶⁰ An ecological consciousness is beginning to emerge as people become aware that they belong to a wider earth community.⁶¹ Individuals are starting to realize the long term effects of their societal and general behaviour.⁶² If the ecological movement is too recent to have caused significant changes in Quebec's curriculum, the arrival of an increasing number of immigrants to a once homogeneous society, has profoundly altered the intrinsic dynamics of Quebec's society, and required immediate action.⁶³ Pluralism and environmental consciousness stand as the new guiding principles behind Quebec's global conception of individuals and society.⁶⁴

The recent advent of a pluralism of cultural and religious views in Quebec, has created a situation where individuals have the possibility of choosing a way of life different from the one in which they have been brought up. In such cases, a situation is created where people are forced to redefine their own cultural and religious positions.⁶⁵ The mere multiplicity of mass-communicated ideas and notions about the world, causes individuals to experience a sense of being overwhelmed,⁶⁶ and the peaceful coexistence of several belief systems within the same geographic space is requiring people to learn to live in tension with other cultures.⁶⁷ Every person is deeply influenced by the cultural heritage of his or her community, notwithstanding the fact that they may or may not accept this reality.⁶⁸ A person's cultural

heritage is responsible for the chosen system of symbolic codification and meaning-making; a person's culture colours the concrete framework which embodies human relationships to the numinous.⁶⁹ With the cohabitation of several belief systems within Quebec's geographical borders, the problem of relativism of values has become a real issue.⁷⁰

Some theologians argue that all religious stands are not equal.⁷¹ Others say, that any serious religious inquiry or journey requires an assessment of the surrounding religious phenomena in order to reach a deeper spiritual understanding.⁷² Since a person's basic religious vision is determined by factors beyond his or her control: place of birth, historical period, and cultural community,⁷³ and since all religions are culturally incarnated,⁷⁴ it is not feasible to validly grade religions as totalities.⁷⁵ Only some aspects of a given religion can be examined at a time. The determining factor for grading religious occurrences can only be whether the religious practices being analyzed are life-promoting or life denying.⁷⁶ Therefore, just as there are different cultural ways of being human and different ways of thinking, there exist also different acceptable religious ways of being human.⁷⁷

Facing this new pluralistic reality, the Quebec government responded by issuing a first official document on pluralism and intercultural education in Avis, in 1983.⁷⁸ In 1985, the government proposed a new concept of intercultural education, and in 1987 in Vivre la diversité en français, the Ministry of Education evaluated the integration measures it had previously

proposed.⁷⁹ Stating that every individual can and should contribute to the making of the Quebec society, the government seemed to present a positive stand. Unfortunately, Quebec's educational policies once scrutinized, display some ambiguities.⁸⁰ It is interesting to note that the government promotes respect for cultural differences while perceiving them as obstacles to be overcome.⁸¹ The government says, we recognize that you are different so that you can become like us and be assimilated.⁸² In official speeches immigrants are often transformed into the scape-goat for existing social problems.⁸³

For their part, the majority of parents recently surveyed, proved to be far more concerned over the quality of education in the schools, than by the official policies of the Ministry of Education on the subject of the respect for cultural heritage. The parents' answers stressed the importance of the equality of chances needed to ensure that their children would be able to grow and eventually become masters of their own destiny.⁸⁴

It is possible for schools to be agents of integration and acceptance by offering quality education for all.⁸⁵ It is equally important that respect for personal values, valorization of cultural heritage, as opposed to folklorization and reduction of cultures,⁸⁶ as well as the creation of an open dialogue between cultures be promoted within the activities of public schools.⁸⁷ It is the role of the school to teach children about their rights and responsibilities.⁸⁸ Yet, in order to engage meaningfully in seeking valid practical solutions to the problems that have emerged with the growing pluralistic nature of Quebec's society, a theoretical and philosophical

framework should be elaborated.⁸⁹ Up to now, many approaches to pluralism in the schools have been suggested by varied sources, but pluralism really presents a problem greater than just an educational headache. It is not just the problem for newly arrived immigrants but rather it is the problem of the whole society learning to live in compassion and cooperation.⁹⁰

In a pluralistic society, the role of religious education takes on great importance as it attempts to respond to the particular spiritual needs of each individual.⁹¹ In Quebec, religion has ceased to occupy the centre stage of society,⁹² and religious education must fight the general educational tendency to value grades and production over real human growth.⁹³ For example, the Curriculum Guide stipulates that evaluation in moral and religious education must take place for the purpose of reporting as part of the cycle of evaluation in the certification of secondary studies, but insists that this evaluating be distinct from the evaluation of activities intended for personal growth.⁹⁴ As a result, teachers and students are often more interested in the grades that will appear on report cards than on making certain that actual maturation has taken place.

Protestant religious education in Quebec proposes a non-sectarian approach to religious schooling.⁹⁵ The present program took effect January first, 1986, and is in use in all Quebec schools offering Protestant moral and religious education.⁹⁶ The success of the Protestant approach depends largely on the ability of its curriculum to match the challenges posed by the ever changing needs of Quebec's society.⁹⁷ Teachers play an important role in

making the material of the curriculum relevant to the needs of the students.⁹⁸ Religious education within a pluralistic context should strive towards helping students develop sound judging abilities, form critical thinking, study the different ways in which human beings make meaning, understand the contribution that holding beliefs makes, shape their own thinking, and recognize that faith is a higher form of knowledge than just factual knowledge.⁹⁹

Religious education within a pluralistic context should require the promotion of a religiousness that sustains people in their needs and shows how "a reasonable and honest person, willing to take responsibility for his or her own life, can find good reason to affirm that the mysteries we all face are signs not of ultimate meaningless but of a divinely numinous Ultimate, which somehow is the meaning of everything."¹⁰⁰ There exist competing models of religious education, for example the historical approach which discusses the ways people tackled religion in the past, the issue-centered approach which refers to world religions to clarify modern issues or the phenomenological approach which deals with how people come to grips with religion.¹⁰¹ While all approaches have worth and validity, it is important to establish evaluative criteria to analyze the chosen curriculum and readjust if necessary the aims of the religious education program to ensure that it remains relevant, dynamic and life-promoting.

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Religious education along with societal achievements has evolved through time. In today's complex educational world, curricula are a necessity. The demands made on the religious education curriculum have increased as "we have asked that curriculum accomplish more and assume more responsibility for educational success and failure"¹⁰² Curriculum in the twentieth century has become a highly controlled tool and it has sometimes been used as a sophisticated ideological controlling device.¹⁰³ In our pragmatic society, governmental bodies and educators tend to look for "the right curriculum (which) would solve their problems,"¹⁰⁴ instead of analyzing the situation at hand for illuminating insights. As curricula come and go, it is important to reflect on the philosophy behind the curricula and establish some criteria to facilitate the analysis of that philosophy. The following set of criteria should help to delineate the parameters of a life-promoting religious education curriculum and help clarify the vision behind the curriculum. No worthwhile implementation is possible unless the ideas that lie behind the curriculum are clearly stated and deeply understood.

Before deciding on a set of criteria, it will be useful to define what curriculum is, since the definition of curriculum has changed throughout the ages and has recently attained a scientific status.¹⁰⁵ The following will be the chosen definition and all further references to curriculum will refer to this specific definition: curriculum will be considered as a map, which traces the organization of knowledge into realms of meaning, each with its own methods

and characteristic structures.¹⁰⁶ A curriculum is an instrument by which the teacher communicates with his or her students. This educational map is there to help the student determine where he or she is on his or her growth-path and, what is the best way to reach the goals he or she aims at. This map allows diversions into interest-trips for students, enriching them along the way, but most important of all, this map is a design to facilitate the learner's growth; it is not a prescription or an edict.¹⁰⁷

Criterion #1: Educational Concerns

A religious education curriculum should first display educational concerns. The curriculum being a map to guide students on their learning journey, it is normal that its first concern should be educational and not religious.¹⁰⁸ A curriculum should delineate the process of learning and the goals to be moving towards.¹⁰⁹ "Education is not to press the child into any prearranged mold but to bring out his normal powers in their own natural order."¹¹⁰ Students will show common patterns and directions but the pupils' final outcome is uncertain and of their own volition.¹¹¹ Therefore, a curriculum should leave some room for local adaptation. This flexibility is a crucial element of any curriculum.

Criterion #2: Respect for Religious Developmental Stages

A religious education curriculum should respect the religious developmental stages of students. Gabriel Moran in Religious Education Development, has elaborated a comprehensive religious, developmental theory guided by his concept that all life is religious, that being religious is a condition known to every person and finally, that this condition plays an important part as people make decisions for the orientation of their lives. Moran offers a theory of religious development concerned with the creation of a coherent religious educational language that would be comprehensive, consistent and precise, so that it could bridge the gap between modern educational language and traditional religious language.¹¹² Moran divides the religious development of an individual into three stages, each subdivided into two moments. Those stages do not show a linear progression but rather indicate a spiral movement indicating the various levels to be reached as the next stage is entered. There are occasional stage reversals since the development of the person is based on a constant circling back motion.¹¹³ A new stage is a qualitative step and provides new adequate answers, imagery and language, where the previous ones were no longer sufficient and satisfactory in the resolution of problems.¹¹⁴ Therefore, any religious education curriculum should take into account the religious developmental stage of students in order to be effective.

Criterion #3. Presentation of Fundamental Beliefs and Values

A religious education curriculum should present students with humanity's fundamental beliefs and values. Education plays an important role in the process of humanization of students [externalization, objectivation and internalization].¹¹⁵ Every person as he or she matures discovers the givens of the human condition. Those givens mean "those facts about human beings that are constant, irrespective of culture and ideology,"¹¹⁶ those constant features illuminate the fact that the beliefs people hold shape their existence. In a learning process, it is possible to discover the core values which are implicitly included in humankind's givens.¹¹⁷ Those core values exist in tension of each other within society. When a happy balance is found, an individual finds harmony in life. The specific form that an individual will become at the end of his or her maturation period, will correspond to his or her beliefs about what a worthwhile human is.¹¹⁸ The study of fundamental beliefs and values will lead students to discover the human person's intrinsic religious nature and the necessity to believe in something. At the same time, students will come to realize that no one holds a neutral position nor are anyone's statements value-free.¹¹⁹

Criterion #4: Promotion of Understanding and Respect of Other Belief Systems

A religious education curriculum should promote the understanding and respect of the different modes of meaning-making that human beliefs can embody. Beliefs and values need to be embodied in a specific meaning-making mode. In other words, people are not religious in general but need to articulate their beliefs and values within a particular religious code. Because conflicts arise when this embodiment of beliefs and values occurs, it is important that students develop an inter-faith consciousness.¹²⁰ What is referred to here, is not a utopic vision of various faiths but rather a realistic vision that will enable students to function properly as religiously mature persons in society.¹²¹ This inter-faith consciousness would allow for real communication to take place: an inter-religion communication based on respect and mutual understanding.¹²² This consciousness would hopefully eliminate prejudices and the all-too-frequent tendency to want to alter others so that they would become like us.¹²³ Prejudices are based on perceived realities, but are quickly transferred to an affective and unconscious level. Since they root themselves in an affective-psychological dimension, prejudices resist rational explanations. This is why it is most difficult to eradicate existing prejudices.¹²⁴ Education therefore plays a very important role in the shaping of students' attitudes towards others. Even though, it is easier to form and transmit a new attitude than it is to create a change in existing attitudes; it is important that existing negative tendencies be tackled before they spread and contaminate other students.¹²⁵ In today's society, many people feel uncomfortable in a multi-religious environment. This

unease should not be conveniently ignored but should be adequately dealt with. Understanding who the others are might alleviate these uncomfortable feelings.¹²⁶

Criterion #5: Content and its Requirements

The content of a religious education curriculum should be non-repressive, non-indoctrinating and non-prescriptive. It is impossible to determine what the precise content of a religious education curriculum should be. However, the material should be carefully selected and the content should have no denominational bias.¹²⁷ The content should be carefully screened against a hidden curriculum that could discriminate against some minorities, whether they be racial, religious, sexual or political.¹²⁸ It would be best to start the religious education curriculum from an anthropological point of view. signals of transcendence could be found within the empirically given human situation.¹²⁹ There are constant components within each human being and those components reveal themselves regardless of the spacio-temporal situation of individuals.¹³⁰ Using these components as a starting point could ensure a non-repressive curriculum. An open and respectful religious educational content should provide students with a "metaphor (that) has the most fruitful social, political (and) institutional possibilities."¹³¹ Religious education is responsible for ensuring a productive interplay of personal and social forms that should be forever open to development.¹³² The content of the curriculum is to be used to feed the intellectual hunger of students. It should provide them with up-to-date and accurate data to respect their intelligence and their quest for knowledge. "This knowledge should be complemented by additional conceptual learning provided by one's own group,"¹³³ the experiential level is best dealt with outside of school. Indoctrination is the teaching of ideas with the intention that students believe regardless of evidences and regardless of the students'

personal stand,¹³⁴ it can be considered influence carried to excess. A religious education curriculum should state clearly that whatever its content is, it should not be used to suppress evidence or to assert one's authority in a coercive manner.¹³⁵ A truly non-repressive, non-indoctrinating and non-prescriptive content should foster a positive attitude towards the transcendent aspirations of human beings while engaging the interest, the awareness and the minds of students.

Criterion #6 Guiding Towards the Discovery of Identity and Proper Interpersonal Behaviours

A religious education curriculum should guide students towards the discovery of their own identity while at the same time, encouraging a sensitivity regarding proper interpersonal behaviour. Students need to discover that "each woman and each man is a unique historical and bodily creature,"¹³⁶ and that this uniqueness is important. Too many students feel insignificant and lost. The result of their negative perception can be found in the alarmingly high rate of teen suicide. Students often experience an identity crisis during their adolescence.¹³⁷ The role of the religious education curriculum is to provide meaningful material upon which teachers base themselves for educating and nurturing. The careful interweaving of those two actions will help students develop confidence in themselves.¹³⁸ The students' search for identity should thrust them forward towards maturity and towards becoming fully human.¹³⁹ In a multi-faith society, it is important "to make students aware that we are not the centre of the universe."¹⁴⁰ As students learn about humility, they can better understand what their relationship to others should be. Learning about common human ground and common human weaknesses, as well as 'earning about sharing and personal accountability, should result in a better and less prejudiced world.¹⁴¹ A religious education curriculum should try to curtail all explicit rejections of what others hold sacred.¹⁴² Self-confidence, tolerance and responsibility should be the basis for a religious education curriculum which seeks to guide its students towards self-discovery and towards proper human dealings.

The above listed set of criteria is concerned with the philosophy behind a religious education curriculum. It is hoped that the application of these criteria to a curriculum, can help an evaluator ask pertinent questions, which in turn will lead him or her to the identification of the philosophy underlying the curriculum, as well as provide a basis for a concrete and sound evaluation of the curriculum. Of course, there are other aspects that influence the quality of a curriculum such as clarity of language, suitable format, precise vocabulary, close relation of the material to the targeted students, sound organization of the material and a comprehensive bibliography, to name just a few. The next section will apply the suggested criteria to the current Secondary School Curriculum of Protestant Moral and Religious Education, at the secondary one level

APPLICATION OF EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

The present Secondary School Curriculum for Protestant Moral and Religious Education was authorized by the Minister of Education and took effect on January 1st 1986. It had previously received the approval of the "Comité protestant du Conseil supérieur de l'éducation"¹⁴³. This Secondary School Curriculum is complemented by a Curriculum Guide. Though designed to accompany the curriculum and intended as a support document for teachers, "this guide is an official document whose use is optional"¹⁴⁴. Together, the curriculum and the guide represent a program of moral and religious education designed to fit the continuum of moral and religious instruction, as stipulated in section 43 of the Régime pédagogique¹⁴⁵.

The three modules established by the Ministry of Education for the teaching of secondary one students attending a Protestant school are first, the search for identity in the stories of the Old Testament, while showing how the covenant represents the essential belief of the Scriptures and provides an understanding of the relationship between God and the Hebrews,¹⁴⁶ second, the mythical dimension of world religions through the study of creation myths from various cultures;¹⁴⁷ third, the development of a sense of personal identity through the examination of heredity, environmental factors, personal value systems and social changes.¹⁴⁸

In a booklet entitled Protestant Moral and Religious Education, the Quebec government in conjunction with the Comité protestant clearly

states the aims, the nature and the orientation of the Protestant moral and religious curriculum.¹⁴⁹ The following application of the evaluative criteria will examine the three previously mentioned documents.

The first criterion states that a moral and religious education curriculum should be primarily concerned with educational matters. In Protestant Moral and Religious Education, the government indicates clearly that the main objective of the present MRE program is "to encourage the personal development of the pupil."¹⁵⁰ Development here can be interpreted to mean progress or evolution. Inasmuch as education is interested in the nature and direction of the changes that occur within the development of a learner,¹⁵¹ we can then say that in presenting the encouragement of the personal development of the student as its first goal, the present curriculum respects the first criterion. Furthermore, the first section of the Curriculum Guide presents an overview of developmental theories which have outlined the aspects of adolescent growth to be considered when teaching the present MRE curriculum.

The second criterion refers to the need to respect the stage of religious development of the students. When Gabriel Moran elaborated his theory of religious development, he studied Piaget, Kohlberg and Fowler.¹⁵² The authors of the Protestant MRE program researched the field of personal development and investigated the same sources as Gabriel Moran. While Moran suggests a coherent religious educational structure based on his research, the authors of the Protestant MRE curriculum mention each theory studied but do not merge them into one educational religious education

structure. The authors fail to bridge the gap between education and religion. Moran offers a broader perspective by wanting people to go beyond where they are and by explaining how an individual deals with his or her inner invisible dimension in search of finding meaning to life.¹⁵³

In the second section of the Curriculum Guide, the authors of the program offer an accurate description of older adolescents' developmental stages,¹⁵⁴ but seem to overlook the fact that secondary one students are generally thirteen to fourteen years old, and only entering puberty. The authors obviously are concerned that the curriculum should match the stage of development of the learners, but need to reconsider the stage secondary one pupils are at.

The three modules of the secondary one moral and religious education curriculum certainly offer much material which forms the intellectual content needed when religious education is part of a larger educational curriculum;¹⁵⁵ but some adjustments are needed in order to ensure that the material corresponds to the developmental stage of the students so that they are not turned off by the subject matter and can benefit from this course.

The first module, inasmuch as it offers the possibility to "personalize" God, answers the needs of the pupils to perceive Him as a person and nothing greater. It is up to teachers to provide a concrete particular religious background so that the children will be able to acquire a specific religious language.¹⁵⁶ This religious language is the medium through which

the children will feel they "possess" God. Doing so, they will feel secure and will start to understand the universe around them. Students have been known to identify God with a specific segment of reality, therefore teachers aware of this phase should limit to one the religious ideology they use as reference. The children will use this knowledge to better understand their own religious affiliation if the latter is different from the one presented in class.¹⁵⁷ To provide children with a concrete specific religious background does not mean indoctrination or the forced conversion of the children to the chosen ideology. As children explore the universe from its outermost limits and work their way inward, this other religious territory is nothing more or less than a chance for an adventurous exploration.¹⁵⁸ These encounters will help the children find their own identity. The above mentioned aspect is not presented within the curriculum or the Curriculum Guide but it is most important.

At the acquiring-a-religion stage of personal development, students are not ready to accept or reject the moral and religious system they have received, as the authors suggest,¹⁵⁹ because most pupils are still in the process of setting up their religious system in a concrete and particular framework.¹⁶⁰ While elaborating concretely their religious system, students show a tremendous ability to store information and develop their abstract thinking to form a system of ideas which will provide inner security.¹⁶¹ At this level, students begin to differentiate between the sacred and the profane.¹⁶² They learn a specific religious language by which they feel they possess God.¹⁶³ This in turn, gives them the assurance that the world can be understood and that it is acceptable to trust one's thinking.¹⁶⁴ This trust in

their ability to think, will later lead them to reassess the religious system that they have been presented with.¹⁶⁵ This aspect of the sacred and of a religious language seems to have been overlooked in the Curriculum Guide.

While the first two modules can be adapted fairly easily to the students' need, the third module presents a real challenge. Most secondary one students have not reached the religious developmental level enabling them to be interested in a cerebral search for their identity, as the curriculum proposes.¹⁶⁶ Their immaturity and youth seriously slow the progression of lessons devoted to this module. This third module would be fine at a secondary three or four level, when the students are between the ages of seventeen to nineteen. Often, this module has frustrated and bored students, not to mention created a feeling of insecurity and tension. Substituting the exercises recommended in the Curriculum Guide for a series of adventure tales which serve as a stepping block for classroom discussions about values and the students' perception of the actualization of those values in Quebec's society, might prove more worthwhile. The presentation of fictitious tales facilitates the integration of current topics. All efforts should be geared at fostering students' reflections on people's actions, attitudes and motivation and to teach these students how to probe beyond appearances and the immediate reality level. As professionals, teachers are entitled to elaborate what they consider appropriate to teach from the Ministry's curriculum proposals, because they are aware of the varied stages of religious development their students have reached.

While the curriculum does not offer as precise a study of

adolescents' religious development as could be hoped for, it does respect the idea of stages of development. It will be up to the teacher to focus more specifically on his or her students' developmental stages, as he or she personalizes his or her teaching.

The third criterion mentioned the importance of transmitting human fundamental beliefs and values. In Protestant Moral and Religious Education, it is clearly stated that students are expected to develop "an understanding of the moral and religious values of the community,"¹⁶⁷ in which they live. The Secondary School Curriculum lists some of the essential beliefs to be explored and the values to be examined.¹⁶⁸ The beliefs and values suggested by the curriculum, within a Biblical or mythical context, correspond to the core-values suggested by Michael Grumet in his article "Religious Education and Value Assumptions". It can then be concluded that the curriculum does present students with human fundamental beliefs and values.

The fourth criterion is concerned with the pluralistic nature of Quebec's society, it refers to the understanding and respect of the various embodiments of meaning-making systems. The present MRE curriculum is very definite on this particular point, as it declares: the curriculum should help a student develop his or her personality "by fostering an appreciation of his (the student's) own religious tradition and a respect for the religious traditions of others."¹⁶⁹ The second module, called Beginnings, is specially geared towards promoting understanding and respect of other religious systems because it proposes the study of myths from various cultures as the

content to be examined.

The fifth criterion referred to another dimension of respect: the need for a curriculum to have a non-repressive, non-indoctrinating and non-prescriptive content. The Quebec government recognizes the importance of being non-repressive and agrees with the Comité protestant, which remembering the origins of its schools, stresses the importance for a curriculum to be free of church control and rules out from the very beginning of its institutions, denominational and repressive religious education teaching.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, since the Protestant schools were serving the various religious groups constituting the Quebec Protestants (mainly Anglicans, Baptists, Menonites, and Quakers), the character of the Protestant schools was forged out of working compromises for a generally acceptable curriculum.¹⁷¹ The Protestant schools have always been characterized by their willingness to give an open religious education and their flexibility "to accomodate wide differences of religious beliefs."¹⁷² In its preface, the Secondary School Curriculum declares the importance of respecting the religious and cultural diversity of our society.¹⁷³

In Protestant Moral and Religious Education, the government stipulates clearly the non-indoctrinating nature of the MRE curriculum.¹⁷⁴ The government also formulated regulations in 1967, to govern the moral and religious education classes in Protestant schools and specifically offered alternatives to the religious program.¹⁷⁵ The Régime Pédagogique also allows up to 20 percent of the time allotted to a program to be adapted locally.¹⁷⁶ The Curriculum Guide reinforces the non-prescriptive aspect of the program by

suggesting that the guide "must be adapted by the individual teacher" since the latter knows "which approaches will more efficiently and appropriately meet the needs of his or her students."¹⁷⁷

The last criterion refers to the fact that a moral and religious curriculum should investigate the process of self-discovery and the development of proper interpersonal behaviour. In the Curriculum Guide the authors of the programme recognize the need for self-discovery,¹⁷⁸ and also underline the importance of the pupils' attempts to interpret life through the adoption of patterns of belief and interpersonal behaviours.¹⁷⁹ In Protestant Moral and Religious Education, the government states that "pupils should acquire a general knowledge of other people's beliefs and cultures so that they can communicate and live together."¹⁸⁰ The government acknowledges that to cohabit with several religious groups within the same geographic space, is a difficult task which requires that individuals learn to live in tension with others.¹⁸¹ The religious education curriculum must help students manage their human affairs in a responsible fashion and gain consciousness of the interdependence of people and the environment.¹⁸²

The Comité protestant reinforces the fact that certain Protestant virtues are still extolled in Quebec's pluralistic and secular world and should be passed on through the MRE curriculum, such as: attitudes of accountability and respect for others, a sense of the practical, a spirit of critical inquiry, the development of students into independent responsible citizens, a positive orientation to the world and work, and a striving for excellence.¹⁸³ The above listed characteristics by the Comité protestant "were meant to guide . and to

enable a future rather than perpetuate a past."184

The application of the criteria previously chosen, leads to the discovery that the present Protestant MRE curriculum does not fit into the "old" confessional model where theology had an absolute status over secular education 185 The curriculum tends towards a phenomenological approach to moral and religious education, because it wants to provide students with a stand that aims to be as objective as possible. In recognizing the equal value of several truth claims, the curriculum rejects a prescriptive religious attitude but suffers slightly from a relativization of the beliefs and values it would like to pass on.

The present Protestant curriculum is not completely phenomenological in approach as it wishes to guide students in their learning how to learn. The curriculum establishes a framework within which it is possible to respectfully study the various religious systems. The curriculum also recognizes the necessity of individuals to hold some beliefs which are embodied in specific behavioural patterns. The curriculum acknowledges the validity of the religious experience of awe and wonder, but also realistically recognizes that within the specific ways chosen to actualize these experiences of awe and wonder, is the seed of possible conflict.

While the curriculum stresses flexibility for the acceptance of various religious systems, it wants to avoid the trap of privatized religion, which is one of the drawbacks of our modern society. The Comité protestant through the Protestant moral and religious curriculum, is genuinely

concerned with the humanization process of the students attending its schools. It also hopes to influence positively the growth of its students towards religiously mature individuals and responsible citizens, because "real faith takes responsibility"¹⁸⁶ for its actions. Most important of all, it is committed to "the fundamental right, which makes it possible to have freedom of religion rather than freedom from religion"¹⁸⁷

In conclusion, the present curriculum displays the kind of philosophy of moral and religious education that can constructively lead the student population into the twenty-first century. All the necessary elements for a sound MRE curriculum such as, a good understanding of the learning process, a respect for various religious systems, a willingness to be non-repressive and non-indoctrinating, a concern over the self-discovery process of the students, as well as a dynamic structure that is sensitive of the social context and has provisions for adapting according to the situation at hand, are present within the curriculum currently in use. The present curriculum is not built on the old-fashioned confessional model, nor is it structured like a pure, aloof, phenomenological model. The present approach seeks to retain the best of both models, as it provides teachers with the fundamental moral and spiritual principles to be passed on. The curriculum however is not a magical formula, and it is only as good or as bad as what educators make of it. This is why, it is most important for schoolboards to ensure during in-service training sessions, that the philosophy of the curriculum is well understood by the teachers who are responsible for MRE courses. Too often, this aspect tends to be neglected and the quality of MRE teaching then suffers.

1 The teaching of the basic human beliefs and values suggested in the religious education curriculum should make it possible for the seeds of good character to be deposited within the student population. These moral and spiritual principles are not intended for the future, but are meant to be lived at this very moment, for the purpose of humanizing students and hopefully creating an atmosphere where all are free to develop and grow into well adjusted, fulfilled mature adults who will live in harmony with their fellow human beings and with the environment.

CONCLUSION

The description of Quebec's contemporary social structure provided insights as to how the current Protestant religious education curriculum was elaborated. The analysis of the Protestant model of religious education curriculum revealed how it provides an intellectual content to facilitate students' personal search for meaning-making. With those key factors in mind, the direction that religious education could take in the future can now be discussed.

The first vector of future religious education to be considered should be a true qualitative educational democratization for all. Today every Canadian child must attend school but there is a wide range of quality of education that is offered.¹⁸⁸ The recognition of the fact that quality of education is a right, will lead our society towards greater social justice.¹⁸⁹ In many cases what is needed is the humanizing of the school and assure that every pupil receives an education catered to his or her need. The increasing number of failures of immigrant children and of children from inner city schools is a disgrace. Part of the effect of moral and religious education should be to reorient education towards equal opportunities for all. Religious education should also help all students find meaning and hope in life, show what is possible and illustrating how they can devote themselves to it.¹⁹⁰ Religious education must promote relevant education.¹⁹¹ It must make it easier to learn and grow when they know the reason for learning to meet requirements.

The second directional movement should seek to develop a global consciousness and responsible ecological attitudes. According to the Bible, Man was given dominion over the earth and the animals (Gen 1: 29, 30): this dominion should not translate into the exploitation of the earth and people, but rather should be enacted into just, honest and responsible stewardship,¹⁹² thus revealing the interconnectedness of the entire creation.¹⁹³ Thus future religious education should strive to enlighten students to the fact that human life is a gift and that people should be considered sacred and should not be objectified.¹⁹⁴ This belief in turn, would help students commit themselves to their work as a continuation of the creation and learn to be concerned and compassionate towards the rest of creation.¹⁹⁵ A serious consideration of the planet's ecological balance, of the role of human beings and an understanding of the future ecological threats and of the possible ways to avoid them,¹⁹⁶ should be included in future religious education curricula.

The third orientation that would be welcome, would be the teaching of wisdom. In our modern world, we have created specialized and compartmentalized minds, "What tomorrow needs is not masses of intellectuals, but masses of educated men - men educated to feel and to act as well as to think."¹⁹⁷ Too much emphasis has been put on knowledge: knowledge without wisdom cannot lead towards the realization of God's plans for humans.¹⁹⁸ It is in the MRE classes that wisdom can be best transmitted within the school setting. Students who will learn to think wisely and act accordingly, will be the fabric of our united, just, and truthful future world. Theodore Herzl said: If you wish it, it is no dream.¹⁹⁹

Lastly, it would be important to remember that a child is like the tender branch of a tree: given the right training, within a positive environment, it will grow straight and true. Teachers following the philosophy of the MRE curriculum are in a position to greatly influence the right training of their students and thus, contribute to the elaboration of a world dedicated to the oneness of humanity, the equality of all, the acknowledgement of the truth and the glory of God

CHAPTER FIVE

What our time needs is this . . . that we make people increasingly critical, though with greatest care, wisdom and prudence, . . . In one word, we must find means which, instead of making men weak and bewildered, elevate them to a higher state of education and enthusiasm.¹

Robert Ulich

CONCLUSION

The historical overview of chapter two showed the ever-presence of peoples' religious quests, or how our human predecessors dealt with the timeless question of meaning-making. Through the unfolding of this historical progression, the role of the school as a legitimate and needed partner in religious education emerged.² The third chapter outlined the various stages of individual growth and revealed the inclusive nature of the religious development in any human education.³ Chapter three also delineated the necessity of religious education as an essential tool for reaching human maturity.⁴ The fourth chapter analyzed the various components of contemporary society, discussed and evaluated the current Protestant moral and religious education curriculum, as well as looked into the possibilities of religious education in the future. Throughout this study, the role of religious educators as pivotal figures stands out. The conclusion of this

work will invite a reflection into teachers' endeavours

The role of the teacher in moral and religious education is as vital as in any other subject matter, except that it is made more difficult by the nature of the course. The Ministry of Education states clearly that "at the high school . . . level specialists are required because, like other subjects of an academic nature, moral and religious instruction has content and methods appropriate to itself"⁵ Not only does the teacher need to be acquainted with the content of the course, but the teacher needs also to have a good knowledge of the humanization process and needs to be familiar with human fundamental beliefs and values⁶ In moral and religious education, "a teacher worthy of the name is expected to influence students in wholesome directions while at the same time informing them."⁷ This should not deprive the students of the freedom to make their own choice but rather should provide them with a better chance to decide wisely.⁸

Educating religiously in today's society is a real challenge while religious educators ponder on what sort of image is most adequate to the reality of today,⁹ and seek interesting ways to promote understanding of self and of others,¹⁰ they watch how their students often are being seduced by the mermaids of the twentieth century. Modern society often promotes the legitimations of power and prestige as it separates religion from everyday issues.¹¹ This cleavage reduces religion and religious education to a mere

accommodation, and witnesses "the identification of faith with cultural standards, even cultural idols."¹² The issues that concern everyone today are economical, political and ecological. Religious education must provide relevant guidance to enable students to anchor themselves in justice, and compassion,¹³ as it helps students develop the kind of positive attitudes that will ensure they are fruitful members of society.¹⁴

In order to develop these positive attitudes, a moral and religious education teacher must cultivate a nurturing personality. A nurturing teacher "heightens the students' self-perceptions as persons of transcendent dignity invited to partake of a transcendent universe."¹⁵ Of course, potentially all teachers, whether they teach MRE or any other course, can nurture and thus educate religiously.¹⁶ This is why, even when teachers do not know as much content as might be advisable under the circumstances, if they are nurturing individuals, they should feel confident that they can do a good job of teaching an MRE course.

In North America, we have produced the professional educator: this definition reduces the teacher to one who has learnt a great deal of theory and can apply it.¹⁷ "It assumes that students learn best in a setting in which one person is in charge, that this one has knowledge to be given out,"¹⁸ but this situation is not always so. "Self-understanding and self-assessment skills are of great importance, particularly since Protestant education asserts an objective stance to moral and religious inquiry,"¹⁹ and those skills are not

necessarily acquired through a university degree in religious education. Good will, an open mind and a kind soul often go further than an official degree.

What is important for teachers to realize, is the limits they work from, in order to be successful and efficient.²⁰ This simple premise is often forgotten. If it is an unchallenged fact, that teachers are the ones who transmit the bulk of the intellectual content students are expected to learn, it remains certain that learning is much broader. This is why all teachers but especially non-specialists should seek allies in the resource persons available within the community. Parents, religious representatives and all other caring individuals who wish to share their unique human experience, can be asked to contribute. Teachers cannot be expected to carry the whole burden of the students' education. When the occasion arises, teachers must step aside and be content to act as facilitators or as catalysts in the children's educational best interest.²¹

Just as all teachers can educate religiously, MRE teachers must be conscious that all their teaching can be moral and religious, not just in content.²² Often, a teaching experience will transcend the educator's intentions. "What is communicated at any moment is not necessarily what the teacher is consciously teaching."²³ Teachers should approach the MRE content with respect and reverence. Teachers should convey accurately and as completely as possible, the message contained within the content. This does not mean they cannot express their opinions but it does mean that their opinion does not constitute the subject matter of the course.²⁴

The chosen materials or texts should be seen as mediators between the community of the past and the community of the present.²⁵ Teachers should allow the text to fulfill its role: teachers with their students should seek the meaning of what was said in the text while respecting the context of a different historical time frame. Teachers must be careful not to impose their own interpretation and must not create a fear of thinking in their students. Teachers must show respect by attentively listening to students' responses, and by acknowledging the students' right to reject or accept what has been presented.²⁶ Therefore, all teachers specialists and generalists need an adequate preparation. Once a class has started, teachers should not have to fret over content details but should feel free to act out of instinct.²⁷ Competent educators convey the double impression of having a mastery of the subject matter while keeping an open mind and expecting to learn something new during the teaching process.²⁸

MRE teachers need to realize that the basic purpose of moral and religious education is to underline the sacredness of life.²⁹ Every individual's spiritual journey is a lifelong process of becoming fully alive and human. Therefore, MRE teaching should encourage students to develop life-promoting habits as well as promoting vigilance and global awareness.³⁰ It is important to remember that the content of the moral and religious education curriculum is a tool to reach these habits and not an end in itself. The Curriculum Guide is very clear on the fact that the teacher is responsible to adapt the suggested material within the spirit of the program. It also states that a teacher "alone knows which approaches will most efficiently and appropriately meet the needs of his or her students."³¹

According to Gabriel Moran's theory of religious development, secondary one students, normally being between the ages of twelve to fourteen, should be experiencing the "Our People's Belief" moment in the "Acquiring a Religion" stage. Teachers wishing to adapt the content of the curriculum to that particular stage of religious development, should tap in on the students' need for intense specialization and provide them with the opportunity to focus on the colourful historical data from the Biblical period. Having extra material, such as history books, encyclopaedia or various magazines helps students quench their search for knowledge.

The Old Testament characters can easily be presented as heroes. Students then feel, through them, power and might, which in turn leads them to experience transcendence. Of course, the heroes' achievements should be counterpointed by the problems they are facing. It is important not to deify the heroes because all men were created in the image of God and as such, an image can never be perfect. Only the numinous power is perfection. It is to be hoped for that this contextualization of the biblical heroes will in time lead students to the contextualization of their contemporary heroes and help put everything in a proper perspective. All the accumulated details of the biblical narrations should be fused at the end of a module into a coherent mosaic of bright elements.

Creation myths from varied countries also offer a wealth of geographical, anthropological and sociological details which can all be used to stimulate the students' thirst for knowledge. It is important to expose students to a large body of knowledge and to cover as many fields as possible. This exposition will enable them at a future date to establish systems of thinking

that will be richer and more sophisticated as a result of this exposition. Through these encounters, students will have a chance to identify with the concepts of compassion, justice, power and glory, thus beginning to grasp the immensity and the transcendence of the universe and God. Perhaps, the most teachers can be expected to do is to transmit to their students a religious language in as high a degree of literacy as possible and to encourage the pupils' thinking abilities in order to enable them to use these tools in their global development as spiritual beings.

It is also important to try to pass on a sense of community, of cosmic responsibility and of the knowledge of our long human heritage. Each teacher should serve as one out of the many guides the students will encounter on their personal religious journey. MRE courses should not emphasize religious divisiveness but rather should seek to establish a meaningful dialogue where rationality would help to comprehend the role religion plays within personal development.³² A true religious educational context should allow for the exploration of religious differences without rancor or threat and reveal that no human being is the final judge of people's success. In other words, religious education must offer a positive transcendental vision and create opportunities for spiritual growth.³³

To sum up, the role of MRE teachers is to help the students become "internally more loving, open, sensitive and patient,"³⁴ as well as generate a sense of trust. Furthermore, the main criterion for sound MRE teaching should be that, by a behaviour where they are "consistent, fair, attentive, supportive and never insulting... no matter what reason for doing so might seem

I excellent at the moment,"³⁵ teachers are affecting positively their students. Each teacher tries to pass on the best that tradition has to offer to the next generation.³⁶ The handing over of tradition must leave room for the creative responses of students with activities structured in such a way that the exercises open beyond themselves.³⁷ Religious education aims at creating equal mature individuals who will live responsibly and be enriched by the insights of others.³⁸ Lastly, after all has been said, it should be remembered that "the heart of religious education is the heart of the religious educator."³⁹

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APPENDIX A: HISTORICAL SYNTHESIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

HISTORICAL PERIODS	PREHISTORY 600 000 B C	EARLY ANTIQUITY 4 000 B C	LATE ANTIQUITY & MIDDLE AGES 0 \ 1453 A D	RENAISSANCE 1453 \ 1600 A D	MODERN ERA 1600 \ today
REL. CLASSIFICATION	PRIMITIVE RELIGION	ARCHAIC RELIGION	HISTORIC RELIGION	EARLY MODERN RELIGION	MODERN RELIGION
SYMBOL SYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mythic world - numinous blends into all aspects of reality - only one world exists shared by humans & spirits - compact symbolism - humans seek harmony with the natural divine cosmos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - elaboration of a complex cosmology - spirits become gods - the one world is divided between the gods & humans - emergence of priests - stable symbolic structure worked out & transmitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - duality of the world = supernatural above / real world below - introduction of the idea of rejection of the real world - universalistic aspect of religion - God replaces the gods - perception of the absoluteness of God - humans are defined by their capacity for salvation - humans bear a responsible self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - witness the collapse of the hierarchical structuring of the religious & secular systems - concentration on personal relation to the numinous - eradication of religious intermediaries - reinforcement of personal autonomous positive action in the world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collapse of dualism of the world - structure of the human situation grounds religion - traditional religious symbolism develops in new directions - humans are responsible for their choice of symbolism - general search for an entirely new mode of religious symbolization
RELIGIOUS ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of magical rites to control the gods - divination - participants become one with the mythical beings - humans become one with the myth - daily living is closely intertwined with religious practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emergence of varied cults to get on the good side of the gods = respectful persuasion - distance between the gods and humans creates a need for a communication system - worship and sacrifices are communicative attempts - establishment of official cultic centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all actions are geared towards salvation - ideal of religious life is separation from real life - creation of organized religious communities - creation of religious orders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - elimination of religious hierarchy - elimination of religious orders - stress is put on faith - opposition to the world rejection stand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - humans' search for meaning is no longer limited to the religious point of view - general search for adequate standards of action - search for personal maturity & social relevance considered the modern quest for salvation
RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - do not exist as a separate entity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emergence of a distinct hierarchical religious system - religious hierarchy is subordinate to the political elite - inexistence of religious communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - religious elite claims a direct relation to the transcendental world - autonomy of the religious hierarchical system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creation of a two class system = the elect / the reprobate - religious organizations are based on voluntary association for the vanguard but are imposed on the masses - delimitation of the Church and State spheres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - religious positions are open to question in the process of making sense of human life and the world - introduction of open and flexible patterns of religious membership - acceptance of secular answers as valid solutions to problems - ordering of the standards of doctrinal orthodoxy & of the enforcement of moral purity
SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ritual life reinforces the solidarity of the society - rituals control human behaviour - life is a one process of learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social structures & practices considered grounded in a universal cosmic order - social conformity reinforced as evidenced by religious sanctions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establishment of autonomous criteria to judge political actions - social codes and ideology are provided by religion & promote social improvements - religion often used as the legitimation & reinforcement agent for the existing social order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - beginning of secularization - religious pressures towards social improvements - construction of a social system with a tendency to change in the direction of greater value realization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - culture is endlessly revised - individual freedom in culture & social decisions - unprecedented numbers of opportunities for creative innovations in every sphere of human action - life conceived as an ongoing process

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