

PROTESTANT EDUCATION IN QUÉBEC

LE COMITÉ PROTESTANT DU CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION

I The Development of Confessional Education in Québec

New France began as a Protestant venture. For the first forty years of the Colony, French Huguenots formed the majority of the population, and Huguenot governors Roberval, Pierre de Chauvier and others played major roles in its daily life.^{*1}

After 1630 when the Colony came under Roman Catholic Control, small pockets of Huguenots persisted until the conquest in 1760. This event brought a large new influx of English-speaking Protestants, and with them a problem of relationships between the two confessional groups, now divided linguistically as well. The problem was reflected in the area of education. The next century was marked by many attempts at accommodation, and by unpopular and abortive efforts at the establishment of a single centralized public system alongside the parochial schools. The most important legislation of this period was that of 1841 and 1846 which provided that the confessional minority — Catholic or Protestant — in any area could "dissent" from participation in the existing school system of the majority, set up their own school board, and levy taxes for its support. The education acts of 1869 and 1875 established two independent confessional public systems, Catholic and Protestant, each enjoying a large measure of local autonomy. Both confessional groups favoured this division, but for somewhat different reasons. Catholics viewed the school as a teaching arm of the Church, and felt that its doctrinal mission would be impaired in a unified system. They also saw the Catholic school as a protection against the various attempts at religious assimilation by the Protestant conquerors. The Protestants, by then predominantly English-speaking, favoured the Protestant school partly as a cultural defence against the French majority and partly as a means of transmitting distinctive values shared by the major Protestant denominations.

II Confessionality: some Arguments Against

The confessional system has been criticized on many grounds:

1. It was an accommodation to fear, on both sides.
2. It propagated division. The historian, Louis-Philippe Audet, was eloquent on this point: "Generations of students, the products of this double system of education, have progressed through the system, side by side, for almost a century, ignoring each other completely. Such a system has been inclined to develop a narrow

nationalism and to nurture racial misconceptions, and has missed the opportunity of sharing the two heritages".^{*2}

3. The system, though possibly useful in the past, is incompatible with the religious pluralism and openness of modern Québec society.
4. The Protestant population is largely secular, and has lost its attachment to be religious institutions on which the confessional system is based.
5. The system is an anomaly in the modern world — most nations have a unified system of education.

III Confessionality: some Arguments For

Are there then any reasons for maintaining confessional education in Québec? Indeed there are:

1. The fears of 1875 were well-founded. The same reasons of autonomy and protection of two cultures, which led to the creation of the confessional division, persist to-day. The low rate of cultural assimilation in Québec, compared to other provinces, is partly attributable to the confessional division, even though the one-to-one association of language and religion is not nearly as close now as in 1875. Recent opinion polls in the Montréal area confirm the continuing popular desire, on both sides, for a confessional system, and this in the most pluralistic area of Québec.
2. The Protestant system has evolved with its clientele to the point where it is fully as open to a variety of religious traditions as that of the unified public systems of other provinces and nations. The cultural variety of Québec is served and enriched by the presence of two public systems: the Catholic, unconfessional system, itself increasingly open, and a multiconfessional "Protestant"^{*3} system which actively encourages diversity, both religious and secular. The preservation of these two approaches enriches the cultural life of Québec by providing a cultural mosaic instead of a melting pot. "Vive la différence!"
3. The divisions criticized by Audet have been greatly attenuated in recent years by the advent of sharing agreements between school boards of the two confessions, especially in rural areas where these divisions used to be especially marked. Most "Protestant" schools outside Montréal have

significant proportions of Catholic students and a similar though lesser mixing occurs in Catholic schools. At the level of the confessional committees responsible for these schools, cordial and cooperative relations exist which were virtually absent for most of the past century. More can be done, but already Audet's sad picture is no longer accurate. It is important to note that our confessional system is much less conducive to conflict today than would be one based on language. This is because language is still a "hot" issue whereas religious affiliation is a "cool" one. A linguistically segregated system would thus be much more divisive not to mention the strife an enforced unilingual one would cause! Population trends among both Roman Catholics and "Protes-

tants" are steadily eroding the old equations: French = Catholic, English = Protestant, bringing about a new cultural pluralism. Confessional education can thus be a bridge of entente in to-day's Québec.

We suggest that a confessional system of education is well adapted to Québec's current needs and worthy of our faithful support. The particular values of the "Protestant" system are discussed later in this article — values which lend further evidence of the "Protestant" contribution to modern Québec.

Since the Education Act of 1964, confessional aspects of Québec education have been the responsibility of two permanent confessional committees of le Conseil supérieur de l'éducation. The present article describes the work of the Comité protestant, the kind of education it seeks to promote, and the schools it serves.

The Members of the Comité protestant du Conseil supérieur de l'éducation

Representatives of Protestant Denominations

Mr. Francis W. Slingerland, Chairman, professor, Laval University

Rev. Garth E. Bulmer, rector, Ste-Agathe-des-Monts

Dr. Paul Garnet, professor, Concordia University

Rev. David Oliver, rector, St-Jean d'Iberville

Rev. Daniel C. Racine, national director, Canadian Bible Society, French section

Representatives of Parents

Mrs. Hilda Argue, teacher, Dorset School, Baie d'Urfé

Mr. Gérard Gauthier, editor, Credo

Mrs. Marion Jefferies, teacher, Saguenay Valley High School

Vacancy

Representatives of Educators

Dr. J. Arthur Boorman, professor, McGill University

Miss Gwen Lord, principal, Northmount High School

Mr. John N. Parker, assistant executive director, Québec Association of School Administrators

Miss Frances B. Wright, pedagogical consultant, Lakeshore School Board

Mr. Harry Brown, Counselling Service, Lennoxville

Member ex officio

Associate Deputy-Minister of Education (Protestant)
(vacancy)

Secretary

Mr. Harry Kuntz, Québec

^{*1} "Les protestants en Nouvelle-France" thesis by Marc-André Bédard, U. Laval, 1976; see also the unexpurgated version of F.X. Garneau's "Histoire du Canada", published in Paris, 1913-1920.

^{*2} L.P. Audet — "Education in Canada East and Québec: 1840-1875" in "Canadian Education: a History", Prentice-Hall, 1970.

^{*3} Through various legal decisions and through common practice the word "Protestant" in Québec education has come to mean non-Roman Catholics, including members of other world religions. Its use in this wider sense is indicated by quotation marks.

Composition of the Comité protestant

The Comité protestant is made up of fifteen members, appointed for a three year term of office and representing the Protestant denominations, the parents and the teachers. All the members are appointed by the lieutenant-gouverneur en conseil, following recommendation by the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, after consultation with those groups deemed most representative of the Protestant denominations, of the parents, and of the teachers. Such recommendation must be approved by the majority of the Protestant members of the Conseil.

The sous-ministre associé protestant is an ex officio associate member of the Comité protestant.

The Comité chooses its own chairman from amongst its members and he is ex officio a member of the Conseil.

A permanent secretary is appointed by the lieutenant-gouverneur en conseil on recommendation of the Comité. The secretary is a civil servant who is not a member of the Comité.

Role and Powers of the Comité protestant

The Comité protestant has duties and exercises certain powers:

- It makes regulations to recognize confessional educational institutions as Protestant and to ensure their confessional character;
- It recognizes confessional educational institutions as Protestant and revokes such recognition when necessary;

- It makes regulations respecting Christian education, religious and moral instruction and religious service in the educational institutions recognized as Protestant;
- It makes regulations respecting the qualification, from the point of view of religion and morals of the managing and teaching staff in such educational institutions;
- It approves, from the point of view of religion and morals, the curricula, textbooks and teaching material in such educational institutions;
- It approves, for Protestant religious instruction, the curricula, text-books, and teaching material and makes regulations respecting the qualification of the teachers having charge of such instruction in schools other than those recognized as Protestant;
- It makes recommendations to the Conseil supérieur or to the Ministre respecting any matter within its competence.

The Comité may:

- receive and hear the requests and suggestions of associations and institutions and of any person respecting any matter within their competence;
- cause to be carried out such studies and research as they deem necessary or useful for the pursuit of their objects;
- make for its internal management regulations which shall be subject to the approval of the lieutenant-gouverneur en conseil.

Publications of the Comité protestant

- What is "Acceptable"? 50-1004A 16 pages CSE 1976
Que veut dire "Acceptable"? 50-1004 16 pages CSE 1976
- A New Start in the School 50-240 14 pages CSE 1977
Reprendre en main le projet scolaire 50-239 14 pages CSE 1977
- A Bibliography on Small Schools, 160 pages CSE 1976
- Protestant Small Schools and Protestant Communities: A Historical Perspective 36 pages CSE 1977
Les petites écoles protestantes et les communautés protestantes: Aspect historique (à venir)
- The Protestant Fact in Québec Education
Le fait protestant dans l'éducation au Québec CSE 1978
- Education in Human Sexuality in the Protestant Schools of Québec (à venir)
- Facts and Fallacies (à venir)
Le vrai et le faux (à venir)

HOW THE PROTESTANT COMMITTEE FULFILLS ITS MANDATE FOR PROTESTANT SCHOOLS

THE RECOGNITION OF SCHOOLS AS PROTESTANT

Public education in Québec takes place in confessional schools which are either Catholic or Protestant. Protestants pay taxes to Protestant school boards, which support Protestant schools. Similarly, the Roman Catholic majority pay taxes to Catholic school commissions, which support Catholic schools. For school purposes the term "Protestant" has come to mean any non-Roman Catholic who joins with confessional protestants in the educational enterprise. It includes everyone who declares himself as Protestant for the school census. This does not mean, however, that the school system itself has abandoned its confessional character. Protestant schools are

more than merely non-religious schools for non-Roman Catholics. On the other hand, Protestant education aims to do justice to the plurality of religious view points represented by the various groups of people involved in the Protestant educational enterprise. How is it possible to give an education which is confessional and yet not denominational, which reflects the religious dimension and yet strives to be free from religious bias, which transmits the values emanating from the Protestant Reformation which have formed an important basis of North American culture and yet is open to the diverse contributions made to that culture from other sources?

THE REGULATION

It has been the task of the Protestant Committee to resolve these dilemmas, as it has sought to fulfil its legal responsibility to make regulations for the confessional character of our Protestant schools. To this end, the Comité protestant, in the Fall of 1975, published **The Regulation of le Comité protestant du Conseil supérieur de l'éducation: Text and Explanatory Notes**. This publication constitutes a milestone in the history of Québec Protestant education. There is no longer any doubt about how to qualify as a Protestant school from a confessional point of view.

- In order to qualify, a school must:
- offer to its pupils Moral and Religious Instruction (MRI) according to the curriculum and using the text books which have been approved by the Comité protestant,
 - in all subjects use only texts and curricula approved by the Committee for their moral and religious content,
 - be staffed by teachers who respect the Protestant character of the school as set forth in the Regulation.

RECOGNITION

The Regulation envisages two kinds of recognition: (a) normal recognition of schools which comply with the Regulation, (b) temporary recognition for one year only, of schools not entirely satisfying the requirements.

Clearly, the second kind of recognition is intended only for schools which are making efforts to comply. It should also be noted that recognition is of schools not of boards.

I. MORAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION (MRI)

- The curriculum approved by the Committee aims to inform students about religion, not to indoctrinate them.
- There is sufficient flexibility in this curriculum for a school to

respond to the desires of the vast majority of parents in a given locality regarding the moral and religious education of their children.

- The Regulation requires that these courses be available for all grades. At the secondary level the local school authorities are free to decide whether they are to be optional or not. At the elementary level, le ministère de l'Éducation regulations preclude optionality.
- Similarly the Regulation requires that every pupil be given the opportunity to participate in activities of a religious nature.
- Parents who object on conscientious grounds to their children partaking in MRI or in religious activities in school may have their children excused upon making a written request.

II. APPROVAL OF TEACHING MATERIALS

The publication "What is Acceptable?" describes the Committee's task and criteria by which approval of teaching materials is given.

- In practice very few of the books submitted to the Committee are refused.
- It is incorrect to say that the Committee "bans" a book when it refuses approval. There is nothing to prevent a parent acquiring a book so refused, at his own cost and on his own responsibility, and making it available to his own children. The purpose in refusing approval is not to limit freedom, but to guarantee it. Refusal ensures that no child can be compelled to read the book in question or be put academically at a disadvantage for refusing to read it. It also ensures that tax-payers' money is not spent on such material.
- For audio-visual materials which are too numerous for the Committee to review, criteria have been provided for the guidance of local school authorities.

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The cultural variety of Québec is served and enriched by two public systems: the Catholic, uniconfessional, itself increasingly open, and a multiconfessional Protestant system which encourages diversity, both religious and secular.

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PROTESTANT EDUCATION IS VALUES EDUCATION

How we teach Quebec's minority what it believes!

"The worth of any society depends upon the value experience it promotes among individual human beings".

A.N. Whitehead

A. The teaching of Moral and Religious Instruction (MRI)

(a) Requirements to offer MRI in present situation

One of the most important duties of the Protestant Committee is to ensure that moral and religious instruction is provided for pupils attending Protestant schools. Every school has a course outline for each grade level, and it is the responsibility of the individual teacher to adapt the program to suit the needs of his or her pupils.

(b) Objectives of MRI Curriculum

The objectives of the MRI Curriculum are:

1. to develop the growth of a moral and spiritual interpretation of life.
2. to develop a growing awareness of moral and religious values.
3. to broaden the pupil's socio-spiritual culture and experience.
4. to allow for the pupil's personal development of values.
5. to give every pupil an opportunity to participate in courses of religious or moral instruction.

(c) Curriculum:

The curriculum for moral and religious instruction includes:

1. Bible study courses based on passages selected from the Old and New Testaments.
 2. Courses of study dealing with world religions, philosophy or ethics, personal development, human relations and social problems.
- School boards adopt many different approaches in the teaching of MRI to the various levels of elementary and secondary schools.

The Protestant Education Service (P.E.S.) is comprised of a Director and two professional staff workers.

The role of the PES is to help school boards and individual schools to develop a program for MRI.

The field workers set up workshops for teachers, review new materials, and encourage the teaching of MRI in the schools.

MRI bulletins are issued to the schools regularly to inform teachers of new programs, films or literature dealing with moral and religious education.

B. Teachers and teacher training

(a) What is expected of a teacher:

Enthusiasm, that zest for living and learning which gives joy and purpose to all our days, is an incalculable asset to any teacher. A firm grasp of the subject matter is essential but not sufficient. The ability to motivate students, to relate to them in a relaxed yet professional manner and to make the subject matter come alive — these important skills are more easily developed once the teacher has that extra spark of enthusiasm.

Freedom of conscience is a fundamental principle exercised at all levels within the Protestant schools. Teachers are therefore expected to respect a student's right to decide freely all spiritual and moral questions according to his own conscience. At the same time, it is the responsibility of the teacher to guide and to encourage the student in establishing his own particular value system and a sense of responsibility. Just as the student has an inherent right to make moral decisions according to his conscience, the teacher, likewise, may ask to be relieved of the duty of teaching MRI. A teacher is required to make the request in writing, at the time of employment or re-engagement stating his reasons.

(b) How teacher training schools serve the MRI teacher:

Bishop's University's 'Graduate School of Education' offers a one-year program in which all teachers-in-training are trained to teach MRI. The method is three-fold. 1. The theory behind the teaching of religion is integrated into both the educational psychology course and the principles of education course. 2. All teachers-in-training are required to familiarize themselves with methods appropriate to MRI. 3. Practice teaching in MRI is arranged for all teachers-in-training who are working toward certification at the elementary level and a substantial amount of practice is provided for students majoring in MRI at the secondary level.

McGill University's Faculty of Education serves the prospective MRI teacher as it does a teacher of any other discipline. Teachers-in-training who wish certification at the secondary level can specialize in Protestant Studies. These students become well acquainted with various methods used in teaching MRI and efforts are made to provide the student with as much practice teaching in MRI as possible. For the students wishing certification at the ele-

"And whatever it may become in the future, Quebec will always have had a Christian culture. Only blind dogmatism could exclude the academic study of human faiths from the curriculum. It is essential to the study of English and French literature, to history, to the arts and even to the science."

From: *The Future of Protestant Education in Québec*, by George Johnston of McGill Faculty of Religious Studies.

"It is society's values which will determine the solutions it seeks to its problems. A value is a state or quality which is seen as desirable, for which one is willing to invest effort or modify behaviour. It is the energy source of society and also the channel of that energy".

From: *Tomorrow's Values for Today's Children — Toward a Consensus of Values*, address by Prof. Francis Slingerland to the Québec Federation of Home and School Associations, April 30, 1976.

"A meaningful school is a school that recognizes that values in education cannot be set aside. It is agreed that schools are full of scientific truths and objective facts. But one cannot fully live on scientific truth alone. Life demands reasons for living, values that can give meaning and purpose to life.

Yet, values cannot simply be taught. They have to be demonstrated by human beings and reflected in their daily conduct. Youngsters must be able to live in contact with persons who understand the meaning of friendship and joint responsibility, who place a high premium on loyalty; people who do not equate success with money; in short, persons who respect intelligence and who know what they themselves stand for in life."

From: *A New Start in the School* Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, Comité protestant. 1976

mentary level, Math and Language Arts are compulsory but Protestant Studies can be taken as an elective.

As of Summer '77, McGill offers a **Certificate in Moral and Religious Instruction**. This course is specifically designed to meet the needs of present and prospective MRI teachers. Candidates must be undergraduates who are working toward B. Ed. degrees. In order to fulfil the practical requirements of the program, the candidate should be actively engaged as a teacher. Thirty credits are required, covering academic and methods courses as well as field experience. It should be noted that McGill is no longer accepting scattered credits — a student must take the whole program to qualify for

certification. McGill offers this program during the summer and winter sessions.

Concordia University offers a Diploma in Theological, Religious and Ethical Studies designed to meet the needs of teachers who wish to update their study of these fields. Candidates must be graduates holding a bachelor's degree from a recognized university. Each student in the program makes course selections which provide him with not more than 3 areas of concentration. In order to receive the Diploma, candidates are required to complete thirty credits and pass a three-credit exam. Classes are held in the evenings and are offered on both campuses of the University.

MRI CURRICULUM

The Comité protestant approved, in May 1976, a new curriculum for Moral and Religious Instruction in Protestant Schools. This new curriculum was prepared by The Protestant Education Service of le ministère de l'Éducation.

As a sample, the prescribed course for Secondary III is described here:

THEME: "Survival and Living"

AIM: To lead the pupil to an examination of a variety of attitudes concerning the moral and spiritual implications of survival and living.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Unit I Prophets and Wise Men

OBJECTIVE: To acquaint pupils with the Old Testament Prophetic Tradition with its stress on religion as an ethical response to God's presence; and with an important type of religious writing, "Wisdom Literature", familiar to people of most cultures and of all ages.

Unit II Myths and Rituals

OBJECTIVE: To acquaint the pupil with the significance of myths and rituals in man's struggle for survival and in his quest for the meaning of life.

Unit III Issue of Survival

OBJECTIVES: To acquaint the pupil with some of the major current factors related to both individual and collective survival.

Sub-Unit 1 Prejudice and its Forms

Sub-Unit 2 Contemporary Technology

Sub-Unit 3 Poverty, Affluence and their Forms

Sub-Unit 4 Pollution and Conservation

Sub-Unit 5 Human Sexuality

