

Renewing the Place of Religion in Schools

Report submitted
by the Catholic
Committee to the
Minister of
Education
October 1999

Québec

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1999

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INTRODUCTION

The current debate on the place of religion in the schools offers Québec society a unique opportunity to participate in decisions that will have a significant impact on the future of religious instruction in the schools. These decisions will have repercussions on many fundamental issues: the responsibility of educating young people; the sharing of this responsibility among parents, the school and the community of believers; the relationship between Québec society and the State; the interpretation and application of rights; the role of the Charters in establishing an equilibrium between the judiciary and legislative powers; the place that must be made for religious and cultural diversity in public institutions; and the relationship of Québec society with the spiritual roots of its culture.

In this report, the Catholic Committee presents the educational mission of the school as the focus of its reflection on children and adolescents in today's society, their questions and hopes, but also the challenges that confront them on the threshold of the third millennium. The changes that face our modern society call for renewed visions and educational practices, as we understand their impact on moral, spiritual and religious formation. Different perceptions of the changes required in today's society have necessitated this democratic debate.

Thus the Catholic Committee will propose an analysis of the debate and make recommendations that take into consideration the particular contexts that have questioned the place of religion in the schools and the implications thereof. The Committee will explore both educational and social perspectives. Its reflection will focus first on the 'raison d'être' of religion in schools. The Committee believes that reflection on the primary objectives will help to reconcile the differences that this debate tends to polarize: a cultural initiation or a spiritual development; rights or traditions; religious particularities or social cohesion; a quest for identity or common values. The Committee believes that fundamental respect for differences will diffuse potential controversies. The analyses and recommendations of the Committee will reflect this perspective.*

* This report will use inclusive language and will alternate between feminine and masculine pronouns and adjectives.

1. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

To situate the problem in its proper perspective, the Committee began by questioning the purpose of religious education in the schools. Why do we have spiritual and religious formation in schools? What might be expected of this formation? The Committee will first consider questions pertaining to educational objectives. Then it will explore the structure of this education, the pedagogical approaches, and the most appropriate administrative and juridical framework.

1.1 The objectives of religious education in the schools

The question of the place of religion in the schools is situated within a larger context that examines the objectives of education. From the 1960's, these objectives focused on the growth of the individual. This concept of growth is reflected in several national and international documents: the Parent Report in Québec (1963), the Hall-Dennis Report in Ontario (*Learning and Living* Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education in the Schools of Ontario, 1968), the Plowden Report in England (*Children and Their Primary Schools*, Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967), the Faure Report (*Apprendre à être*) for Unesco (1973). In Québec, this educational philosophy was expressed in the report, *L'École québécoise. Énoncé de politique et plan d'action* (1979) and in the preamble to the Education Act. The emphasis on personal and global development is an undeniable acquisition and its purpose is to develop free and responsible individuals, social beings who are capable of critical perspective and creativity. This emphasis prevents the educational process from simply promoting modeling or conformity.

However, in the context of a society undergoing transformation, the school must also accentuate other aspects. The fragile nature of the social fabric and the explosion of knowledge require educational objectives that pertain to instruction and citizenship. The Catholic Committee supports the objectives of educational reform and seeks to establish an equilibrium for these important considerations in the educational mission of the school. **This educational mission must be inspired by an enriched humanism.**

In this perspective, we will explore the relevance of religious education in the school, for young people as well as the society in which they live. **The educational principle is the first consideration that must guide the State in this matter.** Religious education has its place in the school in so far as it focuses on significant knowledge and competencies, affects the fundamental dimension of a young person's personal development, and pursues cultural and social interests for the common good.

1.1.1 Objectives relating to personal formation

Because students are the focus of the educational mission of the school, its primary aim is to enable students to experience the fullness of their humanity. The educational mission seeks to instruct and situate young people in a cultural universe by offering them access to different areas of knowledge and experiences that will give meaning and quality to their lives. This mission helps young people become free and responsible individuals who are capable of discernment, of making moral choices, of developing convictions and of commitment. Religious instruction specifically contributes to this educational mission by pursuing three related objectives: cultural initiation, spiritual development and the formation of an identity.

Cultural initiation and religious knowledge

Human development takes place within a particular culture and history. It presupposes an aggregate of affective and social intellectual references to which it subscribes and by which it is supported. It is ingrained in a process of initiation and cultural transmission. The school's purpose is to provide a view of the world, offer adequate access to the important domains of experience and knowledge by different means of exploration and appropriation.¹ Exposure to the arts does not necessarily produce artists, nor does education in the sciences produce scientists. Yet either exposure will introduce an educational experience which otherwise might remain unexplored. This rationale applies to the domain of religious questioning. We do not proceed without an initiation, a transmission, an appropriation of rich and complex beliefs that are the object of research and scientific reflection in many disciplines: history, exegesis, anthropology, philosophy, religiosity and theology. The school introduces students to these domains of knowledge, within the proper context.

How can the school assume the responsibility of transmitting this knowledge without "indoctrinating" students? The presentation of doctrines or religious beliefs could become a form of intellectual conditioning if it entailed pressure to conform and did not leave place for critical reflection or affirmation of autonomy, or if the knowledge was fossilized, transmitted as unalterable and its acquisition became the principal objective. In order to begin an exploration of religious doctrines in a context of respect for freedom, the approach must focus on a process of 'accompanying' young people on a quest for meaning and the development of their autonomy. This approach is neither neutral nor purely objective. It does not exclude the expression of convictions, provided that the aim of this expression is not to impose meaning but rather the expression of a journey that invites us to continue our research.²

On this point, religious instruction is similar to citizenship education or moral instruction, where it is necessary to find a delicate balance between respect for freedom and the invitation to discern values and behaviors that will benefit society as well as individuals. The school educates the young person to develop a responsible and enlightened freedom. This is accomplished by avoiding an approach that claims to be purely objective, or by presenting subjective feelings of authenticity as sufficient criterion for truth. The teacher is not the source of unalterable knowledge, but rather presents avenues for discovery and personal responsibility. The 'art' of education consists in putting 'freedom' in a world that must always be interpreted and transformed, from one generation to the next.

Spiritual development

From the perspective of an enriched humanism, **the spiritual dimension represents a particular and fundamental structure for human development.** There are definitions of the objectives of religious education that strip it of its specific character by reducing it to a transmission of ethical or civic values. Even if such an education may contribute to the pursuit of this objective, it should not be restricted to it. Considering that we are discussing religion, we are indeed dealing with the religious dimension of human development. However, this does not mean that we are referring to the development of religiosity, understood as an expression of religious faith. Rather, it refers to the growth that each person is called to experience in a relationship with the ultimate and unconditional, and to the maturity and autonomy that should develop as each individual addresses the question of

1. Cf. CSE. *Pour un renouvellement promoteur des programmes à l'école*, September 1998, Ch. 2.

2. For information on this question, see Elmer John THIESSEN, *Teaching for Commitment. Liberal Education, Indoctrination & Christian Nurture*.

the absolute.³ It also refers to the quality of relationships that each individual is called to develop with one's self, with others, and with one's physical, cultural and social environment.

These are universal challenges of growth whatever attitude we adopt toward religious beliefs. The theologian Karl Rahner said that even in a world where the word 'God' and all religions would have disappeared, human beings would still be confronted by the mystery of their existence. Alister Hardy, the Oxford biologist, has said that this openness to transcendence is a structure that human beings have developed in the process of evolution and survival.⁴ The research of Robert Coles, the Harvard psychiatrist, demonstrated not only the presence of this dimension from childhood but its existence in all cultures.⁵ The philosopher Charles Taylor described a universal form of the human conscience as part of a spiritual reality, in so far as ethical search for the Good relates the subject to a transcendence, to a 'something' else to which each person must situate himself in order to acknowledge himself as a human being.⁶

The concept of 'the spiritual' must be specific if we wish to avoid equivocal ambiguities. There is a tendency to associate it with a vague moral or aesthetic meaning, or even with bizarre experiences mixed with mysticism. For many years, the English researcher David Hay has conducted empirical research on infants and adults in order to specify the nature of the experience that is categorized as 'spiritual.' The most significant constant he identified was a more intense consciousness of one's own reality and of one's profound communion with others and with the universe, even an openness to a transcendence that is beyond the control of one's will. In this sense, a spiritual being is a being-of-relationships.⁷

This spiritual dimension has a more explicit religious connotation when the question is raised concerning the relationship with God as understood by various religions. These connotations give both an interpretation and a particular historical and cultural context to the universal spiritual experience. In actual fact, however, the two dimensions of spiritual and religious development overlap and enlighten the other.

The challenges of growth involved in this development call upon educational interventions shared by families, the school, and the faith communities. The specific role of the school is defined in its educational mission. Its purpose is to accompany students in a process of growth and maturation, using means that are specific to the school and respecting the freedom of all individuals. There is also the 'pedagogical' role whose objectives and procedures may be defined for moral development.

The formation of an identity

Must spiritual and religious development be grounded in the expressions of particular traditions or should they be completely detached? What is the connection between the growth of young people and the formation of their identity?

3. Cf. Fritz OSER, P. GMÜNDER, L. RIDEZ, *L'Homme, son développement religieux*.

4. Alister HARDY, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*.

5. Robert COLES, *Les Enfants et Dieu*; David HAY, *Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts*.

6. Charles TAYLOR, *Les Sources du moi. La formation de l'identité moderne*.

7. David HAY, *Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts*, London; 'Identifying Children's Spirituality: How Do You Start Without a Starting Point?', *British Journal of Religious Education*, No 18, Vol. 3, 1992. The research group led by Dr. Hay of the University of Nottingham focused on the place and the meaning that spiritual development must have according to the terms of British Law pertaining to the education of the young.

The formation of an identity in a pluralistic society poses new challenges. In today's society, one's identity is influenced by various sources, by an experiential exploration wherein the formation of beliefs and convictions often depends on the institutional influences and to the communities to which we belong.⁸ Our contemporaries search for spiritual paths that are free from dogmatism and institutional authorities and founded on the person's interior experiences.

This search is grounded in a modern claim to autonomy, in a willingness to distance oneself from particularities that lock us into a closed mentality and often lead to different forms of religious traditionalism. It also promotes the moral principle of tolerance and the free spirit of modernity.

This affirmation has permitted a clearer emergence of freedoms. It provides the opportunity for interior renewal by different religious traditions. However, there is a mistrust of particularities that would favor a type of 'religiosity' without form or contour. This current thought claims to favor a unifying multicultural vision, that "believes it has solved the problem of religious violence by a systematic dilution of any notion of identity. [...] All risk of misunderstanding is thus eliminated, for the worldwide circulation of information will make us completely free to choose what pleases us in each culture, thus we are completely universal and religiously homogeneous!"⁹ *This tendency of contemporary religious culture presents at least two major difficulties.*

In the first place, we must state that *the experience common to all religions is inaccessible in a 'pure state' without any mediation.* "It simply does not exist in a natural state. It is only found in a cultural state and it is only present after a slow acquisition of a particular tradition."¹⁰ We do not automatically develop a universal system of values by a process of abstraction and within a universe of pure ideas, but rather by means of a place, a language, a culture, a religion that is inevitably cloaked in an historical context.

The second objection follows from the first. The experience of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue has demonstrated that patient progress on our own personal journey is necessary before being able to be able to reach an interior place where we may encounter the other. *True dialogue is much more than peaceful coexistence. It presupposes the engagement of each of us in our personal quest, while, at the same time, leaving us open to the other.*¹¹ Within this perspective, we consider the recognition of identifying particularities less as an obstacle to dialogue but rather as a condition to encounter the other "If you understand the particularities that define you, then you will understand yourself. These particularities permit you to enter into relationships with others. They identify you in their eyes and give you references that situate you with theirs. They are what we agree to put aside in order to establish a dialogue: they become the foundation on which we establish our exchange."¹²

In developing this train of thought, we see that the affirmation of freedom includes consciousness of one's heritage. "We see a new rapport that individuals have with what they have been 'given,' with what they have 'received' in sharing their existence, the notion

8. Cf. Raymond LEMIEUX, 'Croyances et incroyances, une économie du sens commun,' in *Croyances et incroyances au Québec*. See also Anne FORTIN, 'Identités religieuses et changement de paradigme' in *Charles Taylor et l'interprétation de l'identité moderne*.

9. Jean MOUTTAPA, *Dieu et la révolution du dialogue. L'ère des échanges entre les religions*, p. 26.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

11. Cf. Raimundo PANIKKAR, *Le Dialogue intrareligieux*, Richard BERGERON, *Vivre au risque des nouvelles religions*, Jacques DUPUIS, *Vers une théologie chrétienne du pluralisme religieux*; J.M. Roger TILLARD, *Dialoguer pour ne pas mourir*.

12. Marcel GAUCHET, *La Religion dans la démocratie. Parcours de la laïcité*, p. 91.

of community to which they belong, of the tradition in which they live or of the sexual orientation that identifies them. [...] To summarize this shifting principle, you must first reconcile your interior self with your exterior being. Memberships and inferences constitute our personal identity. The true 'me' will emerge from subjective appropriation of social objectivity. [...] The appropriation of collective characteristics that we have received is the vector of personal singularity.¹³ The human person is a 'recipient' being, who finds, in a subjective and critical appropriation of different heritages, the path to the affirmation of his freedom.¹⁴

Presently in most western societies, the relationship of the individual with a cultural or religious tradition is no longer taken for granted. We find ourselves with a 'fragmented memory', according to Danièle Hervieu-Léger's expression,¹⁵ by the combined effect of critical history and the fascination of modernity for the future, wherein lies the source of a certain contempt for the past. *This 'fragmented memory' contributes to the difficulty that modern individuals have situating themselves within a particular heritage. They can only freely situate themselves following studies that have enlightened them.*

If this process of discernment appears demanding, it implies certain appreciable benefits. Critical reflection obliges us to recognize the plurality of systems of meanings, which cautions us against asserting exclusive possession of the truth.¹⁶ It cautions us also against any blind or sectarian allegiances. Moreover, it encourages free and enlightened commitment, along with a continuous cultural enrichment through interpretations and experiences of successive generations. It also develops a capacity to transcend cultural or religious ties when our allegiance to the universal human community is required.¹⁷

Within the school context, this vision favors a gradual approach beginning with our initial allegiances and leading to an exploration of different universes of meaning. At a recent conference, the theologian André Charron described this approach:

"In the process of establishing an identity, a child needs to be grounded subjectively in a particular tradition before being able to be open to welcoming differences and to dialogue. The child needs a continuous and experiential approbation that goes beyond a body of information and must have the opportunity first to acquire a sense of self in order to have any interior depth. In a context of a society that experiences an explosion of references, this multiplication of references from all sources may generate confusion and even insecurity, if the child is not able to refer, first of all, to a formation, to a configuration of witnesses, language, symbols and practices. With these identifying references from the child's tradition, he or she will be open to differences, will be able to make comparisons, to put ideas in perspective and eventually to make choices that will accept or reject these references."¹⁸

By making the formation of an identity an objective of religious education, we interpret this to mean that the school contributes to the formation of open and tolerant citizens. Cultural initiation, spiritual development and formation of one's identity

13. *Ibid.*, p. 91-92.

14. "The world must be free. It doesn't matter where or how but in the heart of a people, in a certain vital milieu, within a political community, so that men may live as men among men and express significant opinions and perform definite actions." Alain FINKIELRAUT (citing Hanna Arendt), in *L'Ingratitudo. Conversation sur notre temps*, p. 137.

15. Cf. *La Religion pour mémoire*.

16. M. GAUCHET, *op. cit.*, p. 94-97.

17. Cf. Michel SCHLEIFER, 'Identité et tolérance' in *La Question de l'identité* (dir. Christiane Gohier et Michel Schleifer), p. 119-140.

18. A. CHARRON, 'Le débat sur la place de la religion dans l'école publique après le rapport Proulx,' p. 5.

are some of the contributions to the formation of free and responsible citizens and individuals who will actively contribute to life in society.

1.1.2 The socio-cultural objectives

The religious domain is a major public concern. Despite that fact that secularization has ended religious control of institutions and everyday life in society, their wisdom and teachings remain an important source of personal inspiration and social transformation. If it is a fact that religious convictions pertain to an individual's conscience and the private domain, then a religious presence in society may represent a developmental factor, or, on the contrary, a menace to the integrity of the whole, as history has recorded. **One of the objectives of religious education in the public schools is to provide a positive contribution of religion to life in society.** This contribution would include culture, the affirmation of social cohesion and preparation for life in a democracy. Its role is essentially to humanize and to civilize.

The development of culture

The relationship of Québec society to its historical roots is problematic. The debates concerning national identity are primary examples. How can we go from an ethnic or cultural concept to a civic and political concept with social bonds without obliterating the particular components of life in Québec society? On the other hand, we must not consider culture merely as an object or limit it to past or present forms. It is an evolving reality that changes. It is constructed from generation to generation with the contribution of all the groups that are integrated into this society. It is also the soul of a people or of a society, and cannot be ignored as an element of collective identification.

The relationship of a religious heritage, as part of a cultural heritage, is a relationship of transformation as well as continuity. Even if the religious configuration of Québec has changed considerably throughout the last decades, its spiritual sources, whether native spirituality, Christian or Jewish, have something that is not found in Morocco or Japan. In spite of the secularization and the distance kept by believers themselves toward religious institutions, *modern societies remain culturally marked by their religious heritages.* In Québec, the Christian tradition has the role of the 'founding' or the 'welcoming tradition' with which others are invited to dialogue in a particular manner.¹⁹ The social and symbolic imagery is seen in the countryside, the architecture, the toponymy, the calendar, the civil code, the popular language and the arts. There are many profound ethical and spiritual references to this tradition.

Sociologists such as Fernand Dumont have analyzed the traces of Christianity in Québec culture.²⁰ Similarly, Raymond Lemieux emphasized that the Catholic culture of Québécois could not be reduced to several superficial vestiges. In fact, it "represented an axis of structural appropriation of Québec culture" and "continues to integrate the personality of Québécois within a common reference that may be distanced from the norms and constraints of daily life, but which nevertheless remains available in case of need."²¹ With his colleague Jean-Paul Montminy, he observes the 'paradoxical vitality' of Christianity.²² Foreign observers trace the influence of the Christian presence on certain Québec social dynamics. "Just because the Catholic Church has adopted a low profile regarding modernity

19. Cf. Georges LEROUX, 'Religion et pluralisme dans l'école du vingt-et-unième siècle,' p. 33-71.

20. Cf. *La Genèse de la société québécoise.*

21. Raymond LEMIEUX, 'Le catholicisme québécois: une question de culture,' p. 162-163.

22. Raymond LEMIEUX et Jean-Paul MONTMINY, 'La vitalité paradoxale du catholicisme québécois,' in Gérard Daigle, (dir.), *Le Québec en jeu. Comprendre les grands défis*, p. 575-607.

and is no longer pretentious about being the source of communitarian identities, it does not mean that the identities that she contributed to form in the past have ceased *ipso facto* to exist and produce effects. We may probably find in the different forms of emerging collective action for emancipation, particularly in feminist thought, some indirect 'recognition' of the influence of religion.²³ During a symposium on the Quiet Revolution, the French sociologist, Alain Touraine said that to the best of his knowledge, Québec was the one place in the world where the communitarian movement was most dynamic and understood. "Looking at comparative history, in the last thirty years, Québec has undoubtedly demonstrated a communitarian conscience. From radio to communitarian television, from service and self-help groups to communitarian action, it is not difficult to see the 'old' Québec in the 'new' Québec."²⁴ It seems reasonable to see in such a noticeable characteristic more than a simple, accidental correspondence with the communitarian dimension in the Christian tradition.

Fernand Dumont saw a creative condition for society in what he called the 'historical conscience.' In his opinion, conscience and culture were inseparable.²⁵ "A person builds a future by giving himself projects; but that would be impossible without a feeling for his identity, without his ability to attribute a meaning to his past. Similarly, one's culture must be addressed. People will not be able to confront the hazards of history without having an historical conscience."²⁶

By this term, Dumont certainly does not mean some form of constraining unanimity for individuals. Moreover, what must be seen in this collective conscience is the 'substratum,' the essence of which he calls groupings by *reference*.²⁷ What unites people who are 'grouped by reference' are the common, symbolic representations of the origin of the group, of common historical experiences, of a certain vision of a collective future. New arrivals are invited to learn about this historical experience, to contribute to shaping it in the present, in so far as they integrate into the welcoming society, and to participate in the development of this collective conscience.

According to Dumont's perspective, such symbolic or historical conscience is easily identified with culture. Dumont said, "Culture always and essentially refers to a community that embraces it, animates it, incarnates it and 'transmits' it. It is communitarian, a memory and heritage that we 'receive,' and is conveyed by a tradition that 'transmits' and actualizes it. This meaning is bequeathed and received, we do not preserve it only by an attachment to the past. We adhere to it because in it we find a key to understand the significance of the present, an inspiration and a project for the future, indeed, our hope."²⁸

In Québec, this task is even more problematic because there are areas of our collective history that we barely know. In addition, *we know that beliefs held by Québécois have experienced a remarkable evolution over the past thirty years.* Sociologists such as Raymond Lemieux and Micheline Milot have analyzed this effect.²⁹ They state that the act of believing is neither

23. Jacques PALARD, directeur de recherche au CNRS, *Religion et politique au Québec. Entre distance et mémoire*, May 1999, (reproduced text).

24. In Marc LESAGE et Francine TARDIF, *Trente ans de Révolution tranquille*.

25. Cf. Pierre LUCIER, 'Fernand Dumont: La foi comme héritage et projet.' Conférence prononcée dans le cadre du Symposium du Conseil pontifical de la culture à Québec, March 12, 1999.

26. *Raisons communes*, p. 103. Le rapport du groupe de travail sur l'enseignement de l'histoire, intitulé *Se souvenir et devenir*, adopte une perspective semblable dans son introduction.

27. *L'Institution de la théologie. Essai sur la situation du théologien*, p. 42-43.

28. Pierre LUCIER, *loc. cit.*, p. 2.

29. See Micheline MILOT and Raymond LEMIEUX, *Les Croyances des Québécois. Esquisses pour une approche empirique*.

restricted to “dogmatic expressions that structure an imaginary collective memory capable of imposing parameters on individuals” nor to allegiances to institutions, but rather to the personal experience that leads each of us to retain, from the different religious messages, the elements we judge to be ‘useful’, or more and more frequently, ‘probable.’³⁰

*This process accentuates the diversity of religious beliefs, of spiritual pathways and of moral practices, even within Catholicism. If this process has never been as monolithic as we would like to think, pluralism is found nevertheless in each religious tradition. Globally, an important part of the Québec population seems to retain its confidence in the spiritual resources of Christianity and to claim it as its own spiritual heritage. Though there have been some decisions made in the name of Christianity that have been questioned, the Christian tradition has demonstrated its capacity to nourish hope and the courage to live, to foster compassion and solidarity, to maintain a rich balance with our culture, to transcend time by a process of renewal, and to foster hope for the future of the world.³¹ This explains why *Christianity is a dynamic religious point of reference in Québec, as in many western countries, and constitutes an important identifying reference in the cultures where it exists.**

In previous years, this was easy to acknowledge and appreciate as the Christian reference did not involve any ethnocentric connotation. Today, *Christianity is still a universal heritage that is shared by a significant number of immigrants living in Québec.* We see that a striking dimension of the Québec socio-cultural reality does not in any way indicate encouragement of a tribal vision of the community. In fact, in a century when ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue has progressed to such an extent, Christian sources of Québec culture may very well encourage a search for universal openness and social cohesion.

Strengthening the social bond

One of the essential missions of the school consists in fostering harmony among the different social groups by teaching them to live together. This cohesion must always remain open to the expression of differences and dissension. It is not based on unanimity or uniformity. **Reconciling the affirmation of cultural particularities and religious identities within a search for ‘common grounds’ and ‘building social bonds’ is one of the principal issues in the current debate on the place of religion in the school.**

There are two distinct political views on this subject. There is a school of ‘liberal’ thought primarily preoccupied with the individual, that is focused on citizens who are equal in rights, and reserves the expression of differences and particularities to the private sphere. There is also a school of ‘communitarian’ thought wherein the group to which we belong, in the perspective of justice and equity, may address the State with a request for recognition in the public sphere. The first perspective focuses its attention on the integral respect for rights and freedoms of the individual. The second admits the concept of collective rights and wishes to assure respect for languages and cultures of origin, particularly for immigrant groups and minorities.

There are those who see a convergence or a compromise between individual liberalism and communitarianism in matters of cultural and religious differences.

30. Raymond LEMIEUX, ‘Les Croyances des Québécois,’ *Interface*, March-April 1991.

31. This perception has been beautifully expressed in a recent letter by M. Claude Roquet in the Letters to the Editor in *Le Devoir*, August 30, 1999. “*In a universe that is both difficult and beautiful, where individuals dealing with pure sciences do not understand ‘meaning,’ can we not respect Christian hope? With hope, the world has a meaning, both good and bad, and God is as universal as the sun. In this world, we are called to serve men, women and creation, and love accompanies us even beyond death.*”

They “stress that the free development of the individual, as the base of liberalism, demands that a cultural context be preserved, in which each individual may exercise his capacity to choose. The interest of the individual requires that the expression of cultural minorities must be expressed in the public sphere, and that certain measures are in place to properly support the growth of pluralism.”³² In this perspective, it does not appear necessary to consider *a priori* cultural and religious particularities as a menace to social cohesion. **On the contrary, each culture and religious vision may be a means to access the universal.** The ‘liberal’ limit placed on the recognition of particularities is found in the ‘protection of the moral independence of individuals’ in such a way that belonging to a cultural community does not erase personal freedom under pressure from the group.³³ We add to this the limitation connected to the ‘maintenance of cohesion necessary to democratic life and the proper functioning of its institutions’ by means of laws, rules and norms that make all political regimes viable.³⁴

The challenge of reconciling individual rights and communitarian allegiances is recognized as a major issue among modern democracies. Even in France where the republican tradition tends to see the school as the ‘hearth of decisive learning beyond particularities,’ it is more and more conceived that these diverse moral and spiritual options must find their place and expression in the public place in general and in the school in particular.³⁵ By acknowledging its consideration for spiritual identities, political power also acknowledges its differences. These identities have their place elsewhere in civil society, and the State’s role is to give them their legitimate place. Separation is at the heart of ‘a politics of difference.’³⁶

In France, this leads to a *redefinition of secularism* wherein the concern to reconcile the detachment of the spiritual or philosophical dimension with that of rendering justice to all, takes on a new dimension. “Beyond a simple, peaceful coexistence of these ‘differences,’ there is the question of meaning that one may have of the other. This question is particularly important for scholastic institutions that can neither continue to ignore what these meanings are and what students think outside of school, nor content themselves with teaching tolerance.”³⁷ Moreover, it is essential for the school to create interactions between these groups to encourage learning about inter-religious communication.

In Québec, the anthropologist Jacques T. Godbout has recently critiqued a traditional version of secularization similar to the French model, which does not leave a place for communities in the public sphere of the school. “In the modern, sacred place that is the secular school, we must rid ourselves of all social affiliations and exist as isolated individuals without roots and history. Only under these circumstances will we have access to the light of Reason.”³⁸ This vision is based in the French concept of democracy that favors the ‘national community’ to the detriment of distinct communities. These latter are seen as a “potential, permanent menace for the State concerning rights that are universal and secular. This model recognizes only abstract citizens, stripped of their particular characteristics and most importantly, their allegiances and social networks. [...] The natural mistrust of the

32. Guy BOURGEAULT, France GAGNON, Marie McANDREW, Michel PAGÉ, ‘L’espace de la diversité culturelle et religieuse à l’école dans une démocratie de tradition libérale,’ p. 84. See also Michael WALZER, *On Toleration*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1997; “Comment”, in Charles TAYLOR *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”*, p. 99-103; Will KYMLICKA, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, 1989.

33. BOURGEAULT, *loc. cit.*, p. 84-86.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 86-89.

35. Marcel GAUCHET, ‘Penser le pluralisme,’ in *Le Monde de l’éducation*, May 1999, p. 37.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. Jacques T. GOUBOUT, ‘Qui a peur de la communauté?’, p. 29.

French for the notion of community follows from that view, from the absence of a vision of society that exists *by itself*, independent of the political power of the State.”³⁹ Godbout criticizes the pretension of secularization which “subtracts the school from society and students from their parents in order to make a clean slate of their beliefs and thus to learn to become free, solely through reason.” There is faith in universal truths, [...] and reason is a myth. Taken at face value, this would indicate that the French students who attend private religious schools would not have access to the truth, as the secular school is a necessary condition for this access. This also implies that citizens of other countries are not as free as the French.⁴⁰

It appears necessary to find an equilibrium for the relationship between the affirmation of diversity and the search for social cohesion in the school environment, as described by Bourgeault, Gagnon, McAndrew and Pagé in the text cited previously. They propose the following analysis of the respective responsibilities of parents and of the school concerning matters of cultural and religious transmission:

“In the school milieu, [...] the decisions made concerning cultural and religious diversity must find an equilibrium between the parents’ legitimate desire to transmit their culture and values to their children, the role of the school in matters of citizenship formation as well as its responsibility toward the student, and knowing when to allow the gradual exercise of the student’s rights and freedoms, following a process of maturation. The school does not have the mandate to promote the adoption of the same cultural and religious values by all students. Rather, by means of citizenship education, it transmits the basic principles and actions necessary to maintain a democratic society, which must take priority over cultural and religious specifics in case of conflicts.”⁴¹

This analysis clearly supports the view that **a religious education concerned both with affirming one’s own identity and democratic formation acknowledges the recognition of differences admissible within the framework of the school.** In the exercise of its mission, the school must facilitate the appropriation of their respective traditions by young people, leading to an appreciation of universal values transmitted by these same traditions, as well as the respective particularities of other traditions.

Preparation for life in a democracy

The democratic ideal depends on the involvement of active and responsible citizens. We have noticed today a certain ‘democratic deficit.’ We are concerned by this disinterest in democratic participation, by individualistic cocooning, by the rupture between the political class and the citizens, by the fatalistic outlook when faced with ascending economic power.

These symptoms have produced new challenges for democracy today. According to Alain Touraine, the future of democracy will depend less on the institutional guarantees of politics than on the emergence of a democratic culture among subjects capable of acting on behalf of social development.⁴² Beyond the particular aptitudes that are involved in such a culture, we must ask ourselves what would motivate people to agree to the demands of this process, and how would they be involved. For example, it is evident that when confidence in all social bonds is overthrown, or when cynicism or despair threaten, we are less inclined to engage in building a democratic city. It follows that the recognition of an obligation toward

39. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

41. BOURGEAULT et autres, *loc. cit.*, p. 98.

42. Alain TOURAINE, *Qu’est-ce que la démocratie?*, p. 180-182.

others is an indispensable prelude to effective recognition of rights.⁴³ If Charters do contribute to recognition and respect for personal rights, they also have a tendency to

“In conformity with its objectives, western society has chosen a form of existence that was most convenient for it and that I would qualify as juridical. The extensive limits of rights in general and of the rights of each man are defined by a system of laws. By holding to it, by being stirred by it, and by being evasive about it, the Western world has acquired a good dose of *savoir-faire* and juridical endurance. [...] Conflicts receive a juridical solution, which is itself the supreme sanction. If a man finds himself juridically in his right, we cannot ask more of him. Then after that, if we were to tell him that he is not entirely right, advise him to limit his demands and to renounce that which comes to him as a right, to ask him to consent to sacrifice or to take an unnecessary risk [...] you would be a complete idiot [...] I have spent all my life under communism, and I affirm that a society where an impartial, juridical balance does not exist, is a horrible situation. But neither is a society that only possesses, in all and for all, a juridical balance, worthy of man. [...] When all of life is determined by juridical decisions, an atmosphere of moral mediocrity is created that asphyxiates the best plans of man. When facing the trials of the century, juridical crutches have never been sufficient to keep men standing upright”.

A. SOLJENITSYNE, 'Le déclin du courage,' in *L'Express*, June 19, 1978. (free translation)

promote a culture of individuality rather than an ethical involvement toward collective interests.

Without reflecting on these questions, the promotion of a social project, whatever it may be, risks remaining forgotten. If democracy remains formal and abstract, it “resembles a sort of mimicry, and bureaucratic preoccupations which we are required to counterbalance. [...] Submitting to bureaucracy in their everyday lives, citizens hardly want to experience it as well in the groups to which they belong.”⁴⁴ To our technocratic

or procedural objectives, we must add ethical perspectives, a vision of living-together that depends on shared convictions that respect what makes human life worthy of its name. Democratic participation is not the result of the simple adoption of several principles or of the promotion of common values. Guidance or intellectual reflection will not suffice to create such a commitment. It will be necessary to find a meaning that goes beyond conformity, utility or general opinion. It presupposes profound motives that relate to transcendence.

The symposium of the Pontifical Council on Culture, *Mutations culturelles et transcendance à l'aube du XXI^e siècle*, in collaboration with the University of Laval was held in Québec City in March 1999, concluded on this note: “How can we assure the future of society and consolidate the social bond without appealing to transcendence? Certainly by starting this dialogue between national, religious and humanist cultures, but also by permitting people and societies to define their boundaries. [...] In a new quest for transcendence, that goes beyond individual channels in the search for ‘common grounds,’ (Fernand Dumont) the Christian faith in its theological, social, and mystical dimensions, must dialogue with other religions, beliefs and humanisms and develop new traditions to meet the challenges of the 21st century.”⁴⁵

In this view, the ‘religious aspect’ constitutes essentially one of the most solid pillars of citizenship. There exists in fact a direct connection between spiritual and religious searching as defined previously and the ability to commit oneself to ethical and civic values. The eminent philosopher Paul Ricoeur has expressed several thoughts on this connection: “Society requires the presence [...] of different spiritual and cultural heritages which motivate citizenship.”⁴⁶ He believes that religions may participate with different humanisms

43. Cf. André NAUD, 'L'enracinement. À propos d'une intuition de Simone Weil,' p. 90-92.

44. F. Dumont, *Raisons communes*, p. 107.

45. André CHARRON, Allocation de clôture du Symposium.

46. In *Le Monde des livres*, June 10, 1994. See also 'Il y a de la vérité ailleurs que chez soi,' in *L'Express*, July 23, 1998, p. 8-11; *La critique et la conviction*. Entretien avec F. Azouvi et M. de Lannay. For a similar theme, see Louise O'NEIL, 'L'égalité, ce n'est ni le nivellement, ni le vide,' in *Le Devoir*, 23.07.99.

in the process of co-founding a new democracy. "I would like to propose something that I hold very dear. Could democracy not benefit from the resources of religious communities? [...] Religious men, agnostics, atheists, whatever we may be, are able together to be the co-founders of a modern democracy that calls for a shared symbolism in order to be strong and vibrant."⁴⁷

To summarize his thoughts, Paul Ricoeur borrows the idea of a consensus by cross-referencing from John Rawls. "The different confessions, religious or non religious, are not exclusive as they interact, and through these zones of interaction they enter into the process of co-founding a new democracy." The search for such consensus presupposes that we leave room for 'reasonable disagreement,' which means we agree to integrate different visions rather than exclusively our own, and acknowledge that truth exists beyond my beliefs." This perspective is very different from the practice of tolerance that presupposes a particular silence when dealing with convictions. On the contrary, a consensus by cross-referencing presupposes that we leave room for the expression of convictions and to dissention by means of enlightened debate. "We must distinguish between the secularization of the State [...] a secularization of abstention, from a secularization of civil society, which is the ethic of the discussion, the sincere confrontation of convictions according to rules. It is without a doubt that within this framework we may develop a new and democratic harmony."⁴⁸ These reflections invite us to learn these ethics of discussion. Religious education should participate in this discussion, since our intention is not to make religious diversity invisible or silent in the school environment. Religious education may contribute to nourish an appreciation of the other and a commitment to society which democracy needs in order to live and develop.

Objectives: to humanize and civilize

As other religions, Christianity opens on a transcendence that is at the heart of culture, whether it be the recognition of an unconditional obligation of solidarity toward others, or the search for the beautiful, the good, and the truth that exist beyond the forms that we know. Culture is nourished by fostering an openness to accomplishments that seek perfection. This openness to transcendence nourishes faith in the possibility of a world that is more human and that rejects fatalism. This openness enlightens us on the meaning of 'otherness,' introducing the individual to realities that are beyond, and that merit the gift of self. It may create an interior and positive disposition toward values such as human dignity, justice and solidarity.

In this sense, the question of the place of religion in education is inseparable from questioning the conditions of life that would be authentically human, and on the type of social framework that will properly satisfy these conditions. There are intellectuals who believe that a nihilistic attitude threatens contemporary culture by opening the door to domination of the social universe by economic dogmatism. In Québec the secular boundaries that we maintain oppose this nihilistic wave and they are primarily constructed on guarantees found in the Charters. But **the necessity to go beyond abstract or juridical norms leads us toward a spiritual foundation based on ethics and values.** In this context, religious traditions have a potential to humanize and civilize. If Québec schools no longer allow a sufficient appropriation of a religious heritage by future generations, does not Québec risk making itself poorer on the cultural and social levels as well as the ethical and spiritual?

47. Cf. *L'Express*, July 23, 1998, p. 9-10.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 10-11.

1.2 Students in primary and secondary school

The primary objectives that we have identified must be contextualized by considering the needs of young people today, their aspirations and the challenges that they face. How can religious education help them to take their place in society, to develop their intellectual capacities, to become mature individuals and social beings, and to hope? What are these primary objectives and how should they be transmitted into intermediate objectives, activities and programs which correspond to the mission of the public school? These are the questions we will address, as we begin with a discussion on the reality of youth today.

In 1991, the Task Force for Youth headed by Camil Bouchard published the report titled *Un Québec fou des ces enfants*.⁴⁹ This report outlined the “serious difficulties experienced by children and young people in Québec” regarding their family life, poverty, social integration, and behavioral problems. “Québec society as a whole was asked to make children the center of its collective life.”⁵⁰ Following this report, several studies were carried out throughout the 90’s on the situations faced by young people, their values, and their spiritual and moral experiences. What emerged was a picture consisting of shadows and light.

1.2.1 Children in primary school

The social and cultural situation of children in primary school has been described recently in a brief submitted by the Superior Council of Education.⁵¹ The Council noted “improvements on various issues, but deterioration in others.”⁵² For example the more children are stimulated and have access to additional educational opportunities, the more they acquire an impressive knowledge base and skills before even attending school. “However, this base consisted of ‘fragments of knowledge’, wherein order and hierarchy barely existed, and this knowledge did not always have meaning in their present lives. [...] As there is not always someone close by to help them decode information, the knowledge that children possess more precociously today is not always that which makes them feel more secure. Quite the contrary, at times it is knowledge that they do not have the intellectual capacities or emotions to integrate. [...] Some people have referred to the *quasi-disappearance* of an inter-generational distance, one that is necessary both to protect the child by keeping him at a safe distance from what he does not have the capacity to understand and also to foster the desire to grow up and one day have access to what has been kept from him, i.e., the privileges but also the responsibilities of adult life.”⁵³

Children are victims of different forms of abuse. They sometimes experience multiple family reorganizations and they are preoccupied by an uncertain future. Like children each century, they wonder about death, violence, and abandonment. They have witnessed the horrors of war and famine through the media or through the experiences of friends who have come from different regions of the world. “Regarding issues that refer to the moral or spiritual domain, the children of today are preoccupied with certain questions and perhaps a keener search for meaning than ever before.”⁵⁴ Regarding the religious domain, “the children of today enjoy great freedom but display an unprecedented lack solid guidelines,” due to the numerous beliefs and world-views to which they are exposed. Who can be

49. *Un Québec fou de ses enfants*, Rapport du Groupe de travail pour les jeunes, Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, 1991.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

51. *Une école primaire pour les enfants d'aujourd'hui*, 1995.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

believed? Who is right? Despite this difficulty, “many children still manifest the beginnings of moral and religious convictions.”⁵⁵

To summarize, the Council believes that “**children are searching for meaning that is unprecedented and not only on the spiritual level but as well on all levels.** They question everything that surrounds them and it is precisely in satisfying this quest for meaning that mediators fail them.”⁵⁶

1.2.2 Students in secondary school

The students in secondary school are a social group that for several years has been studied and analyzed in Québec and elsewhere. These studies oscillate between a disconcerting and a reassuring vision of the situations experienced by adolescents today.

The cultural, social and religious orientations of young people between the ages of 12 to 19 living in the lower Laurentian regions, was studied at the beginning of the 1990's by a research group headed by Jacques Grand'maison. This qualitative inquiry lasted three years and the results were published in a report titled *Le drame spirituel des adolescents*.⁵⁷ In his introduction, Jacques Grand'maison wrote: “Recent polls on adolescents told us that they are good and kind young people, who are pleased with themselves and for the most part, are not anxious about the future. In brief, ‘no problem.’ The “children of divorce” are stronger, and more determined than others. Certainly there are adolescent suicides, drugs, violence among certain gangs of students, but they are only marginal phenomena. We forget that there is a school dropout rate of 40% which represents close to half the total number of adolescents.⁵⁸ This bewildering problem is only the tip of the iceberg. The more we investigated this research on adolescents, the more we recognized the depth of their concerns regarding human, moral and spiritual issues.”⁵⁹

This problematic situation consisted primarily in an extreme **difficulty to believe in others, in people in general, in society, in love, in justice and in the future.**⁶⁰ This would lead to a “dissolution of the primary base of confidence that is the foundation of belief in humanity.”⁶¹ The school dropout rate, a certain narcissistic culture and the various anomic behaviors of many young people are symptoms of this phenomenon.

The publication of this report was followed the next year by a study commissioned by the Ministry of Education which researched young people in secondary school.⁶² This study concentrated on the spiritual and moral experiences of youth. Its purpose was to “examine the accuracy of certain opinions that existed in the scholastic milieu concerning young people in secondary school.”⁶³ There was a detailed questionnaire mailed to the homes of ten thousand students. Some six thousand young people from the ages of 12 to 16 throughout Québec replied, which provided a 57.6% rate of response. The results of this

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*

57. Fides, 1992.

58. For the 1997-1998 school year, the percentage of young people who did not obtain their high school diploma before the age of 20 was stabilized at 30.6%. The data is from *Indicateurs de l'éducation, édition 1999*, ministère de l'Éducation, p. 8.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 12-13.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

62. *Au-delà des apparences... Sondage sur l'expérience morale et spirituelle des jeunes du secondaire*, Direction de la recherche, Direction de l'enseignement catholique, 1992.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

survey indicated the need to reexamine the perceptions and attitudes of young people in secondary school.

The inquiry revealed that a majority of them believed they were 'open to social realities' through "participation in regular organized activities or in movements of a social, humanitarian or religious character (70.9%) and in demonstrations that supported a particular cause (90%)." These activities were primarily connected to student life, to ecology (certain activities were integrated into course requirements), the third world, to reflection and Christian action, to first aid, to scouting and volunteering.⁶⁴

"Close to three quarters of the young people surveyed (71%) did not believe that the future was desperate, since they could see that humanity had made some progress and that the lessons of the past could enable us to resolve present challenges." However, a relatively high percentage of youth (29%) said they had little hope concerning the future of humanity.⁶⁵

An important segment in this research focused on *the moral aspirations of young people*. "[**The responses**] were a reflection of the approbation by young people of certain values transmitted by the family or the school, and among others, through programs of moral instruction or moral and religious instruction." The analysis of these results revealed that young people "find it important to maintain a positive attitude toward others, to make room for agreements and respect for mutual rights." The values that they prioritize are freedom that results from personal responsibility, respect for the dignity of each person, and action for justice and empathy.

At the outset, the survey aimed to verify the *spiritual openness of young people* by measuring a predisposition to wonder about existential questions, to reflect by themselves, and to review key events in their lives. The values assigned to this indicator were from 0 to 12 points, according to three categories: 'less open,' 'moderately open,' and 'more open.' This indicator showed "**that as a group, young people were definitely predisposed to favor a spiritual process**: more than 60% of them were more open to existential questions and to reflection, whereas only 5.9% of young people indicated they were less open to these realities."⁶⁶

Finally an *indicator of openness to religion* considered such factors as one's attitude to God, religious practice and interest in learning about one's own religion and other religions. According to this indicator, one quarter of young people manifested a greater openness to religion, one half were only moderately open, and the percentage of young people that remained (23.9%) was less open.⁶⁷

Among the subjects that preoccupied them the most, young people expressed a "**marked interest in fundamental questions on the 'meaning'** of life and death, the predisposition to reflect by themselves, and to discuss with others and find answers to issues of their existence. [...] Finally they expressed the expectation that courses in moral instruction or moral and religious instruction, either Catholic or Protestant, would guide them in dealing with their personal and social challenges." On the religious level, they "were interested in precise domains of knowledge: in particular, life, death and God."⁶⁸

64. *Ibid.*, p. 40-46.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 50-53.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 118-119.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

The moral and spiritual profile of young people that emerged from this analysis required an explanation of current beliefs concerning the moral anomie of young people, their religious indifference, and the failure of the adult world, particularly of the family and the school to transmit certain values. “Young people in secondary school have moral resources. They have appropriated several of the values that moral and religious formation in the school has attempted to promote. **They nevertheless, expect more from their formation, and at this particular time, are feeling not only confused, but also the urgent need to be educated in order to face the complexities of life.**”⁶⁹

In 1994, a new study was published with the collaboration of the Centre Jeunesse du Québec and researchers from the University of Laval.⁷⁰ More than 3,200 adolescents from the ages of 11 to 19 responded to this questionnaire which focused on several aspects of their experience: the school milieu, the family atmosphere, relations with parents and friends, love relationships, sexuality, feelings about themselves and their life projects, consumption habits and personal activities. In the summary, the authors emphasized the *difficulties they encountered in attempting, honestly and accurately, to describe the situations that young people faced*. “In the absence of reliable empirical data, we relied on what we could perceive around young people or selected groups of young people and drew up basic guidelines for generalizations that at times were quite daring. The deviance, the marginality, the dropouts, the awkwardness of youth, in short, the difficulties of young people, seemed much easier to perceive ‘intuitively’ than were their strengths, their equilibrium, their social graces, their positive attitude toward the future, their family ties, their will to succeed, etc. We also had great difficulty integrating the diversity of these young people. This diversity came from the coexistence of strengths and weaknesses in the same individuals, the juxtaposition of successes and failures, of happiness and sadness, of certainties and anxieties, etc. [...] In fact, we could not classify these adolescents into neat categories.”⁷¹

The details of this research are published in the report on each of the categories. **On the whole, it presents a positive picture.** “Young people told us that things were going well, that they loved their families, they felt comfortable in school and that they could foresee an optimistic future, [...] **even if the study indicated nevertheless that there were negative areas that required serious consideration.**”⁷² In conclusion, the authors advised readers that the results should be interpreted carefully, keeping in mind the limitations of their study, particularly the specific sampling and areas covered by the inquiry. “First [...] we chose to study findings concerning their families and the parameters of their lives within a perspective of relationships, and not in an intra-psyche perspective. [...] Second, our analysis did not consider the quality of the material and social resources available to adolescents.”⁷³

At a conference in 1997, the sociologist Diane Pacom spoke to the *Federation des comités de parents de la province de Québec (FCPPQ)* and emphasized the *problematic situation faced by the current generation of children and young adults*, who are “confronted by such unprecedented social problems due to the profound structural changes that have taken place in post-industrial contemporary western society.” One of these changes established a *minority situation for the younger generation*. Young people have difficulty taking their place in a world dominated by

69. Idem

70. *Ados, familles et milieu de vie. La parole aux ados!* Research directed by the Bureau Québécois de l'Année internationale de la famille and l'Association des Centres jeunesse du Québec in collaboration with the team headed by Richard Cloutier of the Centre de recherche sur les services communautaires de l'Université Laval.

71. *Ibid.*, p.2-3

72. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

the social vision of the 'baby boomer' generation. This has brought about a process of deconstruction, which may have been necessary, but it has not been replaced with a process that would put values, social models and other institutions in its place. "Young adults and adolescents today are trapped between two ages, two centuries and must live in a fragmented society in a process of reconstruction. This creates not only great distress but also deep rooted feelings of revolt that, among certain young people, go well beyond merely rejecting the ordinary adult world."

Many young people react in an anomic manner to a society that does not offer young people much respect or proper guidance, and where they often experience economic poverty and social marginalization. Various phenomena, such as the increase in violence, the suicide rate that has quadrupled in 30 years particularly among young men between the ages of 14 to 24 years of age, and the anorexia that is rife among young women, should be interpreted within a socio-historical perspective. These responses often appear to young people "as the only possible responses to a tragic and unbearable social situation."⁷⁴

The inquiries and surveys are not sufficient to produce an exact image of this social group. Each study documents results that are obtained at a precise moment and according to a particular sampling. Each study reveals an aspect related to a situation and it is the cross-referencing of the accumulated data that results in a fairly accurate representation of young people.

The analyses cited above call for a nuanced evaluation of the moral, spiritual and religious situation of the age group that is studied (from 12 to 19 years). Except for the studies commissioned by the MEQ, the data collected only partly concerned the young people in secondary school. This study combined the diversity of experiences and the life conditions that affect young people today.

The following chart indicates the requests from adolescents and young people that require serious **consideration. They are addressed to the adult world in general, and to the school world in particular, and** may be evaluated as immediate or long term needs. Among the expectations and needs that must be considered, the following should be noted:

- The need to be recognized, considered, understood and to 'take their place' in society.
- The need to regain confidence in others and in life, to surmount a feeling of powerlessness, to learn to hope.
- The need to be accompanied in the 'reconstruction' of their social and symbolic self.
- The need to be educated in order to face the complexities of life.
- The need to reflect on certain fundamental questions such as the meaning of life and death, the discernment of good and evil, the existence of God.

These expectations and requests concern the entire organization of the school. For the most part, they agree with the objectives of religious education described above. They must be considered when decisions are made concerning the goals of religious education. There is a strong existential component that is based on their particular dramatic context and even helplessness in certain cases, and also on a particular stage of growth, as when young people find themselves at a crossroads that leads them to adult life.

74. In *Veux-tu savoir?*, Journal published by the FCPPQ, July-August 1997, p. 31

1.3 The present state of religious education in the schools

If we consider the preceding data and reflections, how do we evaluate the orientation and the components of religious education in the school? We can offer a fairly accurate assessment by examining the program of studies, teacher training and pastoral animation.

1.3.1 The program of studies

Historical Review

Between 1960 and 1999, there were four successive *generations* of programs of Catholic religious instruction⁷⁵ in the schools which were profoundly influenced by the transformations taking place in Québec during this period. The shifting of authority from the Church to the State that took place in 1964 - a change in which government organizations exercised important responsibilities regarding education - was a major factor in this evolution.

At the beginning of the 1960's, the bishops of Québec decided to make major changes to the religious programs (*of the first generation*). Influenced by European research in the domain of religious pedagogy, they decided that the current programs were too focused on instruction rather than on education, on 'filling the students' heads' rather than 'reaching out and converting their hearts.' The process considered students as 'intellects to instruct' instead of 'individuals who would grow on many levels.'⁷⁶ From 1964 until the end of the 1970's, the Office de Catéchèse du Québec, (OCQ) an ecclesiastical organization, was given the mandate to revise completely the orientation of Catholic religious education for the primary and secondary programs. The OCQ produced students' manuals and teachers' guides. This was the main thrust of the *second generation* of programs whose purpose was to awaken in the students the meaning of God and positive attitudes toward religion, to make them disciples of Jesus and active members of their parishes. According to these objectives, the teacher was expected to be both a catechist and an example for the students as faith was considered an acquisition. In the primary school, the teacher was also responsible for initiating children to the sacraments of the Church.

It was during the 1980's that the *third generation* of Catholic religious programs of instruction appeared. These programs were supported by two sources: on one hand by the publication of the report of the Superior Council of Education titled *L'Activité éducative* (1971) and on the other, by the ministerial document titled *L'École Québécoise. Énoncé de politique et plan d'action* (1979).

In *L'Activité éducative*, the Superior Council recommended that we proceed first with a thorough reflection on the values and the objectives of education in Québec and focus on the students whom we wished to educate. The Council was strongly opposed to any 'mechanical' or bureaucratic concept of education and instead advocated an organic approach. This approach was less 'teacher-oriented' and required more student participation, i.e., the students had to be active partners in their own education.

75. This section of the brief on the evolution of the programs of religious Catholic instruction in Québec is based on: Denis WATTERS. *L'enseignement religieux catholique au Québec. Du Rapport Parent aux États généraux sur l'éducation (1963-1996): Autorités, stratégies, enjeux.*

76. Concerning this aspect of religious instruction, see BRODEUR, Raymond (dir.). *Les Catéchismes au Québec 1702-1963*, p. 97-98.

The Catholic Committee quickly adopted this important focus. It published the results of its research in 1974 in the first installments of the series called, *Voies et impasses*. The study focused on what would be reasonable and pertinent to offer as religious formation in the public school system. The Committee ruled that Catholic religious instruction should be offered in Québec schools. However, faced with the increasing difficulties of teachers being witnesses of the faith, and the redefinition of school objectives that had been in effect from 1970 on, objectives that were not those of the Church, the Committee asked for a revision of this discipline with respect to the educational perspectives of the school and the adoption of the organic approach recommended by the Council. These recommendations should not be taken lightly. The first called for an important shifting in the responsibilities from the school to the Church and families. They were called upon to promote the pastoral and catechetical faith education of the young, particularly regarding their sacramental initiation. The second called for a pedagogical approach wherein the students were the driving force behind their education.

In 1979 the publication of *L'École Québécoise* would mark the *third generation* of programs. We put aside a framework of programs and adopted instead programs that were structured around an analytic sequence of terminal and intermediate objectives. The revised programs of Catholic religious instruction were inspired by the orientation developed by the Catholic Committee from 1974 and the report, *L'École Québécoise*. These programs were developed from a framework of ministerial directives that were common to all disciplines. In fact, as in other disciplines, they reflected objectives that focused on the students' integral development. This approach followed a sequential order of objectives. The end result would be the development of the students' own resources through presentation of the Catholic tradition interpreted as a search for meaning. This educational perspective required trained teachers. At the primary level, the implementation of this new generation of programs paralleled the responsibility of the Christian communities for the catechetical initiation to the sacraments.

Following the new recommendations of the Catholic Committee in 1991 for the secondary level, and in 1994 for the primary level, the Ministry began a thorough revision of the Catholic moral and religious programs of instruction. These became the *fourth generation* programs. This exercise permitted us to adapt moral and religious teaching to the needs of young people in order to enable them to rise to the new challenges of growth facing them in a society in a continuous state of change. Rising to these challenges, we adopted an approach that focused on competencies that reflected learning experiences that were considered essential by the Catholic Committee. These knowledge took into account that human beings were 'beings-on-the-way, beings-with-others and beings-in-the-world.' This instruction permitted the students to learn about the Bible, the beliefs and symbols of the Christian tradition, the ways of entering into one's interior world and to develop the ability to make moral judgments concerning choices and actions. In addition this approach encouraged the students, from the first year of primary school, gradually to be open to and respect other great religious traditions that were part of this cultural diversity. As a result of the advances in the pedagogical domain, recent programs favor teaching and learning strategies that encourage students to become autonomous and responsible as a result of their learning. As in the preceding generation of programs, the teacher is a guide who accompanies the students. They, in turn, are expected to question their ideas, to examine another's ideas, to exercise critical reasoning regarding information they receive, to develop their own identities as believers, and to decide by themselves which actions they will perform.

The Present Situation

If we follow the educational process of the last thirty years, we may observe that **the programs of study in Catholic moral and religious instruction have been progressively inspired by the general objectives of education.** The educational perspective, integrated in the mission of the school, has replaced a catechetical vision that was more appropriate in an ecclesiastical context. The main objectives of religious education in the schools have been summarized in the meaning of human, spiritual and moral formation, as well as cultural initiation. The process of critical discernment and the journey toward a growing autonomy in religious matters are presently at the basis of this program of study. The primary social preoccupations, relating to culture and citizenship, are reflected in the proposed instruction, as is knowledge of and appreciation of religious diversity. This positive evolution must be pursued.

For the most part, the new programs have been received very favorably by teachers as well as students. The relevance of the subject matter, the proposed pedagogy of research and reflection, and the flexibility that is left to the teachers is appreciated. The Catholic Committee also held consultations on the proposal to entrust religious instruction in primary grades to specialists. The Committee discovered from the reaction of the teachers, and particularly homeroom teachers, that there is a preference to retain responsibility for this instruction because it offered a privileged moment of communication with the students on existential concerns and questions of meaning.

1.3.2 Training and support for teachers

Whatever the quality of the programs of study, nothing of value could be accomplished for students without the work of motivated and competent teachers. Many teachers have enjoyed teaching religion particularly since the publication of the new programs. Some have encountered varying degrees of difficulty: indifference to religious culture among young teachers and a lack of motivation or conviction from others. In primary school, we acknowledge some difficulty in applying the rule of exception, whereas at the secondary level, these problems are more often due to varying degrees of administrative constraints or to a lack of qualified personnel in certain areas.

Various factors have contributed to a deterioration of this situation. One of these is in the confusion generated by opinion campaigns against religion in the schools, as well as the future of all religious education, particularly since the report of the Estates General on education. It has slowly but surely created a 'climate of doubt' that has influenced the attitudes and the assignment of resource persons, the recruiting of candidates to teach religion, and the status of this discipline in the school. The clarification following this debate on religion in the schools will permit reorganization at this level.

We must also mention the *lack of resources* for professional support for several years, following the elimination of many positions among pedagogical resource personnel and counselors in Christian education. Too little time is set aside for the implementation of new programs, and as a result, the teachers' willingness to pursue courses to remain 'current' may often fall by the wayside due to lack of funding. This situation may be improved with the funds that the minister has recently decided to devote to this specific need.

Various measures must be taken, in relation to the formation as well as support for teachers, in order to reduce the number of problems. A more solid disciplinary formation is required in any case, including at the primary level. We must also find the means to assure that this

instruction is given by competent and motivated teachers. Must we rely on specialists to teach at the primary as well as the secondary level? As soon as the ministerial decisions concerning the modalities of religious instruction will be made public, the Catholic Committee maintains that we must conclude the studies that have already been undertaken in order to provide a complete picture of the situation.

According to several university professors responsible for teacher education, there are some *encouraging signs* of a renewed interest among their students regarding subjects of religion and Québec heritage. Having not experienced any 'religious saturation' or any negative experiences as have some of the older teachers, these young teachers-in-training display an openness and interest in this particular aspect of their education. If sufficient value is given to these subjects and if favorable conditions exist, then there is hope for a renewed commitment among future teachers in these areas.

1.3.3 Pastoral animation

Pastoral animation services, particularly at the secondary level, reflect a paradoxical situation. **Although recognized as a positive influence to guide the young and humanize the school milieu, these services have nevertheless suffered severe budgetary cuts.** In many cases, they have been reduced to the minimum required to satisfy the letter of the law. As a result, for the past five years, the ratio of pastoral animators to students has constantly increased. In 1994-1995, there was a provincial ratio of one full time animator for 1,123 students, which was the absolute limit accepted by the Catholic Committee. Then in 1998-1999, this ratio became one animator for more than 1,300 students. Twenty-six school commissions acknowledged a higher ratio of one animator for more than 1,500 students. Among the latter, ten school commissions had a ratio of one animator for more than 2,000 students and three school commissions had a ratio of one animator for more than 6,000 students.

It is evident that supplementary services in education have suffered severe budgetary cuts these last years. The Superior Council of Education has recently presented a brief⁷⁷ that emphasizes the connection between these services and success in the educational milieu, and the importance of adequate support. The Catholic Committee wholeheartedly supports this analysis and recommendation.

1.3.4 The impact of religious education in the schools

The school can only achieve the primary educational objectives that inspire its mission to a certain extent. Cultural and social education of the young is accomplished primarily today through many influential networks, particularly the media and popular culture that often oppose ideals promoted by the school. The impact of institutions such as schools or Churches is strongly contested. It is not surprising that the aim of various scholastic disciplines regarding the assimilation of knowledge and competencies often appear deficient.

An evaluation of the impact of religious education in the schools demands more nuances than we are able to provide. If we examine their framework of conceptual references, the young people who complete their secondary studies sometimes display a distressing ignorance concerning elementary aspects of doctrine or Christian history. Is this an admission of failure? However, if the religious knowledge of young people leaves much to be desired, we should not immediately conclude that they have 'retained nothing.' *Despite*

77. *Les Services complémentaires à l'enseignement: des responsabilités à consolider*, 1998.

an insufficient knowledge of their religious culture, young people have been able to assimilate certain fundamental intuitions about what makes life worth living. We must distinguish between the resistance that adolescents display before authority figures, whether they are parents or teachers, and a process of interiorization that may exist. We may in fact observe that many young people have interiorized values and attitudes that have been transmitted by the adult world, 'understood as the school,' as was previously documented in the MEQ study.⁷⁸ We maintain that on becoming parents, they continue more often than not, to want to initiate their children into the Christian tradition and its values. This leads us to conclude that they retain *a basic confidence in the heritage they have acquired from their years of formation.* In the final analysis, their religious practices resemble most adults': they maintain their distance from certain elements of doctrine or morality, while conserving fundamental spiritual and religious convictions that will guide and support them throughout their lives.

A complete evaluation of the impact of religious education must take into consideration the contribution represented by the mission of the school in the general conceptual framework. It is not easily measured, but **the connection between the presence of religion in the education of young people and certain ethnic and cultural traits of Québec society does not appear to be arbitrary.** We refer to the observations of sociologists mentioned previously that refer to the Christian influence in Québec. This influence has also been felt in other areas as well.

1.4 Renewing the place of religion in schools

In Québec, there is a general consensus for the necessity of renewing the place of religion in schools. The structure of this renewal is still being debated. Before reflecting on solutions that can be used in Québec, we will examine the systems in place elsewhere.

Religious instruction in different school systems

In certain milieux, confessional instruction within the school system has been considered both anti-modern and an anachronism. With this reasoning, secularization appears as the only reasonable avenue to pursue. However, in a review of the different European systems of education contained in Appendix 1 of this report, we notice a **wide diversity of structures of religious education in the schools in western democracies.**

In countries with predominant Protestant populations, as in Norway and Denmark, Christian religious education is part of the curriculum. In countries where the majority of the population is Catholic, as in Spain and Italy, religious education in the schools exists. It is not imposed and is distinct from the catechesis that relates to the Christian communities.

In countries that are clearly divided in matters of religious affiliation, it is possible to have an initiation to the religions that are present in their society. This initiation is frequently seen in the common, non-confessional schools (the official instruction in Belgium) or in the schools that, for all intents and purposes, are public though confessional (as in the Netherlands, England, and Belgium). In countries that are historically divided between Catholics and Protestants as in England and Belgium, and have welcomed a significant Muslim religious population for some time, it is possible to have access to Muslim religious education. England has made a place for major religions, present since decolonization, in regular religious instruction, in particular, for Hinduism and Islam. In all countries, the State is secular, in the sense that there is no 'state religion.' However, Lutheranism is the

78. Cf. p. 21-22.

'national religion' (and not the state religion) in Denmark. Though the English sovereign is head of the Church of England, the school laws are welcoming and open to religious diversity.

France and the Swiss canton of Geneva⁷⁹ have engaged in a debate regarding the possibility of a religious cultural program which responds to the artistic, (architectural heritage, literary, and musical), historical, and civic objectives of education. This is being considered as an added dimension to various courses in secondary studies, or even as an element of curriculum that should merit attention in a secondary school course. This debate is taking place in an historical context of a prolonged absence of religious instruction in the public schools. In both situations, the exclusion of all strictly religious instruction as such, is not questioned.⁸⁰

The research on several different countries in Western Europe allows one to better situate religious education by comparing it to a so-called 'cultural' approach regarding the religious phenomenon and religions in general. "In a majority of European countries such as Germany, Belgium, Italy, Portugal and England, **religious education appears to be part of a cultural and spiritual appropriation of the meaning of life.** This education potentially nourishes faith without explicitly encouraging it, which is a very personal and individual characteristic of belief in our century.⁸¹ Religious education is influenced by history: from a sensitivity to the diversity of religions, to the ethics of a civic affiliation that is neither racist nor intolerant, and to the dimension of critical reflection on the religious experience and institutions.

Seeking a model for Québec

The research and debates that have taken place for several years in Québec concerning the place of religion in schools have resulted in a framework of issues and challenges. Many groups and individuals have expressed themselves on these issues. Among them, the Task Force on the place of religion in the schools headed by Jean-Pierre Proulx has recently published a report called *Religion in Secular Schools* that will be the reference document for a National Assembly commission that will study this question. The recommendations of this document, commonly called the Proulx Report, will be examined before the recommendations of the Catholic Committee will be presented.

1.4.1 The Proposals of the Proulx Report

The Proulx Report raises many important questions concerning juridical and political philosophy. It proposes a systematic reflection on the right to equality and freedom of conscience in the education system. It emphasizes the necessity to reevaluate the place currently held by the Catholic and Protestant traditions. It reaffirms the role of the school in contributing to the reinforcement of the social bond and the development of democracy. The analyses and recommendations of the report have permitted us to promote the debate on the place of religion in the schools.

79. See W. HUTMACHER (dir.), *Culture religieuse et laïque. Rapport du groupe de travail exploratoire sur la culture judéo-chrétienne à l'école.*

80. In France, Alsace-Moselle is the exception and follows a practice similar to what is observed in Germany. In the French-speaking part of Switzerland, either canton permits religious education in public schools, which is not the case in other cantons, such as the canton of Geneva.

81. See Appendix 1 of this document.

The Catholic Committee does not consider itself competent to undertake a systematic analysis of the interpretation and application of certain juridical principles and the political philosophy expressed in the Proulx Report. The comments of the Committee are restricted primarily to the educative, cultural and social aspects of the report.

The concept of integral development

The authors state at the outset that they do not want to question the consensus in Québec that “the general objective of education is to allow the personality of the child to flourish and to allow the child to develop as a whole person.” They recall that this objective constitutes “the founding principle of our school system and forms the preamble to the law on the Ministry of Education.”⁸²

Subsequently, the authors tried to extend the meaning of this objective by putting forward “the fundamental differences in the way it is pursued.”⁸³ “If the State must remain neutral toward religious or non-religious conceptions of a good life, it must also remain neutral toward them on the educational playing field.”⁸⁴ *This reasoning will further lead the authors to minimize the role of the school regarding the quest for meaning and the spiritual development of young people,*⁸⁵ despite the expectations expressed by all the groups consulted within the framework of their inquiry,⁸⁶ and to propose an instruction conceived particularly as a function of the objectives of education for citizenship.⁸⁷ “We must identify the objectives and principles that should guide the State in citizenship education and, *from this perspective*, judge whether or not religion has a place in schools.”⁸⁸ This instruction presupposes a vision of the educational mission of the school that does not integrate spiritual development in the pursuit of personal development.

The Report continues with this statement. “The state must, subject to its duty of neutrality and within the limits imposed by the common good, facilitate the organization of public schools within which the diversity of conceptions related to the development of the whole child can be expressed.”⁸⁹ If this is the case, we must question how the proposals of the Proulx Report concerning the teaching of religions respects this principle, since it does not leave place for the vision that considers the spiritual dimension as part of the integral development of each person.⁹⁰

A human sciences program in religion

These premises led the Task Force to recommend abolishing instruction relating to a particular religious tradition and replacing it by a course in human and social sciences in religion offered to all students. “The study of religions must include all of the great religions of the world such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other Eastern religions. It must give secondary students an overview of Egyptian, Greek and Roman mythology. In addition to these religions, students should learn about the religions of the traditional societies still in existence in many countries and those of Canada’s First Nations. Finally, [among the current secular philosophies], humanism, existentialism, Marxism,

82. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 89

84. *Ibid.*, p. 90

85. *Ibid.*, p. 209

86. *Ibid.*, p. 158

87. Cf. p. 87, 200-201, 245, 251, 252, 255.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 85

89. *Ibid.*, p. 90

90. Cf. See Section 1.1.1.

liberalism, and atheistic scientism are a few of the schools of thought that could be included in a program on the study of religions.”⁹¹

Among all these world views, “it gives a prominent place to the study of the Christian tradition.”⁹²

Such a study from a cultural perspective “examines religious phenomena and secular schools of thought from a social sciences viewpoint.” “This rationale excludes all forms of religious instruction that approach religion or current secular views from the perspective of a given denomination.”⁹³ “The program presents the richness and complexity of religious traditions and secular schools of thought” and examines religious phenomena from three different angles: “the personal experience of individuals; the experience of the groups to which these individuals belong; the religious tradition or secular schools of thought to which these groups and individuals adhere.”⁹⁴ “The study of religions takes into account the students’ cognitive development, their lifestyles and diverse interests.”⁹⁵

Even if this instruction does not include the spiritual development of the individual as its objective, *we feel that the proponents of this instruction attempt to make room for a search for meaning in addition to the intellectual formation and learning to live together.*⁹⁶ Thus, this instruction may “help the students to form their own convictions and at the same time become aware of their relativity. This process of finding meaning in their lives requires focused, enlightened, critical thought.” The authors seem to suggest that this will occur *incidentally, by indirect means*, rather than a deliberate and clearly articulated manner focused on the needs and expectations of young people. These disciplines each have their own logic and postulates and their methods imply maintaining a certain distance with respect to any religious or secular view.”⁹⁷ The “presentation of themes and possible topics in a study of religion from a cultural perspective”⁹⁸ is coherent with this vision.

An analysis of various elements

The purpose of the cultural instruction proposed by the Proulx Report is to expose young people to religious diversity. From a social point of view, this objective is important “to provide students with an understanding of their role as citizens and to prepare them for life in a society characterized by ideological, cultural and religious diversity.”⁹⁹ Ignorance breeds intolerance. The curriculum must foster a better understanding of different convictions among students.

This instruction would contribute to the cultural enrichment of all students. As they progress, their curiosity is awakened by the discovery of different aspects of their own universe, including the discovery of different religions.

91. *Religion in Secular Schools*, p. 240-241.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 239-240.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 239-242.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 245

96. *Ibid.*, p. 243-245; *L'Enseignement culturel des religions. Principes directeurs et conditions d'implantation* (Task Group on the place on religion in schools, Study 1) p. 18-23

97. *Ibid.*, p. 244

98. *Ibid.*, p. 247

99. *Ibid.*, p. 243

From an educational point of view, the *type of instruction proposed by the Proulx Report raises serious difficulties, particularly if it is obligatory and exclusive from the beginning of elementary school to the end of secondary school.*

- The report focuses on the *learning of an alterity* (other world-views) without acknowledging the importance of *exploring one's personal identity* (the knowledge of one's own religion). We must also be aware of the fact that students in elementary and secondary school are at the beginning of their spiritual journey. Their progress may lead them, like many of their contemporaries, to put their primary spiritual allegiance in perspective, to specify their personal convictions and even to detach themselves from all particular religious views. Or, they may undertake the task of reexamining and personalizing their own heritage through which they situate themselves as autonomous religious subjects within a given tradition. In one way or another, *this journey begins by welcoming a heritage that offers a primary framework of experiences and religious reflection. On the spiritual level, as well as on the cultural and linguistic, human beings inherit their culture from those who have preceded them.* By means of this transmission and initiation, human beings progressively develop their identity using their judgment and freedom.
- In order to develop a religious identity through reflective and balanced means, it is necessary to have a *critical appropriation* of the tradition to which they belong. The school teaches the competencies that enable young people to accomplish this. This is an important process and requires more time than is suggested in the Proulx Report which proposes addressing fifteen or so religious and non-religious world-views. This will be difficult if we wish more than a minimal knowledge of the different systems that are present in schools today.

The Report affirms that '*an important place*' is granted to the Christian tradition among other world-views. This *importance* is not reflected in the hypothesis of the program that is presented which does not propose the study of Christianity and Islam before Secondary Three. In Secondary Five, Catholicism is studied as one of several religions that contributed to shaping Québec culture.¹⁰⁰ If we adopt the suggestions of the Proulx Report, this instruction must be incorporated within the few hours reserved for moral or religious instruction.¹⁰¹ We doubt if this is sufficient to respect the importance of Christianity in the culture and historical conscience of Québécois.

- This instruction would adopt a *human sciences point of view*, one that is neutral and distant, and one that takes an historical, anthropological, or sociological approach. A question of epistemology arises. Is neutrality possible in the domain of values and religious experiences? If we think it is, then the question is whether it is beneficial to introduce young people to this type of relationship with religions from the beginning of their spiritual journey? This could foster an attitude of detachment, even indifference toward the religious dimension, particularly if it is the only approach used from the beginning of elementary to the end of secondary school.

One must be aware that certain practices in social sciences tend to downplay cultural or religious particularities rather than acknowledge them. The purpose is to create conditions of freedom that allow us to be different: "to release us from the contingency that makes us who we are, and gives us the possibility of being, doing, or thinking other

100. Cf. *L'Enseignement culturel des religions*, "Étude 2", p. 22.

101. *Religion in Secular Schools*, p. 209.

than what we are presently being, doing or thinking;”¹⁰² “to show people that they are much freer that they ever thought they could be, that certain themes that they hold to be true have been fabricated at a particular moment in history and as a result this ‘so-called’ evidence may be criticized and destroyed.”¹⁰³ There is a time in the life of each individual when these interpretative processes may be undertaken. Meanwhile as we have read above,¹⁰⁴ **we must first experience freedom from within our heritage which we appropriate and use every day.** It would be hazardous to short-circuit this process for students in elementary and secondary school.

Diversity is necessary

Any authoritarian solution that negates diversity can only create mistrust, resistance and tensions. The turbulence that surrounded the publication of the Proulx Report is a serious warning. **What caused the most comments was the compulsory and exclusive character of the proposed type of instruction.** These objections came from people who are religious as well as those who declare that they have no religious affiliations. Several of the latter have already expressed their mistrust, alleging that such a program of studies may indeed be a disguised fashion of religious indoctrination. Parents who practice their faith may fear a limiting or unfavorable approach to religion in general and to Catholicism in particular. In either case, we must expect numerous demands for exemption granted with respect to freedom of conscience.

The Proulx Report explicitly mentions two ways to satisfy the demand for diversity, however limited the request may be. In the hypothesis that would impose obligatory cultural instruction, “this process would give the various denominations the time they need to take the necessary measures to begin offering religious instruction as part of the community services offered by schools, if this is the formula they choose to adopt, or otherwise.”¹⁰⁵ The first proposal consists in leaving to religious denominations the responsibility of instruction offered in the school premises, but outside of regular school hours. The second hypothesis, modestly cloaked in the word ‘otherwise,’ regulates all denominational instruction to the network of private schools. Unfortunately, these two suggestions appear deceptive.

1. *The suggestion to place the school premises at the disposal of all denominations that wish to organize courses in religious formation outside of school hours is not desirable and could be difficult to administer for various reasons. The absence of all discrimination, as recommended by the Proulx Report, to the demands addressed to the schools may place the administration of the schools and the governing boards in a delicate position. They could find themselves dealing with instruction that is separate from what is experienced and thus not integrated into the framework of school subjects and activities. We can also foresee difficulty in recruiting several thousand qualified persons who could be required to assure Catholic religious instruction. Finally, the attendance at such activities by young people after class hours could be very problematic.*

From a social point of view, this hypothesis would cause a major inconvenience. In fact, if we were to leave the responsibility of religious instruction to the different groups of believers, we could lose the experience gained from past years concerning non-catechetical religious instruction in the school and in certain cases, we could open the door to ideological

102. Michel FOUCAULT, *Dits et écrits*, p. 174.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 178

104. Cf. p. 8

105. *Religion in Secular Schools*, p. 205.

hedging. At the same time, we could prevent the school from assuming its responsibility to encourage critical reflection and openness to diversity. We could find ourselves increasing the risk to the innermost recesses that identify us and making the contribution of religious instruction contingent on reinforcing social cohesion. A variation of this model, which consists in integrating this instruction into the school schedule, does not seem any more desirable, for the same reasons.

The Québec tradition in matters of religious education favored a form of partnership between the State and the Church, leaving specific responsibilities to each entity.¹⁰⁶ This approach permits numerous advantages and it seems wise to preserve it instead of reorganizing it.

2. *The suggestion of limiting the possibility of managing denominational schools and of offering denominational instruction to the private sector is quite surprising within the framework of a report so strongly in favor of promoting social cohesion. If the scholastic initiation of students in their own religion becomes the domain of the private school, this situation will foster the creation of 'particular' schools which are less subject to the authority of the State than those in the public system. **The risk of creating social differences is more apparent in this hypothesis than if diversified religious instruction were offered in the public school.***

This suggestion is perplexing for another reason. The Proulx Report is evasive on the topic of the financing of private schools. "We did not deem it was part of our mandate to discuss issues related to the funding of private schools. We simply took note of the current provisions in the Act respecting private education which allows such funding, although on a largely discretionary basis."¹⁰⁷ We foresee that **if all denominational instruction would revert to the private sector, this could provoke a significant increase in the demand for private schooling.** The financial constraints on the parents could doubtless bring about pressures to obtain a higher level of public funding particularly in favor of private institutions who offered religious instruction associated with a particular religion. Equal treatment must be granted to all denominations in this aspect, as emphasized by the Proulx Report.

This is where the difficulty arises. Do we foresee a significant increase in funding for the private network? Is this a possibility? If not, then we must recognize that insufficient funding could be equivalent to rescinding all religious denominational instruction within the framework of the school system or it could make this instruction accessible only to children from economically advantaged families.

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The preceding analyses lead us to conclude that this human sciences approach to the study of religion proposed by the Task Force constitutes an interest on the cultural level. However, it does **not permit the pursuit of the specific objectives of a true religious education nor does it respond adequately to certain fundamental needs of young people in elementary and secondary schools.** Even from the point of view of social

106. Cf. Denis WATTERS, op.cit., t.I.

107. Religion in Secular Schools, p.188.

cohesion and citizenship education, these propositions have significant deficiencies. It appears increasingly doubtful that it responds to the general expectations of the parents.¹⁰⁸ We understand from the authors' argument that respect for the Charters obliges us to reconsider these objectives, needs, and expectations. Meanwhile, the report recognizes that **this proposal does not represent the only option compatible with respect for fundamental rights.** (p 204) Moreover, it is necessary to consider seriously the options that would satisfy different aspects of the question.

1.4.2 The Recommendations of the Catholic Committee

The Catholic Committee agrees with the necessity to respect the fundamental rights of all citizens in matters of religious education. However, it believes that we may adhere to the democratic values of a lawful society and reach conclusions that are different from those expressed in the Proulx Report. The spirit of the recommendations of the Committee consists in *making the best possible recognition of cultural particularities advocated by the 'communitarian' vision and the concern for social cohesion offered by the 'republican' approach.*

1.4.2.1 Religious instruction

Regarding religious instruction, the recommendations of the Committee are supported by the educational objectives presented in the first part of this document. They take into consideration the psychosocial situation of young people today, as described in Section 1.2. A number of principles and orientations follow as a result.

Principles

First of all, the objective of religious instruction is to provide an introduction to a specific field of knowledge and contribute to the initiation of youth into the surrounding culture. *Religious instruction will thus feature a major intellectual dimension* and should provide young people with exposure to realities they need to know if they are to understand their history and the world in which they live. This instruction should stress knowledge of the main religious traditions present in Québec society.

Religious instruction is not limited to knowledge of a cognitive type. Instead it encompasses a 'savoir-être,' i.e. knowledge as a 'way-of-being,' inasmuch as each person is called to deepen her relationship to herself, to others and to the universe; to learn to live with suffering, to question the meaning of death; and to adopt a position with respect to transcendence and God.¹⁰⁹ *Accordingly religious instruction should contribute to the spiritual development of young people and enable them to progressively gain knowledge of themselves as free, autonomous subjects, vis-à-vis religion.* This instruction should support the young in their quest for meaning and hope and consider the particular context facing youth today.

108. It is not evident that parents have clearly understood the nature and implications of the program of human and social sciences proposed as a result of the survey of the Task Force on the place of religion in the school. This may explain, to a great extent, that some results of the poll taken diverge considerably from many previous polls. These results also diverge considerably from the data collected in a qualitative study by Mme. Marie-Andrée Quintal for the Catholic Committee. This study focussed primarily on parents' opinions on the subject of a possible cultural instruction on religions. A copy of this study, produced in 1995, may be obtained from the secretary of the Catholic Committee.

109. Cf. See previous Section 1.1.1.

*Religious instruction should also help to shape the personal identity of young people, while teaching them to familiarize themselves with, and appreciate other world-views.*¹¹⁰ Students should be offered enough time in which to critically appropriate their source tradition and also have the opportunity to progressively discover and dialogue with other traditions. Religious instruction should thus contribute to the capacity of individuals from different backgrounds to live with one another in a spirit of mutual respect.

The objectives of religious instruction are by no means limited to the personal development of youth. *Religious instruction should also bring about a positive contribution of religion to life in society.* Religious instruction also contributes to the development of an 'historical conscience' of our society, inter-religious communication and citizenship education.¹¹¹ In particular, this contribution affects the cultural, social and democratic vitality of society. Thus, religious instruction should stress the study of past and present spiritual sources of Québec society and emphasize learning to live together in a pluralistic society. It fosters respect for basic rights and educates youth to respect these same rights.

The extension of the right to religious instruction related to particular traditions

A religious, denominational instruction is the only instruction that can permit the pursuit of objectives specific to religious education that relate to both formation and the socio-cultural objectives of society.

The right to such instruction in the public school is not actually recognized by Law except for Catholics and Protestants. It is a 'privilege' resulting from an historical evolution that neither Catholics nor Protestants have ever claimed exclusively for themselves. Having inherited this situation, the Committees should not be resented for this fact. A transformed context necessitates revisions that should involve their constructive participation. For this reason, the Catholic Committee does not believe in establishing equality by abolishing all right to instruction related to a particular tradition in public schools. **A better solution would be to promote equity by extending this right and by offering non-confessional instruction to those who would prefer it.**

This choice would *satisfy the demands of the Charters*, respect *parental choice*, reflect *regional diversity* and permit an *evolution in the community*.

1. *The extension of rights to religious instruction would not be universal.* In fact, it would be impossible to assure religious patrimonial instruction to all denominations in Québec society today. Various means are possible to situate this extension of rights within a reasonable framework.¹¹² The approach used by other Western democracies consists generally in restricting religious education in schools to traditions that have world-wide importance. This is because of their historical contribution to the development of civilization, their 'matriciel' role towards the religious schools that evolved, their spiritual wisdom over several centuries, the presence of credible, responsible people and of significant numbers of followers, and their social and cultural contribution in contemporary societies. For these reasons, the right to equality obliges us to grant the same rights to each of the traditions recognized by the State concerning public instruction.

110. Cf. See previous Section 1.1.1. and 1.1.2.

111. Cf. See previously, Section 1.1.3.

112. See below p. 45-49

2. *Only a diversity of choice would permit us to honor the involvement of the State respecting the primary responsibility of parents in matters of religious education. Moreover, parents must agree that the school would fulfill its specific role in accompanying young people in the critical appropriation of their heritage and in their gradual discovery of different world-views.*

3. *The administration of religious instruction relating to various traditions will vary depending on the milieu. Each school will adjust the services it offers to conform to the needs of its clientele, within the framework of guidelines defined by the State. The particularities of the different milieux will be respected.*

4. *These extensive changes could inevitably involve considerable adaptations depending on the situation. The establishment of criteria applicable to all traditions would permit us to manage such services within reasonable limitations. On the other hand different measures, which will be indicated below, may facilitate the management of this diversity. At any rate, there will have to be some concessions. If the transformations permit a more comprehensive respect for rights and better services for young people, then we must make the necessary efforts. **All things considered, a policy that would extend rights would be less disturbing for the system as a whole and for the population in general, than the radical shift proposed by the Proulx Report.** This policy of extension of rights would permit a significant evolution without causing major disruptions.*

“Québec culture, though dedicated to the perpetuation of Québec’s heritage, is a dynamic culture, one that is continually changing and open to different contributions.

Moreover, the Charter of Human Rights affirms that “persons belonging to ethnic minorities have the right to maintain and perpetuate their own cultural life with other members of their group.” [...]

The position of Québec society concerning intercultural relations is to avoid extreme situations where different groups would integrally and rigidly maintain their own culture and traditions and co-exist in reciprocal ignorance and isolation.

On the one hand, our population as a whole attaches great importance to the respect for the democratic values defined by the Charter, particularly those relating to equality between the sexes, the status of children and the rejection of discrimination based on ethnic or racial origin. These values constitute the conditions that assure that the growth of diversity in our society will be accomplished by respecting the rights of people.

On the other hand, the success of the integration process requires that new arrivals and Québécois of all origins be open to inter-community exchanges and recognize that all cultures are susceptible to enrichment through sharing. [...]

MINISTÈRE DES COMMUNAUTÉS CULTURELLES
 ET DE L’IMMIGRATION, *Au Québec, pour bâtir ensemble.*
Énoncé de politique en matière d’immigration et d’intégration,
 Montréal, MCCI, direction des politiques et programmes,
 1990. p. 17-18.

This evolution would **conform to the spirit of Québec policy in matters of cultural integration.** This does not “set a limit to consideration of diversity such as the principles related to maintaining democracy, equality of rights, as well as the proper functioning of institutions.”¹¹³ *L’Énoncé de politique en matière d’immigration et d’intégration* (1990) recognized the State’s obligation to respect cultural and religious diversity within the limits defined by law and fundamental democratic values, and on the basis of a moral contract that connects new arrivals to Québécois of all origins.

113. Marie McANDREW, et al., *Diversité culturelle et religieuse: divergence des rhétoriques, convergence des pratiques?* in France GAGNON et al, *Pluralism, citoyenneté et éducation*, p. 300

L'Énoncé de politique encouraged institutions to adapt to their diverse clientele by assuring accessibility to services through reasonable means of accommodation.¹¹⁴ These measures favor cultural integration. They must, of course, be aware of the norms and limitations necessary for the proper functioning of institutions.

A non-confessional option

We must maintain the possibility of another choice that is parallel to confessional instruction. This second option must consist of a choice for moral instruction. A cultural initiation to various religions in one form or another is also necessary to prepare young people to live in a pluralistic society. This initiation can be accomplished according to several models that will be determined by the minister after considering proposals made by different groups.

For example, the second option could consist of a non-confessional program of studies with a component of moral instruction, and non-confessional instruction on the subject of the religious phenomenon and religions. However, those who do not have any religious affiliations may consider that their rights have not been completely respected by this choice and would prefer that the second option consist exclusively of a program of moral instruction. In this case, elements that favor a familiarization with religious diversity could be integrated in different disciplines or in complementary activities, as proposed in France, to compensate for the religious illiteracy of the young people.¹¹⁵ In one way or another, it would be prudent to proceed gradually, leaving sufficient time for experimentation.

The Catholic Committee does not think it should choose one model over another as it could accommodate either proposal. It wishes to emphasize that programs of religious confessional instruction must dedicate a significant block to an initiation to religious diversity.

The Parents' Opinion

The Proulx Report makes a statement concerning the ambivalence that parents expressed to the proposal of extending rights. The respondents to the questionnaire seemed to have retreated before the idea to offer 'each religious group its own instruction,' despite a strong adherence to the principle of extending rights to others groups rather than just Catholics and Protestants.

The formulation of the questions and their order may doubtlessly explain much about this apparent contradiction.

In the questionnaire, (Question B.1), parents were asked the following question concerning principles:

“Would you prefer that the State:

- a) maintained rights and privileges only for Catholics and Protestants;
- b) granted other religions the same rights and privileges enjoyed by Catholics and Protestants;
- c) did not grant any particular rights or privileges to any religion?”

114. *L'Énoncé de politique en matière d'immigration et d'intégration*, p. 60, 72.

115. C.F. Guy COQ, *Démocratie, religion, éducation*.

The majority of respondents indicated a preference to extend rights to other religions. (Catholics: 50.8%; Protestants: 55.1%; other religions: 54.4%)

Moreover, it is significant to note that if we add up the results that favored responses a) and b), we find the great majority of Catholics (72.2%), Protestants (67.3%) and those of other religions (62.3%). In all cases, among those who would prefer either to maintain or to extend the 'rights and privileges,' the number that *preferred to 'extend' access to religious education in the schools was more than double those who preferred to 'maintain' the status quo.*¹¹⁶

These results **do not concur with those of another, more crucial question, (D.2)** which asked parents about "your child's school" and their choice among four possibilities:

- a) only Catholic instruction and Protestant instruction would be offered;
- b) each religious group would be offered its own religious instruction;
- c) a cultural instruction would be offered to all students comprised of general knowledge about different religions;
- d) no religious instruction would be offered.

In this instance, the response from Catholic parents is very divided: 28.9% for a) 17.9%, for b) 44.2%, for c) 7.9%, for d).¹¹⁷ These results do not agree with those of the preceding question, which refers to 'maintaining' or 'extending' access to religious education. Moreover, it should be noted that the same discrepancy appears in the responses to these two questions from the other respondents to the survey. There are at least three hypotheses to explain this discrepancy.

First of all, the question is *asked in such a restricted manner* without any clause that would relate to an actual request or consider possible conditions. We may understand a certain concern when faced with the idea that each school must offer a complete palate of services depending on the number of religions present in the school.

Furthermore, *the options presented are very polarized.* They have not sought the opinion of the respondents concerning the hypothesis that different religious groups may wish instruction that focuses mainly on their own tradition but that is open also to learning about other religions.

Another difficulty comes from the *uncertainty and misunderstanding* which resulted from the question asked in a telephone poll on the nature of a 'cultural instruction that would offer general knowledge about different religions.' Would this instruction not also deal with knowledge of one's own religion? Must we guess that it refers to instruction based on the human science of religion more than religious instruction? The question deals with the total scope of instruction, similar to the actual religious instruction that is offered but not imposed. In compiling the data, it refers to instruction that becomes 'common to all students.' (Chart 11, p 84). The Proulx Report, *Religion in Secular Schools*, refers to 'compulsory' instruction. This is quite ambiguous. *This makes the 'profiles that refer to the management of religion' very speculative,* inferred by a group of questions, and restricted to the four following types: confessional, mixed-confessional, mixed-secular and strictly secular. (Chart 14, p. 90)

116. M. MILOT & J.P. PROULX, *Les attentes sociales à l'égard de la religion* (Study 2), Chart 5, p. 68.

117. *Ibid.*, Tableau 11, p. 84.

Ways and Means

The Catholic Committee believes **that it is possible to extend the right to religious instruction in the public schools to other denominations without resulting in abnormal situations.** The Committee makes two proposals.

The first, as mentioned previously, *leaves the initiative to the State to identify the religions that may be taught in the public schools.* The religions most often recognized are Judaism, the Christian denominations and Islam as well as in certain rarer cases, Eastern or Middle-Eastern religions. In most Western countries, it is accepted practice to make a particular place for Christian traditions, whether Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox, in the religious instruction in the schools. In a good number of cases, these traditions are often the only ones taught in the public schools.

The State may *undertake to define the conditions that the various religious denominations must accept in order to have the right to instruction relating to their traditions in the public schools.* In principle, all denominations that accept these conditions could ask for their particular religious instruction in the public schools.

This second proposal would offer complete respect for the Charter of Rights. It could doubtlessly lead to the admission of a number of restrictions for religious instruction relating to particular traditions. This limitation could result nevertheless in a democratic process wherein the members of different denominations could have the possibility to evaluate their interest in religious instruction in the schools, under the conditions specified by the State.

In either case, questions are asked regarding the model for extending rights to religious instruction in public schools. For these reasons the Committee submits the following suggestions for examination.

Establishing Conditions and a Framework

The State must first *specify the meaning of the term 'religions'* in the objectives of religious instruction in the public schools and disclose the criteria it will use to evaluate each request from a religious group that wishes to obtain religious instruction related to its particular tradition. Once the authorized groups are known, the Ministry of Education can assure that the programs of studies are developed according to the established requests and criteria.

The next step refers to the school governing boards whose task would be to identify the needs of religious confessional instruction and consequently to plan their activities. The school commission would have the responsibility to ensure that each request coming from a group recognized by the State would be respected as much as possible.

Pedagogical Management

To facilitate planning in the schools, the choice of confessional or non-confessional instruction would be made when the student is first registered in school and would be maintained throughout elementary school or the first cycle in secondary school. This choice would be more of a declaration of intention rather than a firm commitment. During the annual registration, the parents retain the right to 'change their minds,' at which point they will inform the school administration of their choice.

In a case where the required services necessitate hiring additional personnel,¹¹⁸ the school administration would indicate this need and request additional funding *a posteriori* from the school commission. The school commission would then transmit the requests originating from the schools to the MEQ.

In the case where a school receives a request for a particular confessional instruction from a very restricted number of individuals, and as a result would be unable within reasonable limits to offer this instruction, it will inform the school commission. The school commission will see if other measures could satisfy the parents who expressed interest in religious instruction for their children.

The *number of requests* for courses in religious instruction for students of different denominations is difficult to estimate with any degree of precision because the distribution of students of each denomination has not been published by the *Déclaration de l'effectif scolaire*. However, we do know how many registered students belong to a religion other than Catholic or Protestant in each of the schools of Québec. This data provides *an indication of the probability of a sufficient concentration of students, belonging to a particular denomination, that would justify a request for religious instruction in each school*. We may estimate that schools having 100 or more students of another religion present a certain degree of probability. An examination of the distribution of student populations in the schools of Québec reveal that for the 1998-1999 school year, *112 elementary and 75 secondary schools had more than 100 students belonging to 'other' religions*.¹¹⁹ These schools (primary and secondary) are concentrated in the greater Montreal region.¹²⁰

However, this data is not sufficient to predict what will be required. We must include the conditions that the MEQ will establish in order to recognize programs of study in religious confessional instruction.

Even if a moderate number of demands were addressed to a limited number of schools, we must make the pedagogical management of the proposed model as efficient as possible. The Committee makes the following suggestions.

- The instruction time for the program of studies must be established as part of the allocated number of hours per year leaving the different locales the possibility to distribute these hours according to their needs, either within their schedule of classes, or by particular activities, both of which will ensure that the program objectives are met and will respect the guidelines established within the programs. This possibility already exists,¹²¹ and it conforms to a willingness to introduce elements of flexibility in school management in elementary school.
- When a program of cultural instruction in religions is offered within a non-confessional option, this instruction and the program of moral instruction will be offered by the same teacher to the same group of students according to the pedagogical model of organization chosen in each milieu: the integration of subjects, the sharing of modules, the semester-long instruction, etc.

118. Cf. Appendix 6.

119. The public network of schools is composed of 1,940 primary schools, 625 secondary schools and 202 primary and secondary schools in 1997-1998.

120. Cf. Appendix 2

121. Catholic Committee, Art 13.

- Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians could study the possibility of developing an ecumenical program of studies. The Catholic and Protestant Committees have already begun these consultations.

These various measures should permit the establishment of options that would be easier to manage than what is currently in place. The supplementary costs will not be prohibitive, considering the fact that we are no longer obliged to offer religious instruction to individuals or groups with very restricted numbers. Moreover, the administrative demands required to put these proposals in place will be justified by the educational benefits that young people will receive, as well as the positive social and cultural impact on society.

The programs of studies and religious instruction

The programs of studies for instruction in particular traditions must respect certain common guidelines as defined by the State. These could consist of the following:

- *The programs of studies must be approved by a government decree with the consent of the religious denominations concerned and respecting the criteria enumerated below.*
- *Religious instruction must pursue the educational objectives concerning the development of young people.*
- *This instruction must dedicate a significant part to the knowledge of religious diversity.*
- *This instruction must respect the needs and the capacities of students in different stages of their progress in school.*
- *This instruction must respect the rights of the person and democratic values that are commonly accepted in Québec society.*
- *This instruction must be given by qualified, university-educated teachers.*
- *This instruction must be intended for a sufficient number of students. This number may be established as an average of students per group per school commission using flexible guidelines (cf. Appendix 6). The criterion referring to ‘sufficient numbers’ would apply to all religious denominations, including Catholic and Protestant.*

We propose the following progressive achievement of learning objectives up to the second cycle of high school for the programs of Catholic religious instruction.

- *The specific objectives for the first two cycles (1st to 4th grade in elementary school) will focus on the formation of one’s identity. The programs of studies could thus be centered on the students’ knowledge of their own religious tradition and the enlightenment it brings to certain spiritual and moral questions.*
- *A preliminary initiation to cultural and religious differences could be fostered. It could be developed throughout the elementary and secondary school years through the integration within these programs of a predetermined percentage of experiences relating to the discovery of other religions in a perspective of openness and respect.*

- *The third cycle (5th and 6th grades) and the first cycle in high school (Secondary 1 to Secondary 3) could permit the students to continue to pursue these objectives by making a more important place for critical reflection and discernment.*

For the second cycle in high school, all students could be grouped in a common program of studies. The focus could be on developing competencies relating to *inter-religious communication*, on *integrating and transferring knowledge* previously acquired through various programs of study, and on *developing the ability to discern* different perceptions of meaning. The educational activities could also consist in *developing an understanding of the subject of different religions*, and *reflecting on fundamental human questions*, by referring to various sources of wisdom. Within the framework of these activities, the formation of one's identity could be pursued through dialogue and an existential search involving the expression of different convictions.

This proposal could evidently foster social cohesion among people of different convictions. It could encourage inter-religious communication, through presupposing a process centered on the formation of identity until Secondary 3.

Teacher Training

Whatever model chosen for religious instruction, teacher training will be the key to its success. We recall as was stated previously, that on average, 30% of the school personnel reluctantly teaches religious instruction, while the percentage can be as high as 50% in certain school commissions in the Montreal region. Whatever model of instruction will be chosen, there will probably still be some problems. For example, the perspective of a cultural instruction that focuses on various religions is a concern for some teachers. Competent teachers are needed to fulfill the requirements for quality religious instruction.

In any hypothesis, we foresee important changes in teacher training programs and support for teachers. Should we depend on specialists? Should we raise the required qualifications to 60 credits? Should we require increased training in the discipline in university? Should we change the specific training programs to accommodate denominations recognized by the State?

Answers to these questions require a separate report. It will be possible to determine and specify the required measures once we know the decision of the MEQ on the orientation of religious education in the schools. In any case, teacher training must correspond to the demands of the chosen model. There are university programs in Jewish and Islamic studies already offered in certain Québec universities. Through agreements between departments and universities, it is possible to develop complete programs in pedagogical training in this discipline.

The Catholic Committee therefore recommends:

That the Education Act assert the right of religions to instruction bearing on their particular tradition, conditional upon compliance with a number of general criteria applicable equally to all denominations and programs of studies;

That regular public schools also offer a non-confessional program of studies consisting of moral education, and depending on the Minister's decision, elements of historical and sociological teaching about religions;

That for grades Secondary IV and V, all students be grouped together with a shared or common program of studies so as to foster communication between students of differing convictions around fundamental human issues;

That teachers' training programs be changed so as to prepare teaching staff qualified to teach these various programs of studies.

1.4.2.2 Pastoral or spiritual animation

The Proulx Report recognizes the importance of educational services such as pastoral animation: “[It] recognizes the relevance of providing support to all students who are looking for meaning in their lives or pursuing a spiritual quest. This support would take the form of one-on-one or group meetings with a person who can help them look for meaning in their lives, meet personal or group commitments, and possibly celebrate their religion.”¹²² The report does not subscribe to the recommendations of the Estates General on Education that proposed transforming pastoral animation into a civic support service. “The spiritual dimension is equally important for many who are not affiliated with a specific religion.”¹²³ We are grateful to the Task Force for recognizing the importance of this service, as well as its specific character.

Pastoral animation service is integrated within the general mission of the school. The objectives are as follows: the educational success of the students, their spiritual and moral development, the integration of religious knowledge in the practice of daily life, the development of feelings of belonging to the school community, the improvement of the general quality of school life, and the sensitizing of students to humanitarian and social issues. Its activities offer individual accompaniment to students and members of the school personnel. It includes group projects and community activities whether of a religious character or not. It offers education in the faith for students who freely wish to pursue this path.

The orientations and objectives of the service are generally very much appreciated. **All eventual adjustments must therefore be based on continuing the services and activities that are currently offered.**

The Proposals of the Proulx Report

The Proulx Report recommends replacing Catholic pastoral animation or Protestant religious animation by a spiritual and religious service common to various religions and spiritual paths that are present in the schools and that these services be publicly funded. The personnel responsible for these services may call upon external resources as needed.

122. *Religion in Secular Schools*, p. 211

123. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

“Pastoral or religious animation is the [other] educational service of a religious nature proposed in Québec schools as part of student services”¹²⁴ after appropriate consultations. The activities for this service will be determined each year by the school governing boards when they decide whether or not to offer this service. The criteria for hiring animators would be specified by the school commission. If schools chose not to take advantage of a common animation service, pastoral or religious services could be offered to students of different religious backgrounds. However, these would be held outside of regular school hours and funded by the specific religious groups.

Discussions and Recommendations

The Education Act defines a provincial framework that leaves the different milieux some room to maneuver. This should also apply to religious education in general and to services of pastoral animation in particular. **There are differences that exist between primary and secondary schools, as well as between the milieux and regions and this is reflected in the methods that will be used and conditions that will govern the exercise of this service.**

The question raised by the Proulx Report concerning pastoral or religious animation *focuses primarily on ways to accommodate diversity*. If the Law recognizes the right for Catholic and Protestant students to have this service, should this right not also be extended to students belonging to other spiritual traditions or religions? Based on this idea, how can we follow up on an extension of this right?

This also means that it may be impossible to offer as many denominational services of spiritual or religious animation as there are denominations present in the school. We understand that it may be difficult, in pluralistic milieux, to justify offering a service of animation to a given denomination, despite the capability of the people responsible to undertake such a task, in a spirit of respect for the different spiritual or religious traditions. At the same time, we should recognize that in several milieux in Québec, this pastoral animation service is highly requested. The Catholic character of this service would often be the obvious choice for a school, particularly at the elementary level.

The question of religious diversity is not the only consideration. For example, we note that the criteria concerning public funding does not always reflect the agreements that are in place. At the secondary level, insufficient funding has necessitated severe reductions in services. At the elementary level, the division of the tasks between the Christian community and the school causes some confusion and we deplore the difference in salaries and working conditions from one milieu to another.

Considering the results of this data, the Catholic Committee believes that it could be advisable to redefine the function of the pastoral animation service and include sufficient margin for maneuvering in difficult situations. In this perspective, the Committee proposes the following modifications.

The function of the animator could be of a non-confessional nature. The objectives of this service could correspond essentially to those indicated above for pastoral animation except where an explicit responsibility was added toward students of different denominations. This service could be called an *animation of spiritual and communitarian life* in

124. Ibid., p. 209.

order to reflect the different types of interventions expected of the person who will perform this function.

Even if no denominational connotation is attached to this function, **activities of a confessional or pastoral nature may nevertheless be offered within the framework of this service to students who have freely chosen to participate.** The Proulx Report also makes this recommendation. According to the composition and expectations of the milieu, the people performing this function could have the responsibility to determine the nature and place for these initiatives within the organization of the program of activities. *Thus in an elementary school with a student population of an almost homogeneous religious affiliation, the service offered could reflect this milieu.*

The formation of *general goals* for this common service could be decided by a government organization whose mandate could be similar to the actual denominational committees.¹²⁵

In reference to a *program of activities*, it would be unrealistic and inappropriate to leave the responsibility to determine these goals to the governing boards. There must be adequate time within the school schedule set aside for those responsible for pastoral animation. It calls for specialized competencies. The governing boards must nevertheless approve these programs of activities.

We do not recommend that this offer of service depend on an annual decision of the school's governing board. Until now, pastoral animation has been recognized as a right of the students. This right should not be denied them just because the function loses its denominational status. As with religious instruction, it is preferable in this case to extend the right to this service rather than restrict it or make this offer conditional.

Moreover, we must keep in mind that *this type of service requires a continued presence.* The animator establishes a rapport with the students that will determine the quality of work that can be accomplished. Similarly, the animator must be familiar with the values, expectations, and needs of a given milieu in order to properly perform the task. This position requires a certain stability to be effective. It also requires adequate financing. In fact, the MEQ budgetary planning could become very complicated if we did not know from one year to the next how many schools could offer this service.

The criteria for hiring must include some form of agreement with the religious denominations. With this stipulation, parents of different denominations could have confidence in a person of another faith who could offer a service of spiritual animation service with respect for the students' allegiances.

A government body like the one referred to, would determine the *required qualifications.* *These would be the same for elementary as well as secondary schools.* Transitory measures should be planned for the gradual implementation of these new measures. The people currently holding these positions could continue their work and be paid according to their qualifications and experience. They could be offered in-service training.

The Proulx Report recommends that this service be "*publicly funded by the State.*" We must keep in mind that shared responsibilities could result from a redefinition of the objectives of religious instruction in the school. This will compel the Christian communities to dedicate increased resources to the faith education of young people. *It would appear to be legitimate and*

125. Cf. See Section 3.1.

*normal in the context of reorganization wherein the animation service loses its confessional connotation, that this service be entirely subsidized by the Ministry of Education. The financing should be guaranteed by means of a recurring budgetary 'envelope' for the funding of complementary services, which is in agreement with a recent suggestion of the Superior Council of Education.*¹²⁶

The Ministry of Education could determine the guidelines and focus primarily on the general competencies related to this function. The milieu could have the possibility of adapting this service to their own needs, within the context of the guidelines. The Catholic Committee acknowledges that this vision of spiritual and communitarian animation is new. Appropriate consultation is a prerequisite to guarantee its successful implementation. There are many advantages if these changes are properly presented and understood, and if their application is carefully monitored. To accomplish this, the Ministry of Education should consult the people who presently perform this function as well as the school and ecclesiastical administrators. With these reservations, the Catholic Committee offers the following recommendations:

The Catholic Committee recommends :

That the Education Act assert the right of students of all denominations to a shared service of spiritual animation in public schools;

That this service feature three dimensions: group activities enabling students to put values and knowledge into practice; confessional activities for various groups of students according to demand and the possibilities available for satisfying it; personal pastoral care and attention for students who express this need;

That a public body responsible for religious instruction be charged with specifying the educational and spiritual objectives of this service as well as the qualifications and hiring criteria of the persons in charge of this animation service;

That among such hiring criteria, approval by the denominations concerned be made a requirement;

That this service be entirely funded by the government by means of a resource envelope related to the supplementary services prescribed by the basic school regulation.

126. CSE, *Les Services complémentaires à l'enseignement: des responsabilités à consolider*, p. 51-52.

2. THE STATUS OF THE SCHOOLS

2.1 Analysis of the Situation

An evaluation of the confessional experience of Catholic schools was undertaken from 1988 to 1993 and again from 1993 to 1998. It was obvious from the results that a great number of schools, particularly secondary schools, had difficulty interpreting the confessional experience and making it a significant component of their educational project. Article 4 of the Committee Regulations which states that “a public school, recognized as Catholic, integrates the beliefs and values of the Catholic religion in its educational project, with respect for freedom of conscience and of religion,”¹ has given rise to some misunderstanding. The Committee proposed an interpretation of this article and has made suggestions so that the educational project of a public denominational school can incorporate this significant component while respecting freedom of conscience and religion.² It is understandable that it is incompatible that a school be public and confessional at the same time, even if experience has shown that these two characteristics can be accommodated.

The creation of linguistic school boards has aggravated this difficulty because different religious groups may attend the same school and in the same institution, both Catholics and Protestants could claim the right to confessional recognition. Moreover, the process of consultation prescribed by law means that Catholic or Protestant majorities can almost always prevail over those who would legitimately prefer a secular school. This creates a situation where it is practically impossible to establish a network of non-confessional schools, even if the need is recognized. Some have expressed concern that with the rise of pluralism in Québec society, the ease with which public schools may obtain confessional status may cause fragmentation of the school network, which will be detrimental to social cohesion.

These difficulties appear in varying degrees, depending on the milieu. However, we notice that a great number of parents wish to have a confessional status for their school, particularly at the elementary level. The parents believe that this status will offer *better protection for religious educational services* (instructional and pastoral animation) and will *encourage the creation of a moral and social climate that corresponds to their expectations within the school.* It is an identifying symbol in many milieux. **Favorable conditions must exist, such as a clear consensus among the stakeholders in the school, and after having conscientiously followed the process required to obtain a confessional status, remarkable results can be achieved.** We must also recognize that this status includes a context and implies commitments without which certain activities related to the spiritual and religious dimension may find themselves compromised.

We must also keep in mind particular cases. For example, the English Catholic, French Protestant or Jewish communities view the school as intimately connected to their existence and vitality as cultural and religious groups. Certain specialist schools also have a mission directly related to their confessional status, such as ‘master’ schools that train young people for choirs devoted to sacred music and perhaps would have to close their doors if their confessional status were revoked.

127. The Committee has retained an amending proposition for this article while waiting for the conclusion of the current debate on confessionalism in the schools.

128. CATHOLIC COMMITTEE, *L'École catholique: un choix éducatif et culturel.*

This issue is both complex and ambivalent. **The Catholic Committee believes that a significant revision of the current situation is necessary.** The Committee also believes that it is better to keep a place, even if limited, for schools of a confessional character within a network of public schools, rather than to encourage a proliferation of private confessional schools. We must therefore correct the anomalies described above. The current proportion of 90% of Catholic confessional schools no longer reflects the socio-cultural reality of the different milieux in Québec today, nor the degree of commitment required of the stakeholders in the schools to make this status significant. The preferred solutions must reflect the following principles.

2.2 Principles

Respect for diversity in the network of public schools is desirable and necessary to respond to parental demands.

Public schools must promote common values while leaving room for the expression of cultural and religious particularities.

The status of the school should never infringe on freedom of conscience.

An approach that incorporates participation and respect for local responsibility is preferred to one that is authoritarian in all decisions concerning the status of the school.

Any reduction of the place of confessional schools in the public system of education must be counterbalanced by precise legislative guarantees which ensure the maintenance and quality of services of religious education in the schools.

2.3 Recommendations

The situation described above calls for measures that can be easily applied and bring about significant changes. These measures must **rely on a basic evolution of ideas**, without which they could appear arbitrary and provoke misunderstandings and tensions. Sufficient information sharing sessions and reflection at the level of the local communities must preclude any important changes in the status of the schools. These procedures would affect each school governing board which, using consulting documents prepared by the MEQ, would be responsible for conducting an in-depth analysis of the situation in the school and the expectations of the milieu.

This procedure would permit the stakeholders in a milieu to question the relevance of a confessional status for their school. The parents who wish to retain religious educational services would want to be assured that the retraction of the confessional status of a school would not affect the services offered to their children. **Only once they are reassured on this point, will parents be ready to reconsider the necessity of a confessional status.** It must be clear to the parents that each school milieu will retain the prerogative to give an orientation to its educational project that reflects the values of the milieu. The parents can also authorize religious activities at the school that correspond to the beliefs of the different groups of students, within guidelines determined by the State. We may conclude that **as religious needs are satisfied within the public school, it will not be seen as necessary to request a confessional status for the schools.**

Article 41 of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms states: "Parents or the persons acting in their stead have a right to require that, in the public educational

establishments, their children receive religious or moral education in conformity with their convictions, within the framework of the curricula provided for by the law.” This article is not covered by Article 52 of this Charter which gives precedence to certain rights (defined in Articles 1 to 38) over all laws that the National Assembly may adopt. Meanwhile Article 41 reflects the long standing moral contract between the State and Québec parents. The restriction indicated at the end of the Article (within the framework of the curricula provided for by the law) allows us to satisfy rights within reasonable and legitimate limits.

To assure the guarantees required for the services of religious education in the public school, Article 41 of the Charter should be included among the articles covered by Article 52. This article has a particular status among the group of social rights expressed in the Charter because it may be considered a corollary of the right for freedom of conscience and of religion, as affirmed in Article 3 of the Charter.

The Catholic Committee therefore recommends :

Making the confessional status of public schools exceptional, provided that guarantees to religious instruction in schools is strengthened by means of two measures:

- *Maintaining within the Education Act, the right to confessional religious instruction and to spiritual animation in public schools;*
- *Including Articles 41 and 42 of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms in the list of Articles covered by Article 52 of the same Charter*

With these recommendations, the parents will have a period of approximately two years to specify the type of public school they want.

a) A common public school

A common public school is open to pupils of all denominations. It is not associated with any religious tradition or particular ideology. However, it reflects the natural culture of its milieu and may integrate values that are consistent with this milieu within its educational project.

This school would offer a choice between:

1. One or several confessional religious programs that would include a moral formation and an initiation to religious diversity;
2. A program of non-confessional instruction which according to a ministerial decision may either:
 - consist of a component of moral instruction and another of non-confessional instruction on the subject of the religious phenomenon and religions in general;
 - or consist simply of a program of moral instruction.³

129. Cf. see above, page 45.

b) A specific project public school

The model of a school most commonly found in the context of Québec society should neither be a confessional nor a secular school that does not offer religious instruction. Nevertheless, both can be the result of different and legitimate expectations. It is necessary to find the means to establish such schools but only in cases where they clearly represent the most advantageous option for a milieu or a group of parents.

In the Education Act, Article 240 focuses on specific project public schools. This article refers to an exceptional character and specific conditions. “After consultation with the parents committee, the school commission may, with the approval of the minister respecting specific conditions and for a pre-determined period, establish a specific project school. The school commission may determine the registration criteria for students in this school.” (Education Act (LRQ), Chap. I-13.3, Art 240)

The criteria that must be respected in order to obtain authorization to establish a specific project public school, whether confessional or secular, could include the following:

- An indication of the specific reasons for the request for a particular project school, whether it is confessional or secular;
- A clear consensus of parents and school personnel on the meaning and relevance of this particular project, resulting from a consultation process with specifically defined guidelines;
- The submission of an educational project consistent with the request for a particular project school;
- An acceptance of the context of the pedagogical regime and the programs of studies approved by the Ministry of Education;
- An outline of the methods that will be used to foster the students’ integration into a pluralistic society and their participation in democratic life.

The use of such criteria, along with the precautions foreseen by Article 240, could prevent a multiplication of requests for particular project schools of religious character, as mentioned by the Proulx Report. We must not exaggerate the risks of social fragmentation mentioned in this report. Of course, we may understand that the government does not wish to promote the grouping of ethno-cultural communities around scholastic poles. However, there is nothing that can prevent the formation of these groups, particularly among first generation immigrants. A limited number of religious projects schools would pose less of a risk to a ‘balkanization’ of Québec society than Article 240 which would open only a very narrow corridor to a ‘confessional’ path for public schools. This is legitimate to maintain, if one refers to the Dutch experience,⁴ where **a policy of equal recognition of diversity may be more favorable to integration than measures that would force students into the private sector or to a ‘leveling out’ of differences.** This may turn out to be the case in Québec, as a policy of cultural integration contributes by various means to affirming social cohesion.

130. Cf. Appendix 1.

The Proulx Report raises another objection to the establishment of specific project public schools of a confessional nature, one that refers to the right to freedom of conscience. A public confessional school would risk restricting freedom of conscience in two ways: either by creating pressure to religious conformity or by inconveniencing certain students who would be required to attend a school that is much farther from their homes.⁵ This argument reflects an interpretation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in an Ontario ruling. The Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that each element of constraint violates the freedom of conscience of non-believers, that all religious instruction is equivalent to a form of indoctrination, and that the public school could not be confessional because it guarantees freedom from such practices. **This ruling has been vigorously contested.**⁶ Some jurists considered that a democratic State may legitimately support such instruction and such schools, whether in the name of a moral formation of students, or in the name of a more complete understanding of religious instruction in the schools, and of the role of religion in society. The explanation that the public confessional school violates freedom of conscience *ipso facto* does not seem to have been generally accepted. The government would appear justified in deciding that the protection of the vision of Québec society, regarding religious education, would prevail over this ruling.

The minister may thus authorize the establishment of specific project schools of a confessional or secular character.

A ‘confessional’ school has an educational project that reflects a religious denomination recognized by the State in matters of public education. This school offers moral and religious instruction that reflects the tradition embraced by the school and includes an initiation to religious diversity.

A ‘secular’ school does not offer any religious denominational instruction. Instead, it offers a program of non-denominational studies which include moral formation, and depending on the minister’s ruling, a cultural instruction on religions.

Once the choice of a type of school is made, the governing board would send the result of this process to the school commission. **The schools, previously recognized as Catholic or Protestant and that have opted to become common public or secular project schools, would automatically lose their confessional status. Those that wish to be recognized as confessional project schools would have to submit an explicit request that conforms to the conditions of Article 240 of the Education Act concerning particular project schools.**

The Catholic Committee therefore recommends that the minister:

Permit the establishment of two types of schools in the public education system: common public schools and specific project schools that may be either confessional or secular.

Allow communities and groups approximately two years’ time in which to declare what type of school they want.

131. *Religion in Schools*, p. 198

132. Cf. Patrice GARANT, *Confessionnalité et laïcité: À la recherche d’un compromis acceptable en marge du rapport Proulx*. Paper presented at the Commission parlementaire de l’Éducation, August 1999, p. 15-19.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

3.1 Government Organizations

The Catholic Committee and the Protestant Committee were established in 1964 at the same time as the Ministry of Education and the Superior Council of Education.¹ These Committees are government organizations with significant responsibilities concerning religious education in the schools.

The Catholic Committee is composed of an equal number of representatives of Catholic religious authorities, parents and educators. This composition guarantees representation for the principal partners directly concerned with Catholic Christian education in the schools and also for their opinions. Five members are named by the Assembly of Québec bishops. The other ten represent educators and parents and the Church must approve their appointments.

In order to foster democratic participation and the emergence of fresh ideas, there is a limit to the mandate of each member of the Catholic Committee.² According to the law, the Associate Deputy Minister for the Catholic faith participates in Committee meetings to ensure direct communication between the Ministry and the Catholic Committee on questions pertaining to their particular competencies.

The mandate of the Catholic Committee consists in regulating all confessional aspects of the system, from recognizing confessional institutions to approving programs, manuals and pedagogical materials for Catholic religious instruction. The Committee may also receive and hear requests and suggestions from associations, institutions and individuals on any questions within its scope. It may also commission studies and research that it believes necessary or useful in fulfilling its mandate. Finally the Committee has the power to make recommendations to the Minister of Education on issues that relate to its mandate.

The Catholic Committee has the juridical power to ensure that Catholic instructional services are offered in elementary and secondary schools in Québec whether they are confessional or non-confessional. It acts as an interface between the different partners in religious education in the schools: parents, school networks, and civil and religious authorities. Within the exercise of its mandate, the Committee operates with a considerable degree of autonomy, guaranteed by law. Since the bishops have a responsibility concerning the doctrinal authenticity of the programs of Catholic moral and religious instruction, the Committee requires their *nihil obstat* before approving programs of study and all pedagogical material. From the beginning, the Catholic Committee has played a predominant role regarding educational services for Catholic instruction. The reports and decisions of the Committee have had an important impact on the evolution of this instruction. Throughout the years, its goal has been to adjust religious formation to the needs of the young as well as to the expectations of the population and to give pertinent guidelines as to what could realistically be expected in a public school.³

133. Before 1964, and in fact since 1875, there has been a Catholic Committee. It was composed mostly of bishops and had authority concerning educational activities for the Catholic schools in Québec.

134. Denis WATTERS, *op. Cit.*, p. 131.

135. *Ibid.*, p. 242-294; 314-324; 329-333; 338-345.

An examination of the place of religion in the schools calls for a redefinition of agreements between the State and the religious denominations concerning their methods of collaboration. The Proulx Report is said to subscribe to the general principle “in virtue of which the school reflects the responsibility shared by parents, civil society and the State.”⁴ The churches and religious groups are part of civil society. The Report does not comment on the details of an eventual partnership between these groups and the State. We foresee numerous questions concerning this aspect. For example, how will the religious denominations participate in the development of programs of study, whether these programs are from a cultural or a confessional perspective? What avenue will allow religious denominations to monitor the doctrinal content of the programs of studies that pertain to them? As in other countries, the Churches may expect to approve the choice of teachers for their particular programs of study. It is the opinion of the Committee that reflection on these questions must be guided by the following principles.

Principles

The lack of expertise of the State in religious matters necessitates a collaboration with the various denominations concerning questions relating to religious education in the schools.

A dialogue between the State and the different partners involved in education is necessary to ensure that the educational objectives of the programs of study are respected and reflect the needs of young people and of society.

A new government body

It is in the common interest of the various partners of religious education in the schools to have a government body that will act as an interface and a consulting body for the State, the religious denominations, the school network and the parents. It could be an autonomous government body that could provide not only a place for negotiation among different religious groups, but it could also be a consultative and decision-making body concerning programs of study in religious instruction, the orientations of spiritual or pastoral animation, and the regulations that pertain to them.

The present denominational committees perform this function for Catholics and Protestants. **According to the decisions that will be made regarding religious education services, the situation that could evolve could call for a transformation of these organizations. This would permit the integration of different denominations affected by religious instruction in the school.**

The Catholic and Protestant Committees could be replaced by a multi-religious body, composed of members belonging to various denominations whose religious programs would be taught in the public schools.

- Its responsibilities would include: advising the Minister of Education on questions of common interest concerning religious education in the schools; determining the general orientations of the programs of study in religious confessional instruction; specifying the qualification requirements for teachers, approving the programs of study and the pedagogical materials; specifying the general objectives for a spiritual and communitarian animation service and the qualifications for people responsible for

136. *Religion in Secular Schools*, p. 193.

this service; defining certain common regulatory requirements, exercising a vigilant role in relation to the application of the law or pertinent regulations; and ensuring a liaison and coordination with the National Commission on the programs of studies.

Such an organization responsible for religious education could have the same type of rapport with the Superior Council of Education as the present confessional committees. It could also be a completely distinct body, on condition that it could have access to the resources shared by the Council and the confessional committees.

The Catholic Committee therefore recommends:

Maintaining a public body that will be in charge of religious instruction in schools and that will also constitute a structure for interface between the State and civil society over this question.

Defining the mandate and makeup of this body in accordance with the decisions to be made concerning religious instructional services in schools.

3.2 A ministerial body

This structure as described above will require a counterpart within the Ministry of Education. This ministerial body will have an administrative function with responsibilities concerning the law, the dossiers relating to the place of religion in schools, and a description of the tasks outlined by the MEQ.

It would be up to the Minister to indicate the specifications of this position. It is possible that this function could be assumed by a deputy minister for religious affairs without any particular confessional connotation, or even by an office that would answer directly to the associate deputy minister, as happens presently with the *directions des Communications* or *directions de la Condition féminine*.

3.3 Within the school commissions

The Education Act recognizes the necessity within the school commissions for establishing an administrative position in charge of school confessionality. A similar function should be foreseen whatever new arrangements are adopted by the government in relation to religious education in the public schools. As mentioned previously, despite the importance attributed to religious education, problematic situations could weaken this dimension of the formation of young people. In the future, it is also possible that certain milieux would be tempted to avoid such a demanding aspect of the educational project. In addition, sensitive questions and situations could arise that call upon particular competencies and a profound commitment toward the spiritual and religious dimension of the development of young people.

The Catholic Committee recommends:

Maintaining within school boards a position devoted to supporting religious instruction in public schools.

4. THE NOT-WITHSTANDING CLAUSES

The Catholic Committee firmly believes that its recommendations and proposals respect the fundamental rights of individuals, the collective rights of religious denominations, the educational interests of young people, and the social and cultural objectives of Québec society. Whatever solution is adopted, it may still be necessary to have recourse to the notwithstanding clauses. If such is the case, it must be stated that this recourse is justified in order to facilitate the arrangements that the State decides are most equitable, desirable, and possible in the current circumstances.

CONCLUSION

The question of the place of religion in the school has long divided public opinion in Québec. The current debate offers a possibility to explore the situation and find new and unifying solutions. It is necessary to focus on a sense of compromise and mutual consideration among the stakeholders: the religious majority and the minorities; parents, administrations and teachers; and the State and the religious denominations. The various sides in this debate have given much thought to the current situation. We are aware that a position that is too narrowly defined will not be effective in the long run. Reconciliation of the various points of view is the only viable solution.

The government should carefully consider this democratic process. A hasty resolution could only produce fragile results and stalling for time might cause us to miss a significant historical opportunity. Uncertainty has already caused enough damage.

In the short term, it would be thus necessary to state clear policies, to open new constructs and to revise what must be revised. This process demands an investment in human and financial resources. It is worthwhile to agree to such measures to reach satisfying solutions and foster social cohesion.

The solutions that will be adopted must rest on assured principles and sufficient public support. Only under these conditions will the system of education experience the stability it needs, after the numerous upheavals it has experienced. These reforms will permit institutions to better serve its citizens. The purpose of the Catholic Committee's report is to contribute to an on-going process that would benefit the formation of young people and Québec society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Catholic Committee recommends to the Minister of Education:

Regarding moral and religious instruction:

- *That the Education Act assert the right of religions to instruction bearing on their particular tradition, conditional upon compliance with a number of general criteria applicable equally to all denominations and programs of studies.*
- *That regular public schools also offer a non-confessional program of studies consisting of moral education, and depending on the minister's decision, elements of historical and sociological teaching about religions.*
- *That for grades secondary IV and V, all students be grouped together within a shared or common program of studies so as to foster communication between students of differing convictions around fundamental human issues.*
- *That teachers' training programs be changed so as to prepare teaching staff qualified to teach these various programs of studies.*

Regarding spiritual animation

- *That the Education Act asserts the right of students of all denominations to a shared service of spiritual animation in public schools.*
- *That this feature three dimensions: group activities enabling students to put values and knowledge into practice; confessional activities for various groups of students according to demand and the possibilities available for satisfying it; personal pastoral care and attention for students who express this need.*
- *That a public body responsible for religious instruction be charged with specifying the educational and spiritual objectives of this service as well as the qualifications and hiring criteria of the persons in charge of this animation service.*
- *That among hiring criteria, approval by the denominations concerned be made a requirement.*

Regarding the status of schools:

- *That the confessional status of public schools be made exceptional, provided that guarantees to religious instruction in schools is strengthened by means of two measures:*
 - *That within the Education Act, the right to confessional religious instruction and to spiritual animation in public schools be maintained;*
 - *That sections 41 and 42 of the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms be included in the list of sections covered by section 52 of the same Charter.*
- *That the establishment of two types of schools be permitted in the public education system: common public schools and specific project schools that may be either confessional or secular.*
- *That communities and groups be allowed approximately two years' time in which to declare what type of school they want.*

Regarding government and administrative bodies

- *That a public body be maintained that will be in charge of religious instruction in schools and that will also constitute a structure for interface between the State and civil society over this question.*
- *That the mandate and makeup of this body be defined in accordance with the decisions to be made concerning religious instructional services in schools.*
- *That within school boards a position devoted to supporting religious instruction in public schools be maintained.*

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APPENDIX 1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS IN SEVERAL WESTERN COUNTRIES

Documented Research

The current public discussion on the place of religion in schools calls upon us to consider several choices that are possible within a democratic context. The models used in the United States and France immediately come to mind. However, these countries have not emphasized the diversity that prevails in Western countries. Therefore, this brief *tour d'horizon* will focus on a certain number of countries in Western Europe. Like other documented studies, this one includes different degrees of detail. Nevertheless, it could contribute to a wider variety of possible choices to consider for the future. As the need arises, we will point out elements that are similar to the analysis of the Task Force, *Religion in Secular Schools*, or to any of the other six studies included in this work.

1. A Survey of the practices in different countries.

Many western democratic countries provide for religious education in the curriculum in both elementary and secondary schools. However, their methods vary significantly and it is interesting to examine this diversity.

1.1 The Scandinavian Countries: Sweden, Norway, Denmark

The Lutheran Church predominates in these three countries. It is still the *national religion* in Denmark though it had been the *state religion* until the middle of the 19th century. In each of the following countries, religious education is part of the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools. In Sweden, in a program established in 1995, out of 6, 600 hours of instruction that are spread over nine years of basic schooling (from ages 7-16), 885 hours are devoted to religion. (*C.E. 1995*, p. 388).¹ In Norway, religious education is also part of the school curriculum:

“Education shall be based on fundamental Christian and humanistic values. It should uphold and renew our cultural heritage to provide perspective and guidance for the future. [...] The Christian faith and tradition constitute a deep current in our history—a heritage that unites us as a people across religious persuasions. It has imprinted itself on the norms, world-view, concepts and art of the people. It bonds us to other peoples in the rhythm of the week and in common holidays, but is also an abiding presence in our own national traits: in architecture and music, in style and in conventions, in ideas, idioms and identity.” (*Core Curriculum for Primary, Secondary and Adult Education in Norway*, Oslo, Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 7)

In Denmark, elementary and secondary public schools include religion in a common compulsory program. (*C.E. 1995*, p. 65-68) However, in contrast to Sweden, where there is almost no private sector, approximately 10% of elementary and first cycle secondary schools in Denmark are private. These schools are defined as having either a particular pedagogical

1. The references, *C.E. 1995*, indicate the following document: Commission Européenne: *Structures des systèmes d'enseignement et de formation initiale dans l'Union Européenne*, Luxembourg, Office des publications officielles des Communautés européennes, 1995, 504 p.

perspective, or as belonging to a religious minority. The schools are financed by registration fees and municipal subsidies (a public expense averaged by student, minus the registration fees). (*Ibid.*, p. 64)

1.2 Austria and Germany

There is separation between Church and State in Austria. The public school system has made provision for the teaching of religion in elementary schools for two periods a week, out of a schedule of 21 to 25 periods (for children aged 6-10), and at the secondary level, for two periods out of 30 to 34 periods. (*C.E. 1995*, p. 307-310) The most common religion is Catholicism. In the private sector, "the establishments administered by an officially recognized church expect their personnel to be remunerated by the State." (*Ibid.*, p. 303)

The situation in Germany is particularly interesting:

"The Law states: Religious instruction is taught as a regular subject in public schools, with the exception of secular schools. Without prejudicing the State's right to oversee, religious instruction is offered according to the principals of the different religions. No teacher is required to teach religion against his or her will." (*Art. 7.3*) (J.M. Ouédraogo, 1994, p. 24).

"The goals and content of this religious instruction are defined by the religious authorities, although the government ministries must approve these programs before they are implemented. [...] The themes include subjects as varied as the New Testament, world religions, the Reformation, Human Rights, disarmament, the protection of the environment, ecumenism, etc."

"A non-denominational instruction of religion is practically nonexistent."

"Muslim instruction is offered in several States in response to the needs of the predominantly Turkish immigrant population. A substitute program (*Ersatzunterricht*) has been guaranteed by certain Constitutions for children who wish to be dispensed from religious instruction." (*Ibid.*, p. 24-25).

1.3 Belgium

In Belgium, as in Holland, elementary and secondary non-confessional schools and a vast network of elementary and secondary Catholic schools exist side-by-side.

"In 1958, the official and private networks were recognized and funded by the State. The Catholic schools must adhere to certain criteria concerning programs and teacher qualifications. Following the law passed on May 29, 1959, all the official schools established an optional instruction of 'non-confessional moral' studies, as an alternative to the course on religion." (Jean-Paul Martin, 1994, p. 31.)

The Law and the Constitution established the right to six possible options in the public schools: Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and secular instruction. The choices vary according to the schools. Although religious confessional instruction is the responsibility of the particular denominations, the teachers are paid by the State.

1.4 Holland

The situation in the Dutch schools has many similarities to Belgium, even if Catholicism which has a strong majority in Belgium, is the minority here. (30% and more) There are public schools, private religious schools and finally general private schools, the latter founded on ideological or pedagogical principles.

“More than 70% of the students attend private schools.” (C.E. 1995, p. 273) “Article 23 of the Constitution guarantees the freedom to establish schools that conform to religious or ideological principles and provides equal funding to public and private instruction.” (Ibid.)

In the public schools, an initiation to intellectual and religious movements are among the subjects taught in the first eight years of studies. Beyond this, the theme of ‘religion’ is taught with other optional subjects. (Ibid. p. 281-284)

The practices in Holland have caught the attention of Lois Sweet, author of *God in the Classroom: The Controversial Issue of Religion in Canada’s Schools* (Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1977). Religious differences are much more evident between schools themselves than within the common schools. Moreover, public recognition of these differences does not lead to social segmentation. “Throughout my stay in Europe, I can’t help but be struck by a paradox: by emphasizing religious differences we may actually minimize their social impact. Denying them, however, might well exaggerate them, forcing people to become more dependent on them.” (Ibid. p 132) The Dutch “understand the difference between ‘integration’ and ‘assimilation.’ They describe integration as an exchange between a minority community and the larger community. This means that newcomers don’t have to sacrifice their identity in order to be accepted. In the process of living together, different groups adjust to each other, transform each other, and become something new.” (Ibid. p. 134) The Dutch tradition in matters of scholastic pluralism implies that universal access to core values that are common to society does not require the concealment of differences, but may on the contrary rely on publicly recognized particularities. “For those who believe the public funding of religiously based schools will lead to ghettoization, social division, and religious conflict, the Dutch experience suggests otherwise. People on all sides agree that differences have narrowed, not grown. This has undoubtedly been in part because a policy of equality and tolerance has contributed to the integration and emancipation of religious minorities.” (Ibid. p. 144)

1.5 England

In the United Kingdom, there is considerable variation concerning religious education within the school context. Northern Ireland has little in common with England. Scotland is different because the official Church of Scotland is much more influenced by Calvinism than the Anglican Church. England and Wales are very similar. For the purpose of this report, we will focus on England.

Within the public network of elementary and secondary schools in England, there is a majority of non-confessional schools, called *county schools* and a minority of confessional schools called *voluntary aided schools*.² Among confessional schools, those attached to the Church of England are more numerous. (approximately 20% of the schools) Approximately

2. In his research on the emergence of common public schools, Réginald Grégoire refers to “écoles de fondation libre.” See *L’École publique commune dans quelques systèmes scolaires: Étude exploratoire*, Sainte Foy, Conseil supérieur de l’éducation, 1997, p. 27.

10% of the schools are Catholic and there is a small number of Jewish and Methodist schools. In the fall of 1999, the first Greek Orthodox school in London will open its doors.

The system in England permits us to observe several very flexible situations. Due to their geographic location, some *voluntary aided* schools affiliated with the Church of England have a very large population of Muslim students. These schools do not experience any difficulties and parents have the right to choose this school. The *voluntary aided* Anglican, Catholic, or other schools regularly admit students who are neither Catholic nor Anglican. The public funding added to what the schools receive from local authorities would be incompatible with a selection policy that chose students according to the religious denominations of their families.³

In 1988, the law pertaining to education reform maintained a traditional *recollection*, a moment of meditation during the school assembly. Parents have the right to request that their children be exempted from this practice.

Religious education is part of the national curriculum. “The nature of religious education and of the collective exercise of worship must conform to a program approved by the local councils concerning matters of religious education. (Standing Councils on Religious Education – SACRE). This program is mainly Christian, but at the request of the parents of another faith, a different education and religious instruction may be offered.” (C.E. 1995, p. 418)

The *syllabuses* published by the local councils include programs that are relatively detailed, in contrast to the very terse guidelines of the national curriculum. Some of these syllabuses are used outside their local regions and have been examined as possible references and models that could be used to promote a religious cultural program for Québec.⁴ We may wonder if this process could lead to misunderstandings. However, the opening of this religious instruction on several important non-Christian religions practiced in England does not seem to have taken away any dimension of personal appropriation of the meaning of Christianity for those who practice this faith. Before the program was extended to include non-Christian religions, there was a question of a multi-confessional, familiarization-appropriation of the meaning of the Christian religion. From that time on, it was always a question of learning **about** religion and at the same time, we learn **from religion** (understood for one’s personal life?).

The committee on education of religious phenomenon was started by the Task Force on the place of religion in the school to study the cultural instruction of religions. It seems to have distinguished this focus of religious education by referring to the English practice as a possible model for a cultural instruction of religions.

“Despite the wealth of theoretical reflection and the pedagogical initiatives that have developed and because it insists on the contribution of religious education to the

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3. There is an interesting comparison to pursue here with the growing attendance at American Catholic schools by children from Baptist families or other religions. See Anthony S. Bryk, Valerie E. Lee and Peter B. Holland, *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*, Cambridge, Mass. Harvard Univ. Press, 1993. We have also found Catholic schools in Belgium with a significant number of Muslim students. See Xavier Remacle, *Donner un cours de religion catholique à des musulmans*, *Revue Lumen Vitæ*, Dec. 1996, p. 439-446 for a remarkable example of an adapted religious education.
 4. Refer to among previous references, several chapter in: M. Milot and F. Ouellet (Dir.), *Religion, éducation et démocratie*, Montréal and Paris, Éd. L’Harmattan, 1997, and in particular; Fernand Ouellet, *l’Enseignement religieux culturel: une alternative valable à l’enseignement confessionnel?*, p. 223-254.

spiritual development of young people, the British 'multi-faith' approach does not furnish sufficient guarantees of non-intrusion in the development of personal positions on religious questions." (*L'enseignement culturel des religions. Principes directeurs et conditions d'implantation*, Québec MEQ, 1999, p. 30 Study 1 authorized by the Task Force on the place of religion in the schools).

The situation in England recalls a remark on the distinction between public and private that Jean-Paul Willaime summarizes very succinctly:

"In certain countries, an important part of compulsory schooling is guaranteed by private establishments that are fully recognized and subsidized by the State. For example, though the *Voluntary Schools* in the United Kingdom are confessional, they are totally integrated into the public school network and are part of the *State Maintained Schools*. This also is the case with confessional schools in the Netherlands. As for public schools in Ireland, in this respect they are often controlled by civil and religious authorities." (J.P. Willaime, 1993, p. 384)

1.6 The Latin Countries: Italy, Spain and Portugal

In these three countries, religious education is part of the school programs but it is not compulsory. It is considered optional in Italy (See *C.E. 1995*, p. 232, 234) from the elementary school (a duration of 5 years, with pupils from 6 to 11 years of age) to the middle school (*scuola media*, which lasts for 3 years).

In Spain, the Catholic religion is part of the domain of knowledge and experiences that are taught, but it is optional for the students, who may then choose alternative school activities. (*C.E. 1995*, p. 155)

In Portugal, throughout 9 years of basic schooling, (students from 6 to 15 years of age), the compulsory program specifies the following choices: courses in personal and social development, or morality and religion (Catholic or otherwise). (*C.E. 1995*, p. 336)

Émilio Alberich in *L'Enseignement religieux en Espagne et en Italie* (Dir. R. Brodeur & G. Routhier in *L'enseignement religieux. Questions actuelles*. Ottawa, Novalis - Le Cerf - Lumen Vitae, 1996, p. 15-21), discusses the complementarity that is both established and evolving between the religious education in the schools and the catechesis assumed by the ecclesiastical authorities.

2. Various types of rapport between schools and religions

Throughout Western Europe, we see a great variety in the rapport that was either maintained or abolished between education in the schools and religious education. Jean-Paul Willaime has proposed several types of groups which we will consider. With this information, we may think that the present situation pushes us to evolve towards an 'internal segmentation' or toward a type of integrated 'secular-religious' system.

"What are the different models present in Western Europe? We have distinguished five: two *segmented* types and three *integrated* types.

"We refer to *segmented* types in systems where instruction in schools is structured along important religious and philosophical concepts of the individual and of the world, whether it is an 'external' or an 'internal' segmentation. The *external segmentation* (1st type)

corresponds to an institutional segmentation (a system of pillars) of the educational system in schools with various philosophical-religious orientations: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Free Thinkers ... The systems in Belgium and the Netherlands are the best examples of this type. The *internal segmentation* (2nd type) is found in situations where segmentation is carried out within the same school establishment, at the level of a single discipline which is specifically concerned with options of meaning. Within a school open to everyone, the organization of religious instruction leans toward a secular *Welanschauung*. This type is seen in the official schools in Belgium and in the public schools of Alsace-Moselle in France.

“In other models, the *integrated systems* hesitate to promote any external or internal segmentation of the school (even if it means a limited segmentation) and favor a concept of national education. In this integrated model, we may consider the following cases as potential ideal types: 1) a secular type, 2) a secular-religious type, 3) a religious type. The *secular model* is based on the exclusion of all religious instruction in school and a system that controls the different religious and philosophical options. France appears closest to this model. The *secular-religious model* blends a *secular world view* and a *religious world view*. This model is seen in Catholicism in Italy, in Lutheranism in Denmark, in Orthodoxy in Greece. In this model of mixed integration, the secular world view may have a particular religious dimension, while the religious world view may be profoundly secularized (Denmark). With the *religious model*, education is developed by and structured entirely by religion. (Is this the model used in Ireland?) (J.P. Willaime, 1993, p. 393)

Certain observers have at times contrasted a process of secularization, typical of countries that are predominantly Protestant, with a similar process that has often been abrupt in Catholic or Latin countries. In the first case, liberal theology moved forward at the same pace as social and political liberalization without great upheavals (the Scandinavian countries and Holland) and led to religious education that was nothing more than a certain familiarization with Holy Scripture. We may wonder if the evolution in Québec resembles more of a *secularization* rather than a *laicisation* in terms of religious education, in particular of Catholic religious education.

“The work of Jean Baubérot and Françoise Champion have clearly illuminated the duality of aspects that have addressed emancipation vis-à-vis religious authority in European history. This duality permits us to give a precise definition to the notions of *laicisation* and *secularization*. On one hand, there is a *lay* Europe in Catholic countries characterized by confessional singularity, and where the emergence of a public sphere, separate from the Roman Church, could only be established by an intentional, and at times, surgical intervention of political authority. Considering the potential for conflict, the emphasis is placed on the separation of Church and State, the political sphere from the social, the public from the private, and all sharing must be regulated in a cohesive and simultaneous manner. On the other hand, there is a *secular* Europe in countries that are predominantly Protestant, where there has been a rupture from Rome and national churches have their place in the public sphere. In these cases, we witness a joint transformation of religion with other domains in the collective activity. Ruptures between tradition and modernity seemingly separate the Church and the State instead of putting them in a situation of conflict. (See: F. Champion, *Entre laïcisation et sécularisation. Des rapports Église-États dans l'Europe communautaire*, revue *Le Débat*, No 77, Nov.-Dec., 1993.) Officially its place does not change, but little by little the religious domain loses its power to influence norms.” (M. Gaucher, 1998, p. 15-16.)

3. Religious confessional education and a cultural instruction of religions

There is a certain variation from one country to another. On the one hand, there is religious education in the schools that is close to catechesis but should not be confused with it. On the other hand, there is education that is more distant and detached, similar to what is described in the report, *Religion in Secular Schools*, which is a cultural instruction focusing on religions. This is both an opportunity for discussion and a subject that that can be profoundly misunderstood.

Protestant religious education in countries like Holland and Denmark is naturally inter-denominational, as it reflects a common denominator shared by both the more liberal and the stricter currents within Protestantism. This is similar to the general religious education in England, in its aspect of initiation to Christianity and to other great religions. It is more of a wide and compatible perspective with very diverse affiliations to Anglicanism and Protestantism. We have the impression that in Scandinavian countries, (Denmark and Norway in particular) religious education in the schools is close to a patrimonial transmission, that is of a particular Christian culture without presupposing an accepted adherence.

In the majority of the European countries cited, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and England, religious education seems to be situated in a cultural and spiritual appropriation of a meaning for life. It is an education that may potentially nourish faith without specifically aiming to do so. This is a very personal characteristic of belief in our century.

This reflects various sociological observations on religious evolution. We observe a great disinterest in religious practices, a clear retreat from the institution in Western Christianity, but a much more limited retreat concerning beliefs. Throughout the 1960's, the sociology of religions made a sort of equation between *modernity* and the dominance of instrumental reasoning (utilitarian perspective) and the retreat of the religious fact. This situation has yielded *a priori*⁵ the place of a very strong persistence of religious beliefs that are undergoing all types of changes. "On the one hand, religious institutions continue to lose their social and cultural capacity to impose and regulate beliefs and practices. [...] On the other hand, belief spreads, freely using the symbolic among other resources offered by the great religious traditions and under syncretic forms that are often unexpected. [...] We must reject the paradigm of incompatibility between religion and modernity and at the same time, abandon the strict opposition between traditional and modern societies that are its corollaries. (D. Hervieu-Léger, 1996, p. 45.)

In a context that compares situations and approaches to religious instruction in Québec and in Europe, Jean Joncheray presented 'a list of topics that arose when the question of religious instruction was considered an integral and fascinating part of a much greater whole which we call education.' [...]

1. *Morality*. We say *moral and religious instruction* and insert the word *moral* within the usual expression 'religious instruction' (in Québec, Portugal, etc.), doubtless to specify that 'moral instruction' is not reserved to those who haven't chosen 'religious instruction.' We believe that parents are very attentive to this dimension. It refers to proposing ethical references, guidelines, and attitudes to life.

5. See: D. Martin, "Remise en question de la théorie de la sécularisation", in G. Davie and D. Hervieu-Léger (under the direction of), *Identités religieuses en Europe*, Paris, La Découverte, 1996, p. 15-42.

2. *Citizenship.* I have added this word which was not mentioned previously. It can be summarized as solidarity or the 'social' dimension, themes that Protestant moral and religious instruction in secondary school refer to as 'the individual in society' and 'the person in society.' It is about living in a group and a style of life in society. This dimension is important for those who have a civic or political responsibility.

3. *Knowledge.* There are things that we must know, and with which we must be familiar. The word *instruction* appears often. We refer to the Bible, doctrine, a particular history that should not be forgotten, and memories that must be kept alive.

4. *Culture.* In my opinion, this word is not synonymous with knowledge, even if culture includes a strong component of knowledge. It is about living within a tradition, a way of seeing the world. It presupposes that we recognize our heritage, that we feel at home in a particular place, for example as in a cathedral which is not the same feeling experienced in a museum. We must do more than just inherit our culture. We must be actively involved in it, capable of giving it life and bringing new ideas to a tradition, if we want our tradition to remain alive.

5. *Quest for meaning, for an identity.* "A person in search of an identity", "a search for a meaning for life," these phrases are noted in the Protestant program of moral and religious instruction at the secondary level. This aspect has often been mentioned in preceding articles.

I draw attention to the aspect of 'knowledge' wherein its implication may be minimal until a 'quest for meaning,' for an 'identity,' through 'culture,' is added and thus the implication continues to grow.

6. *Response to a call.* Here also the implication of the person involved is maximal. In the word "catechesis" this dimension is central: it refers to reflection and a call to personally encounter the Other.

7. *Which God?* "How are we able to talk about the God of Jesus?", asks Eddy Ernens. The question remains to be answered. God, the Otherness of God, remains a question, indeed a questioning of practices. (J. Joncheray, 1996, p. 84)

Can we say that the cultural instruction of religions as proposed by the report, *Religion in Secular Schools*, suggests we focus on issues two and three? Or does it touch on elements in issue four but as observable exterior phenomena and not as a perspective of appropriation as described by J. Joncheray? A religious rather than a cultural education certainly does not exclude these issues.

Beginning with these issues, I believe that we may demonstrate the differences between the principal characteristics of religious education in the schools and catechesis, for example, preparatory catechesis for the sacraments. We may also consider the reflections of Anne Fortin-Malkevick to help us understand that religious education cannot ignore pluralism:

"It is the identity of each person living in a modern context that is pluralist. In sociological terms, the formation of identity in modernity depends on three levels of comprehension: the explicit doctrines, the social concepts and the symbolic. [...] The three levels of comprehension that form the identity of people in modernity have not only radically evolved but are frequently in conflict one with the other. Within these

contradictions that accompany the identity, each person chooses what corresponds to his understanding of self.” (A. Fortin-Malkevik, 1996, p. 103.)

If there is a certain symmetry between learning **about** religion and learning **from** religion, and a cultural instruction in religious phenomena and religious education, these remarks show that we may support the idea that religious education is not cultural in a specific way. Religion interiorizes and personalizes as is shown in sociological studies. Referring to Great Britain, Grace Davie has written about *believing without belonging*. (G. Davie, 1996, p. 175 and s.). The more individualistic re-appropriation of one’s belief as compared to the past, has undeniably led to a sense of interiorization and of ‘living culture.’

English education that consists of the goals of religious education, as proposed by a national organization responsible for programs, has inspired very complete syllabuses. These reflect the diversity of the regions and of the local authorities. They exemplify a harmonization between a component of personal appropriation of meaning concerning religious matters and a more social and historical component of familiarization with religions.

“Religious education should help students:

- To acquire and develop a knowledge and a comprehension of Christianity and other major religions present in Great Britain;
- To understand the influence of beliefs, values and traditions on individuals, groups, societies and cultures;
- To develop the capacity to make reasonable and informed judgments on religious and moral questions, with regard to the teachings of the principal religions practiced in Great Britain;
- To stimulate their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.
 - by becoming conscious of the fundamental questions of life that lifts up human experience and of the means by which religious doctrines relate to these questions;
 - by responding to these questions by referring to the teachings and religious practices and drawing from their own experiences and their own understanding;
 - by reflecting on their own beliefs, values and experiences in light of this study;
- To develop a positive attitude toward others by respecting their right to beliefs different from their own and toward life in a society in which many religions are practiced.⁶ (SCAA, 1994, p.4.)

In contrast to England, Belgium provides us with a well-documented attestation of the spirit of religious education in the schools in a Catholic context. This context is adapted to a pluralistic society where religious affiliation is no longer taken for granted and where it is increasingly diverse. The questioning of religious education in schools in the report, *Religion*

6. SCAA (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority), 1994, *Religious Education: Model Syllabuses. Model 1: Living Faiths Today*, London, SCAA.

in Secular Schools, frequently refers to the situation that prevailed in the 1950's: 'a holy history' which was a separate subject that was taught with a doctrinal compendium that summarized questions and answers in a Catechism. Today, the modern approach to religious education in the schools does not focus on doctrine, a focus which was inherited because of the Counter-Reformation. In examining the main objectives of the Belgian program in the network of French Catholic schools, we see that its purpose is not indoctrination but rather appropriation, and a gradual familiarization with a source that is transmitted and re-actualized, from one generation to the next. The main goals of the Belgian program reflect four major competencies associated with integration, understood as a life-long process: "to practice the Scriptures", "to understand and express the faith of the Church", "to understand and express the different components of the Christian faith", and "to prepare ourselves to act as responsible Christians."⁷ (FEFC, 1993, p. 58.)

The Italian experience demonstrates how religious education in schools does not replace the catechesis of an ecclesiastical environment. According to a 1991-1992 survey, the fact that more than 93.5% of the school population take religion for an hour should not be interpreted only in terms of sociological conformity. We know that students appreciate a lay person coming into the class to speak about religion. They also appreciate the possibility to begin a dialogue with an adult concerning various problems facing humanity and as well the students' personal problems. [...] 46% of the students who take religion for this hour generally consider religion to be a search for the meaning of life, whereas 24% of them expect it to be a form of communication with a superior being or with God. The teaching of religion in schools is also perceived as a place where group discussion permits students to confront personal problems that other subjects do not address. The teacher is more appreciated by students if he or she can discuss and understand personal problems as well as being able to relate to the class as a friend. (Enzo Pace, 1996, p. 222-227.)

A practice that is observed in the French speaking part of Switzerland also demonstrates an interesting adjustment between religious instruction in the schools and extracurricular catechesis.

"In the canton of Fribourg, there are two hours of religious instruction per week in the elementary school. One is directed by the State and is often taught by the teacher. It consists of a biblical ecumenical instruction. The other is directed by the Church as part of the school program, and is taught either by professional or volunteer catechists. (This often means that mothers are the catechists or there are female catechists who take care of small groups of children. There are very few male catechists.) This hour has a very catechetical orientation. In addition, preparation for the sacrament of reconciliation and for first communion takes place most often outside of school hours and in a parish milieu. In secondary school, (from 12 to 16 years of age), there is an hour of religious instruction per week taught by teachers who are hired and paid by the State but who must, in principal, be approved by the ecclesiastical authorities. A mixed commission composed of representatives of the Church and the State oversee this instruction which does not as yet have a specific status, and as a result can vary between catechesis,

7. We may easily establish a parallel here with four major competencies proposed for Catholic religious education in elementary school as outlined in the document: Ministère de l'Éducation, *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise: Éducation préscolaire, enseignement primaire*, Version provisoire, Québec, August 1999, p. 260-261. We remember the following remark concerning the Belgian program. "Religious education [in the schools] aims primarily for an education in the faith. Thus it awakens, deepens and fosters the practice of faith. It does not presuppose the students' faith nor does it impose any faith. By active processes of research and discovery, it attempts to make faith possible, plausible, comprehensible and desirable". (FEFC, 1993, p. 48.)

information on Christianity, the science of religions and discussions on the problems of life. In addition, the Catholic Church offers a process of preparation for the sacrament of confirmation (celebrated around the age of 13 or 14) outside of school hours. This preparation is clearly catechetical and ecclesiastical.” (Marc Donzé, 1996, p. 50.)

This information tends to demonstrate the vulnerability of an alternative between catechesis for those who have expressed their commitment and a ‘cultural’ instruction on religious phenomena, without any intermediate level. Religious instruction in the schools is often situated between these two extremes and it varies according to the countries. While this instruction is sensitive and open to the diversity of religions, it always reverts to a profound and personal process that concerns convictions and meaning.

4. The mandate and status of the educators

In the public schools in England, Norway, and Denmark, the qualifications necessary to instruct at the elementary level are accepted as adequate for the religious education component of the curriculum, as they are for other components. On the other hand, we know that programs exist for teachers who wish to specialize in religious instruction in the English university centers for teacher training,⁸ particularly for those who will teach in secondary schools.

Due to a lack of systematic information on teacher education in the countries mentioned above, it may be useful to refer again to the practices in countries that are either homogeneous or heterogeneous along religious lines.

Marc Donzé contrasted the practices observed in Germany and those in the Swiss canton of Fribourg. He emphasized that catechesis is taught in the German schools by professional catechists who have completed a formal training in theology. (Donzé, 1996, p. 54.)

The prevalent practice in Germany is interesting from a second point of view concerning teacher training, in particular for education in the Muslim religion. Ralph Stehly has observed the situation in the west of Germany (Westphalia). From 1979 on, a program of studies has been developed with teachers of Turkish origin and specialists in Islamic history, theology, and religious pedagogy. The State (Westphalia) has declared that it is obliged to organize this instruction from the moment that, or in a year that, there are twelve students of the same religious community. (Stehly, R., 1992, p. 55) In 1992, there were one thousand teachers of the Islamic religion who held teaching positions in this state. This program was also used in schools in Basse-Saxe. “Eight hundred teachers follow continuous training, [...] considering the urgency of the situation. Teacher training must include a component of an initial formation within institutes specializing in Islamic theology and religious pedagogy. (R. Stehly, 1992, p. 54, 59.)

It is interesting to note in passing the particular situation of three departments in France in Alsace-Moselle. At the end of World War I, they were united with France. The situation that had previously existed was maintained, which is very similar to what happened in Germany.

8. See R. Jackson, “L’expérience britannique en enseignement religieux: structures institutionnelles et débats politiques” in M. Milot and F. Ouellet (under the direction of), *Religion, éducation et démocratie*, Montréal and Paris, L’Harmattan, 1997, p. 51 and s.

“From 1974, religious instruction has been taught by teachers who agreed to accept the task. This instruction could also possibly be taught by an external instructor. Instruction in secondary schools is non-confessional but consists of religious instruction that is incorporated into the program (with the possibility of exemption). [...] Since 1975, there have been specialists in religion who may also be homeroom teachers. There is a *PEGC* (program of general instruction in the colleges) with a religious option. (J. Baubérot, 1994a, p. 71.)

Jean-Paul Willaime describes the situation in Italy concerning matters of Catholic religious instruction: “The religion teachers are named by the bishops, educated by the Church and paid by the State”. (1993, p. 385.)

We conclude this subject by reviewing the practices in Belgium. Jean-Marie Virlet refers to the status of a professor of Catholic religion in the *official* school, that is to say a non-confessional school where there is a specific time set aside for religious instruction during which the students are grouped according to their religious affiliations.

“There are those who still think that the professor of Catholic religion is like a fifth column of Catholic instruction in the official network. Though appointed by the organizing body, the professor is *designated* by the religious authorities. [...] It is not easy to make people understand that *designated* is not an exact synonym for *mandated*. However, this difference is very significant. A mandate is given for a service in Church. Then, based on his or her competence as recognized by a diploma, the teacher is designated to instruct. This instruction must conform to the pedagogical project of the organizing body on which it depends. (J.-M. Virlet, 1996, p. 381.)

5. The recognition of religious interlocutors

It is enlightening to examine several cases where a State recognizes, or does not recognize, representatives of a religion, for the purposes of religious education or otherwise.

In the past, various countries have had state religions. At times, sovereigns have been the heads of national churches. The case of Denmark is particularly interesting. As in England, the Danish sovereign is the nominal head of the church. The Lutheran Church was the state church until 1857 when it became the official church, under the ultimate responsibility of Parliament, whereupon the bishops and pastors became its officials. The majority of Danes are Lutherans, but the state recognizes other religious communities. “Before 1969, there were essentially only other Protestant, (Reformed, Baptists, Methodists), Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish communities. Since 1969, new communities have been recognized: The Salvation Army, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, the Bah’ai and the Sikhs.” (J. Baubérot, 1994b, p. 46.)

The Germans Christians are for the most part affiliated either with a Protestant evangelical church or with the Catholic Church. There is also a significant Muslim Sunnite population of Turkish origin. “As elsewhere in Europe, there is no official representation. In 1986, the Islamic Council was founded for the *FRG* and West Berlin. Two decisive criteria for membership on this council were an openness to society and an orientation toward dialogue.” (*Ibid.*, p. 20.)

Ralph Stehly clarifies the situation further. The German federal confederation guarantees not only freedom of belief (Art 4.1 and 4.2) but also the right to religious instruction in the public schools. (Art.7.3)

“Religious instruction is a compulsory subject in the public schools. [...] Under the control of the state, religious instruction is offered and conforms with the basic principles of each religious community.

Conforms with means that in the case of Protestant and Catholic religious instruction, the program is developed with central authorities duly mandated by these two churches. The problem is that nothing similar exists for Islamic instruction. There are Muslim associations, but no central organization. [...] However, the program is developed in collaboration with the existing Islamic associations, the Turkish Presidium for religious affairs and the Turkish ministry of education.” (R. Stehly, 1992, p. 55.)

We mention the program developed in Westphalia cited previously. There are three major goals in this program:

- 1) To contribute to helping generations of Muslims born in Germany become knowledgeable about traditional Islamic values in historical, ethical, and religious dimensions and to present an orientation to life based on this tradition to the students;
- 2) To contribute to developing an Islamic identity among children of Muslim origin in a environment that is non-Muslim;
- 3) To contribute to an understanding between Muslims and Christians, particularly between Turks and Germans, with respect to equality of rights and in an attitude of reciprocal solicitude.”

“The school authorities mentioned the *integration* of young Muslims into the German society as another goal, (integration as distinguished from assimilation and segregation) as an encounter between the cultures, wherein the religious and cultural values of each culture are preserved and developed, where differences are viewed positively, and where we discover common grounds. This integration through a sharing of cultures would prevent young people, otherwise uprooted from their culture, from joining extremist groups.” (*Ibid.*, p. 57.)

If we wish to observe a country that has a great Catholic majority in Western Europe, then Belgium is best example in matters pertaining to recognition of religious diversity. The Belgian state is neutral *vis-à-vis* religion, however, the different religions are acknowledged for the most part. This is how Jean-Paul Martin describes the guiding principle and what actually happens.

“The acknowledgement of a religion is an official act of the State (law or royal decree) which amounts to a particular protection granted because of its social usefulness, since it responds to the social needs of a segment of the population. [...] In fact, there are six religions recognized in Belgium: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Anglican, Muslim and Orthodox. [...] There are Buddhists, Jehovah’s Witnesses [...] and various sects that are not recognized by the State. However, they enjoy the status of non-profit associations and constitutional protection of freedom of religion.” (J.-P. Martin, 1994, p. 33-34.)

In countries that have a huge Catholic majority like Spain and Italy, the separation of Church and State prevails. In Spain, due to the initiative of the Church, this separation existed before the end of the Franco regime and was later defined in the Constitution of 1978. Article 16 declares that no religion will be the state religion. (Lautmann, F., 1994, p. 52). In Italy, a new agreement signed between the State and the Catholic Church in 1984 in principle

repealed Catholicism as the state religion, a principle that was still considered a constitutional right ... while it really wasn't. (F. Champion, 1994, p. 87.)

CONCLUSION

Does this quick survey permit us to explore different scenarios that could enlighten future discussions resulting from the report, *Religion in Secular Schools?* Focusing on a political perspective and on what is revealed by the logic of believers and non-believers alike, we will propose some clarifying remarks.

In European countries with a history of a strong Christian presence, the separation of politics and religion, the neutrality of the state, and thus the absence of an official religion, does not mean an incompatibility between the public school and religious education. France and a part of Switzerland are the exceptions. We know for a fact that in France, it was the involvement of the Church in the politics of the State that led to a complete separation.⁹ Among the various ways of managing the question of religious education in the school, we see that though the state is neutral, it recognizes the social character of religion and its collective and inter-generational aspects, rather than relegating it to the private, intimate and hidden sphere.

In countries that have a Protestant majority, religious education is currently taught in public schools. This is also the case in countries with a strong Catholic population, with the exception of France, and it is always an option. In countries where there are more divisions along religious lines, as in Holland and Germany, religious education is generally offered. Many countries with significant immigrant populations have gradually made a place for religious education that is other than Catholic or Protestant, where numbers warrant. We see this situation particularly in Germany and Belgium.

Where confessional schools co-exist with non-confessional schools, (Holland, Great Britain, Belgium), these schools have a public, or practically public, status and they accept students from families of other religious denominations without any segregation. Thus, in the same school, we can find religious instruction pertaining to different religious beliefs, or an instruction of Christianity that does not accentuate confessional differences. (Norway, Denmark) In the English curriculum, in non-confessional schools, there is a Christian education that makes room for the different religious beliefs of the students attending the school. In all these cases, there is always the possibility of a trans-generational approbation of the meaning of a religious belief, its symbolism, and the significance of its practices. To view this process as an attack on freedom or the absence of the development of critical thinking reveals a prejudicial bias. In this perspective, the American rules of the National Council for Social Studies, cited in references by the Committee on education as a religious phenomenon, (*L'Enseignement culturel des religions: principes directeurs et conditions d'implantation*, Québec, Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 32-33, Study No.1 that accompanies *Religion in Secular Schools*) limits what is acceptable in religious education to the study of religious phenomena and must be understood in the context of a choice to situate the school in a secular ethos. The schools in England, Norway, Holland and Germany, in Denmark, Italy and Spain chose a pluralistic ethos rather than a retreat *a priori* from the religious field.

9. Lois Sweet briefly refers to a practice that has prevailed for several decades: "Ironically, despite France's insistence on secular education, it does fund independent religious schools. Two levels of funding are available, depending on the kind of partnership the school enters into with the government. Most agree to follow government curricula, hire certified teachers and have open admissions. In that case, the State pays for everything, except the initial capital investment and any renovations". (Sweet, 1997, p. 141.)

Will an openness to religious diversity be more accepted in society with an entirely secularized ethos of all the public schools, (the religious minorities or majorities accommodated possibly in private schools funded as in England or Holland) and an absence of visible religious differences in the schools? What we have observed concerning the opening of religious education to the diversity of religions and to the freedom of every religious conviction, leads us to believe otherwise.

This quick and inexhaustive survey on the diversity of practices, whether referring to admissibility to the programs and to the form of education in the schools concerning many religions, leads us to believe that Québec has stronger ties with Europe than with the United States. This survey contributes to widening the scope of choices that may be proposed within the framework of a debate among citizens.

Arthur Marsolais – August 1999.

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APPENDIX 2-A

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WITH 100 OR MORE STUDENTS WHOSE RELIGION IS OTHER THAN CATHOLIC OR PROTESTANT - 1998-1999

Regions	School Boards	Number of Schools
Québec – Chaudière – Appalaches	CENTRAL QUÉBEC, CS	1
Laval – Laurentides – Lanaudière	LAVAL, CS DE	4
Laval – Laurentides – Lanaudière	SEIGNEURIE-DES-MILLES-ÎLES, CS	2
Laval – Laurentides – Lanaudière	SIR-WILFRED-LAURIER, CS	7
La Montérégie	MARIE-VICTORIN, CS	5
La Montérégie	TROIS-LACS, CS DES	1
La Montérégie	RIVERSIDE, CS	11
La Montérégie	NEW FRONTIERS, CS	2
Montréal	POINTE-DE-L'ÎLE, CS DE LA	6
Montréal	MONTREAL, CS DE	22
Montréal	MARGUERITE-BOURGEOYS, CS	16
Montréal	ENGLISH MONTREAL, CS	17
Montréal	LESTER-B-PEARSON, CS	13
L'Outaouais	WESTERN QUÉBEC, CS	5
	Total :	112

Data source : D.C.S. (Déclaration de l'effectif scolaire)
Direction de l'enseignement catholique, February 1999.

APPENDIX 2-B

SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH 100 OR MORE STUDENTS WHOSE RELIGION IS OTHER THAN CATHOLIC OR PROTESTANT - 1998-1999

Regions	School Boards	Number of Schools
Québec – Chaudière – Appalaches	CENTRAL QUÉBEC, CS	1
L'Estrie	RÉGION-DE-SHERBROOKE, CS DE LA	1
Laval – Laurentides – Lanaudière	LAVAL, CS DE	3
Laval – Laurentides – Lanaudière	SEIGNEURIE-DES-MILLES-ÎLES, CS	1
Laval – Laurentides – Lanaudière	SIR-WILFRID LAURIER, CS	4
La Montérégie	MARIE VICTORIN, CS	6
La Montérégie	PATRIOTES, CS DES	1
La Montérégie	RIVERSIDE, CS	3
La Montérégie	NEW FRONTIERS, CS	1
Montréal	POINTE-DE-L'ÎLE, CS DE LA	4
Montréal	MONTREAL, CS DE	18
Montréal	MARGUERITE-BOURGOYS, CS	12
Montréal	ENGLISH-MONTREAL, CS	5
Montréal	LESTER-B-PEARSON, CS	8
L'Outaouais	PORTAGES-DE-L'OUTAOUAIS, CS	2
L'Outaouais	WESTERN QUÉBEC, CS	4
L'Abitibi-Témiscamingue	OR-ET-DES-BOIS, CS DE L'	1
	Total:	75

Data source : D.C.S. (Déclaration de l'effectif scolaire)
Direction de l'enseignement catholique, February 1999.

APPENDIX 2-C

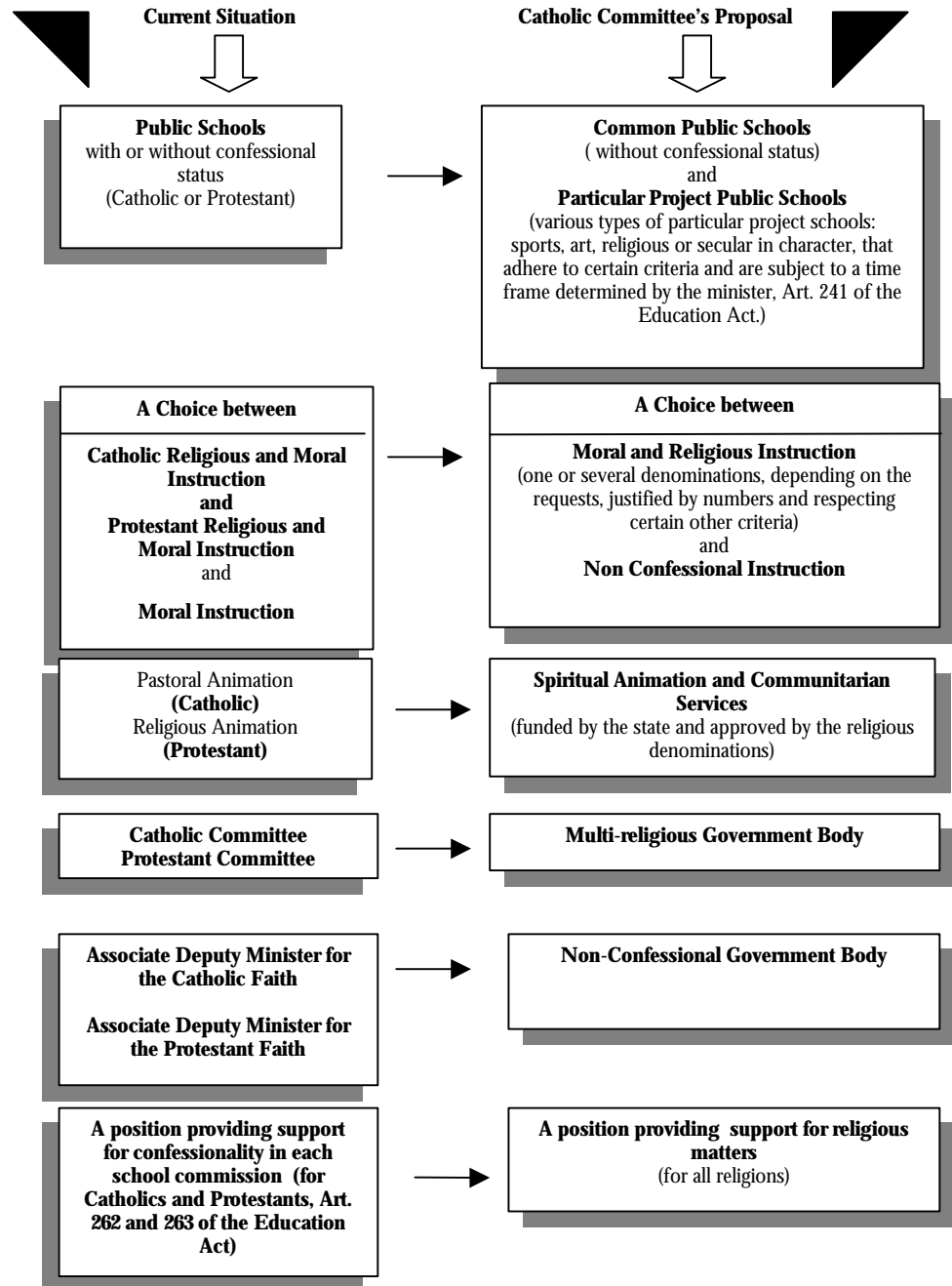
SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH 200 OR MORE STUDENTS WHOSE RELIGION IS OTHER THAN CATHOLIC OR PROTESTANT - 1998-1999

Regions	School Boards	Number of Schools
Laval – Laurentides – Lanaudière	LAVAL, CS DE	3
Laval – Laurentides – Lanaudière	SIR-WILFRED-LAURIER, CS	2
La Montérégie	MARIE-VICTORIN, CS	2
La Montérégie	RIVERSIDE, CS	1
La Montérégie	NEW FROMTIERS, CS	1
Montréal	POINTE-DE-L'ÎLE, CS DE LA	2
Montréal	MONTREAL, CS DE	9
Montréal	MARGUERITE-BOURGEOYS, CS	9
Montréal	ENGLISH MONTRÉAL, CS	5
Montréal	LESTER-B-PEARSON, CS	5
L'Outaouais	WESTERN QUEBEC, CS	1
	Total :	40

Data source : D.C.S. (Déclaration de l'effectif scolaire)
Direction de l'enseignement catholique, February 1999.

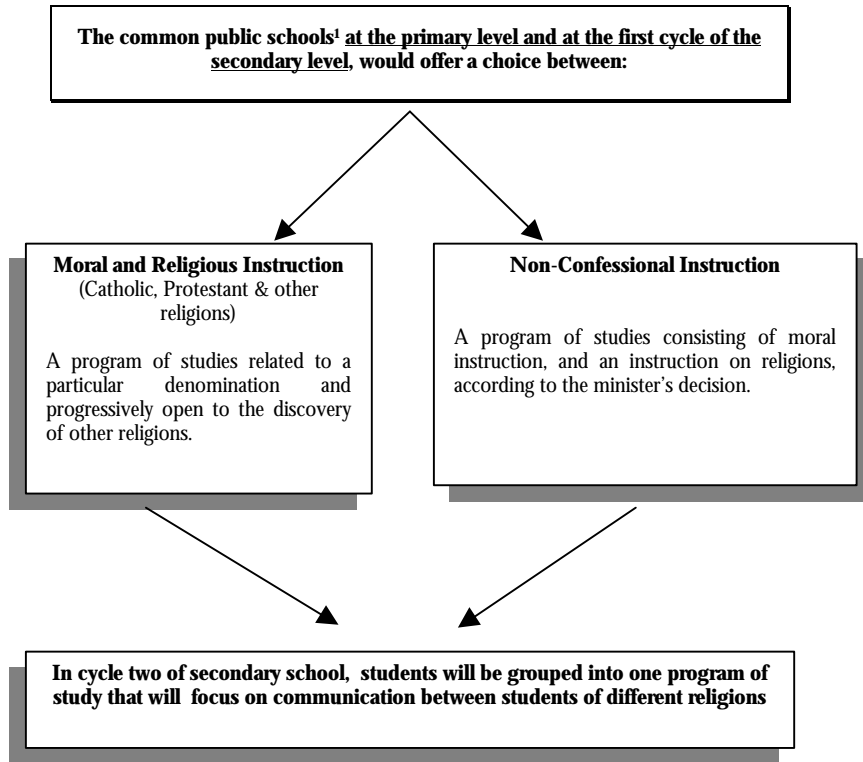
APPENDIX 3

A COMPARISON OF THE CURRENT SITUATION AND THE CAHOLIC COMMITTEE'S PROPOSAL



APPENDIX 4

CHART ILLUSTRATING THE PROPOSED SCENARIO FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION AND MORAL INSTRUCTION



10. These arrangements may vary, depending on the particular project school.

APPENDIX 5

THE DISTRIBUTION OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES IN A PROGRAM OF CATHOLIC MORAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Cycles One and Two of Elementary School

- Formation of one's identity
- Knowledge of one's own religious tradition
- Knowledge of the enlightenment that it brings to certain spiritual and moral questions

Formation centered on human and spiritual growth

- First initiation to cultural and religious differences

Cultural formation

Cycle Three of Elementary School and Cycle One of Secondary School

- Pursuit of the formation of one's identity
- Appropriation of one's own heritage
- Learning what is necessary to situate oneself autonomously in a religious universe

Process centered on human and spiritual growth

- A more developed initiation to cultural and religious differences

Cultural formation

Cycle Two of Secondary School

- Knowledge of various religions
- Recourse to religious wisdom as sources of meaning in various subjects
- Common reflection on fundamental human questions

Process centered on learning how to communicate, integrate and transfer knowledge

APPENDIX 6

A TEACHING MODEL PROPOSED BY THE CATHOLIC COMMITTEE

In order to illustrate how we may assure the pedagogical management of a model of religious instruction proposed by the Catholic Committee, different simulations are presented, each with a certain degree of complexity. Each simulation includes four options of religious instruction: an option of moral instruction (possibly a human science of religion), and three options of confessional religious instruction. To facilitate the presentation, in each of the tables, we indicate these options in the following way: Option 1, Option 2, Option 3, and Option 4. Each option may represent the teaching of any religious tradition or moral instruction (possibly a human science of religion). These simulations follow the norms of the collective convention for the organization of groups.

First simulation:

Theoretical Context:

- an elementary school with approximately 500 students
- an elementary school with three classes per grade
- a school where many students belong to different faiths.

Cycle One:

1st Year

GROUPS	1	2	3	Total Students	Number of Groups	Average per Group	Teacher
Subjects	25	23	21	69	3	23	
Option 1	8	16	14	38	2	19	Homeroom Gr. 1 & 2
Option 2	3	2	5	10	1	10	Homeroom Gr. 3
Option 3	6	5	1	12	1	12	Specialist
Option 4	8	0	1	9	1	9	Specialist
Total students	25	23	21	69	5	13.8	

2nd Year

GROUPS	1	2	3	Total Students	Number of Groups	Average per Group	Teacher
Subjects	26	27	26	79	3	26.3	
Option 1	20	15	18	53	2	26.5	Homeroom Gr. 1 & 2
Option 2	1	5	1	7	1	7	Homeroom Gr. 3
Option 3	2	4	1	7	1	7	Specialist
Option 4	3	3	6	12	1	12	Specialist
Total students	26	27	26	79	5	15.8	

Note: In this school, the organization by grade level necessitates the creation of two additional groups, if we wish to respect the four options for religious instruction. In this case, the average number of students in each option is 15.8, which conforms to the minimal number.

Organization in the First Cycle: If the students from Grades 1 and 2 are grouped together where necessary, we have a situation that is more cost effective as outlined in the following chart.

	1st	2nd	Total	Number of Groups	Average
Option 1a	38		38	2	19
Option 1b		53	53	2	21.5
Option 2	10	7	17	1	17
Option 3	12	7	19	1	19
Option 4	9	12	21	1	21
Total/Average	69	79	148	7	21.2

An organization by cycles involves the creation of only one additional group in comparison to the groups in all other subjects.

3rd Year:

GROUPS	1	2	3	Total Students	Number of Groups	Average per Group	Teacher
Subjects	27	27	27	81	3	27	
Option 1	10	12	20	42	2	21	Homeroom Gr. 1 & 2
Option 2	11	4	2	17	1	17	Homeroom Gr. 3
Option 3	6	11	5	22	1	22	Specialist
Option 4	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Total students	27	27	27	81	4	20.25	

Note: In the above scenario, if Option 1 represented the Muslim tradition and the homeroom teachers were Christians, it is a possibility that the two groups in Option 1 would be taught by specialists. As a result, the groups in Option 2 and Option 3 would be taught by two homeroom teachers. The third homeroom teacher would not give any religious instruction. This teacher's responsibilities would then include other functions such as: animation, remedial sessions for students with learning difficulties, etc. This scenario would create additional expense because it necessitates hiring a specialist. If this situation remains the exception, the costs will not be prohibitive.

4th Year:

GROUPS	1	2	3	Total Students	Number of Groups	Average per Group	Teacher
Subjects	29	28	29	86	3	28.6	
Option 1	6	11	10	27	1	27	Homeroom Gr. 1 & 2
Option 2	4	3	5	12	1	12	Homeroom Gr. 3
Option 3	1	2	0	3	1	3	Specialist
Option 4	18	12	14	44	2	22	Specialist
Total students	29	28	29	86	5	17.2	

Note: If we apply the criteria *where numbers justify*, Option 3 in the 4th year could not be offered. However, if we apply the criteria of an average of students per group in the 4th year, the average would still be above the acceptable minimum.

Organization in the Second Cycle: In this simulation, the students in Grades 3 and 4 are grouped together, where necessary, and we have a situation that is more cost effective as outlined in the following chart.

	3 rd	4 th	Total	Number of Groups	Average
Option 1a	42		42	2	21
Option 1b		27	27	1	27
Option 2	17	12	29	1	29
Option 3	22	3	25	1	25
Option 4	0	44	44	2	22
Total/Average	81	86	167	7	23.8

An organization by cycles involves the creation of only one additional group in comparison to the groups in all other subjects.

5th Year:

GROUPS	1	2	3	Total Students	Number of Groups	Average per Group	Teacher
Subjects	29	28	29	86	3	28.6	
Option 1	18	10	15	43	2	21.5	Homeroom Gr. 1 & 2
Option 2	3	5	4	12	1	12	Homeroom Gr. 3
Option 3	4	8	2	14	1	14	Specialist
Option 4	4	5	8	17	1	17	Specialist
Total students	29	28	29	86	5	17.2	

6th Year:

GROUPS	1	2	3	Total Students	Number of Groups	Average per Group	Teacher
Subjects	26	29	27	82	3	27.3	
Option 1	20	16	14	50	2	25	Homeroom Gr. 1 & 2
Option 2	2	6	2	10	1	10	Homeroom Gr. 3
Option 3	4	7	1	12	1	12	Specialist
Option 4	0	3	7	10	1	10	Specialist
Total students	26	29	27	82	5	16.4	

Note: In an organization by grade levels, the minimum average of 15 students by group is respected.

Organization in the Third Cycle: If the students in Grades 5 and 6 are grouped together, where necessary, we have a situation that is more cost effective as outlined in the following chart.

	5 th	6 th	Total	Number of Groups	Average
Option 1a	43		43	2	21.5
Option 1b		50	50	2	25
Option 2	12	10	22	1	22
Option 3	14	12	26	1	26
Option 4	17	10	27	1	27
Total/Average	86	82	168	7	24

An organization by cycles involves the creation of only one additional group in comparison to the groups in all other subjects.

Conclusion:

1. An organization by grade level that would respect the four options is possible. In this case, in order for the whole school to be considered in this theoretic model, 11 additional groups would have to be created. The average in a group in religious instruction would be 16.93 students and that would represent an acceptable number. These groups would be taught by one or several specialists with respect to the religious denominations. This organization could create considerable costs depending on the number of schools affected in a given school commission.
2. An organization by cycles is also possible and can respect the choices in the four options. It calls for the creation of only three additional groups. In this organization, an average group in religious instruction has 23 students. These groups would have to be taught by specialists. This organization works well with the new pedagogical structure at the elementary level. It allows us to offer four choices in religious instruction and involves few additional expenses that should not be significant in the context of the whole organization.

**Second Simulation:
Small and medium sized elementary schools**

In elementary schools with a small student population, a pedagogical organization similar to the one described above is possible, keeping in mind the following considerations:

1. The number of options that are possible to administer is proportional to the number of students in the school. If there are fewer students, then there are fewer options. In certain schools with fewer students, it is possible that only two or three options could be offered.
2. There is also the possibility that we may find several religious traditions in a school with a limited student population. In this case, it is possible that a confessional option could not be offered because a limited number of students would request it and the costs would be prohibitive.

Third Simulation: Secondary Schools

In secondary schools where the student population is generally more numerous, two different types of pedagogical organization are outlined, depending on the choice of schools:

- 1. An organization where the groups are predetermined or 'set,' that is, where the same students are grouped together for all their classes or for the majority of their classes:**

In this context, the pedagogical management of options in religious teaching must follow the model of the elementary schools described in the first simulation, including the same advantages and constraints.

- 2. An organization where the groups are not 'set,' that is, where the same students are grouped together only for one or more subjects:**

In this context, the pedagogical organization will follow relatively complex program guidelines. As a general rule, the more numerous the student population, the greater the possibility to offer options and to respect the choices of the majority of the students. Exceptional cases must be considered in religious instruction, as for all other subjects.

In the first cycle of secondary school, options are generally not as numerous. Theoretically, it should be possible to offer up to four options in religious instruction, keeping in mind that additional groups may at times be created in order to respect as much as possible the students' choices. Consequently, additional costs should be anticipated.

In the second cycle, the options are more numerous. The Catholic Committee's proposal to offer one common program for students in Secondary 4 and 5 simplifies the pedagogical organization in comparison to the present situation. No administrative problem is anticipated if the proposal is accepted. If it is not accepted, then the same organization that could occur in the first cycle could be repeated in the second, the difference being that the options in religious instruction would be in competition with the other subject options. Even in this more complex situation, by using technology and modern programming tools, it will be possible to respond to the demands of the greater majority of students.

N.B. It is possible that these two types of organizations could co-exist within the same school.

Catholic Committee 1998-1999

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