

THE CATHOLIC OPTION:
NON-CATHOLIC PARENTS' CHOICE OF A RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN
SASKATOON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In the Canadian city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, there exists two publicly funded school systems. One system is public and serves the general population. The other is a Roman Catholic separate system; it was established and designed to serve the Catholic population of the city. In many ways the two systems are alike. Both are required to follow provincial set curricula and are answerable to the province's Department of Learning. Both provide a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular programs.

What sets the two systems apart is their philosophy, their legal mandates as well as their historical development. The Saskatoon public system claims a commitment "to students, services and excellence" (Saskatoon School Division No. 13, The Board of Education, policy 1001, 1999), whereas, the Saskatoon separate system's philosophy is based on a commitment "to assist parents and the local Church community in the formation of students in heart, mind, body and spirit" (see Mission Statement, Appendix B). Although both systems acknowledge the importance of the education of students, the separate system does it through a religious-based education.

At the time of publication, parents were free to choose to send their children to either system, but if they choose the separate system they did so with the understanding that their children would be exposed to a Catholic, religious-based education. At the high school level, all students in Saskatoon separate schools were expected to take mandatory classes in Christian Ethics in each year of study. Non-Catholics who chose to send their children to separate Catholic schools in Saskatoon were asked to agree to these two conditions and sign documentation to verify it.

As well as being answerable to the provincial government, Saskatoon separate schools are mandated to follow the official teaching of the Catholic Church. Catholic parents, who choose to send their children to Saskatoon separate schools, can expect that the religious-based education of the schools are in line with the beliefs of their religion. Non-Catholic parents who choose to send their children to separate schools do so for a number of reasons, but there is a significant portion of non-Catholic parents who choose the Catholic option because they want the religious-based education the schools provide.

This work examines the phenomenon of non-Catholic parents who choose the Catholic option in order for their children to receive a religious-based education. It begins by examining the history of separate Catholic schools in Canada. The relationship between Catholics and non-Catholics is explored, as is the changing role of religious-based education in public schools. The choices for religious-based education for non-Catholics are examined as well as their positive and negative aspects.

The key component of this thesis is a case study, which outlines in the observations and comments of a sample of non-Catholic parents who have chosen Catholic high schools for their children in order for the children to have a religious-based education. These parents are given the opportunity to voice their opinions and observations, most of which were supportive of the religious-based education their children received.

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Although mentioned last, the first and foremost acknowledgement must go out to my mother-in-law and my late father. It was they who inspired this work. They were two, very special parents who were born and raised in non-Catholic traditions. They were strong in their faith and never lost their roots, or gave up the heart of their beliefs; yet, they insisted on choosing a Catholic education for their children. After listening to the opinions and beliefs of the non-Catholic parents in this study, I have an renewed understanding of why they did what they did.

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Chapter One

CANADIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH NON-CATHOLICS

Introduction

In Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, parents may choose to send their children to either the public school system or the separate Catholic system. If they choose the public system, they can expect an education that is secular. If they choose the Catholic option, they place their children in an educational environment that is religiously based on the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. A religious environment and religious instruction is prevalent at all grades. At the high school level, religious instruction is formalized in a specific class. All students who attend separate high schools must take this class (Christian Ethics) in each year, and they are expected to participate in all religious school sponsored activities.

As a teacher and administrator in separate schools, over the years, I became aware of the fact that there were a number of non-Catholic parents who chose to send their children to separate schools. The exact numbers vary from year to year, and from area to area, but approximately one-third of high school population identified itself as non-Catholic. What are not known, however, are the reasons that these people had for choosing Catholic schools. One may speculate. In some instances, the choice may be explained by proximity; the separate school may be more conveniently located than was the public one. In other cases, the decision might be explained by the fact that the separate school offers an academic, intramural, or extramural program that is not

available in the public system. Some parents may have made the decisions based on a perception of higher educational quality in separate schools.

While none of these decisions would surprised me, I was puzzled at that large number of non-Catholic parents who had indicated to me that they sent their children to separate schools for religious reasons. I often came across students who were from different Christian communities as well as students who were of other faiths. Often when I met with the parents, they spoke of the religious dimension of the school and how they were pleased with it. Like many Catholics my age, I had attended Catholic schools all my life and had been exposed to Catholic teachers and the Catholic teachings that are a part of the schools' curriculum, but it often baffled me why someone who was not of the Catholic faith would even want to be exposed to such teaching. As a teacher I was aware that, by attending Catholic high schools, non-Catholics appeared to be giving up an elective each year by taking the mandatory Christian Ethics classes; as well, they were required to attend all school liturgies. I often wondered why the parents of these students would make such a choice for their children.

This study looks at the significance of non-Catholic parents' choice to have their children attend separate high schools. First I felt that it was important to examine the history of Catholic separate schools in Canada, Saskatchewan, and Saskatoon. I believed that by looking at the history, one could understand what separate Catholic schools were about, how they were established and what obstacles they encountered. The history of Catholic separate schools put into context the, often delicate, relationship these schools had with people outside of its faith. Secondly, the work looks at the current situation and dialogues between separate schools and those outside of the Catholic faith. The second

chapter looks at non-Catholics who desire a religious-based education for their children and what choices are available for them in Saskatoon. The third chapter describes the design of the case study, which was undertaken to understand the phenomenon, and the fourth chapter reports results of parents' views. These views come from a sample of non-Catholic parents who have chosen the separate school option for their children. In the final chapter, this work provides observations and recommendations.

The current situation in Saskatoon, in which parents may choose to send their children to either public or separate publicly funded schools, has not always been in place. The choice that these parents have is not available to every parent in the province, neither is this option available in every Canadian province. Although Catholic schools exist in every province, not all are publicly funded and not all are open to non-Catholics.

The Saskatoon situation has evolved over time. This chapter examines this evolution. It first looks at Canadian separate schools and how they were established. It also looks at the role non-Catholics played in determining the direction separate schools would take.

Catholic Education and Catholic Schools

It is important to make a distinction between the terms "Catholic education" and "Catholic schools." Catholic education refers to the educating of people in the faith of the Catholic Church and its traditions. In the tradition of the Catholic Church, home, family, and community (church, school, and all baptized) are all involved in Catholic education. Section 1641 of *Catechism of the Catholic Church* makes clear that Catholic parents have the responsibility of providing a Catholic education for their children.

Parents are instructed to “help one another to attain holiness in their married life and in welcoming and educating their children [146]”.

In Canada, Catholic schools refer to established schools that fall under the jurisdiction of a provincial Department of Education.¹ Education, for Catholic schools, involves all elements of the school, not just formal instruction in religion. Therefore, all that is taught in Catholic schools is expected to be based on what the Catholic Church teaches. This is the ideal.

In Canada, where Catholic schools exist, they are subject to conditions dictated by the various provincial departments of education. Although Catholic schools may attempt to provide Catholic education, they may be restricted in this goal by the fact that they are answerable to both the Catholic community and to the provincial government. The degree of provincial influence varies widely; in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta where there are provincially funded separate Catholic schools, provincial control is greater than in other provinces where Catholic schools are private institutions.

Canadian Separate Catholic Schools: A Brief History

The role religion played in the early history of Canadian education was significant. With the exception of the First Nations, before 1900 there were only a handful of people in Canada who were not at least nominally Christian. The colonists who developed the public and separate systems of Canada were Catholics and Protestants who made up the majority of Canada’s population; it was these two groups that set up the laws that would govern education in each province and territory (Phillips, 1957).

In the nineteenth century, there was a general agreement that public education should have a religious core. This condition created problems for Protestants who were

divided into a number of competing churches that disagreed about what that religious core should be (Phillips, 1957). Throughout the nineteenth century, two major changes occurred in Canadian Protestantism: one was church union and the other was compromise about the religious content in schools. By the end of the century, public schools reflected somewhat of a non-denominational Protestant orientation; although the public schools did not permit denominational religious instruction, they did include recitation of the Lord's Prayer, daily readings from the King James version of the Bible, and graded readers liberally laced with Christian literature with a Protestant slant (Van Brummelen, 1983). Most public systems outside of Quebec expanded to include all students who were not Catholic (Sissons, 1959).

The early twentieth century brought new challenges to the school system. From 1890-1914, a flow of immigrants brought sizable numbers of Jews and Orthodox Christians who did not fit nicely into the Catholic/Protestant arrangement in the schools (Lupul, 1974). In the post-1945 period, this population change was further complicated by the immigration of numbers of Moslems, Buddhists, and other religious groups (Statistics Canada, 1996). Moreover, the nineteenth century notion that education is a religious undertaking began to erode with a growth in social secularism. As a result of these factors, the public schools began to change so as to accommodate this new reality (see chapter 2, p. 23). The division was no longer between Catholic and Protestant, but between those who believed in a religious-based education and those who favoured a secular one.

To someone not familiar to Canadian history, the current educational system in much of Canada may appear somewhat odd. Modern Canada is made up of many

religions and religious denominations, yet only Catholicism is given the benefit of publicly funded education.

The British North American Act

The British North American Act (later renamed the Constitutional Act) guaranteed some minority religious educational rights to Canadians. Section 93 of the Act states:

In and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to education, subject and according to the following provisions:

(1) Nothing in such Laws shall prejudicially affect the Right or Privilege with respect to Denominational Schools which any Class of Person have by Law in the Province at the Union:

(2) All the Powers, Privileges, and Duties at the Union by Law conferred and imposed in Upper Canada on the Separate Schools and School Trustees of the Queen's Roman Catholic Subjects shall be the same and hereby extended to the Dissentient Schools of the Queen's Protestant and Roman Catholic Subjects in Quebec: (B.N.A. Act. *Canadian Encyclopaedia*, 1988)

The Act only addressed the issue of religious-based schools in Ontario and Quebec. Later, as other provinces joined Confederation, their citizens were guaranteed religious-based schools if such schools were in existence prior to their joining Confederation or were subsequently established. This Act and this clause was the cornerstone for the founding of the provinces' educational systems (Phillips, 1957).

Protestant/Catholic Canada

The section of the British North American Act that dealt with education reflected the rights of the dominant British Protestant citizens in Upper Canada and the French Catholic population of Lower Canada. The inclusion the minority rights was to appease the Protestant minority in Lower Canada and the Catholic minority in Upper Canada; other minorities were not covered under the British North American Act (Sissons, 1959).

The granting of religious-based minority rights had a significant impact on the public system.

The educational minority rights clause in the British North American Act was a compromise that did not please everyone (Hamilton, 1970 a). At the time, the Catholics and the Protestants of Quebec were happy with their educational system because both groups were permitted to operate their own schools. The Catholics of Ontario, however, were dissatisfied because they wanted what the Protestants of Quebec had; the freedom and funding to run their own schools. Regulations regarding curriculum, textbooks, training and qualifications of teachers restricted the ability of Catholics to make important decisions about the way Catholic schools would be able to deliver Catholic education. A lingering spirit of counterreformation and a growing ultramontaniam, especially among the Canadian Catholic clergy strengthened these concerns (Van Brummelen, 1983).

There were many citizens among the Ontario Protestant population who were also unhappy. Originally settled by the United Empire Loyalists, Upper Canadians were very much American in outlook. They had objected to the Church of England control over schools at the beginning of the nineteenth century and objected to Catholic separate schools in the new confederation (Phillips, 1957). The general population of Canada saw schooling as important and as a force in building and developing the colony. The growing tide of democracy in the nineteenth century led to a growth of suspicion and distrust of the Vatican even among many Catholics. In Ontario, as the rest of the Protestant world, there was a strong anti-Catholic mood that wanted to restrict Papists (Phillips, 1957).

The British North America Act was an attempt at a compromise, which both entrenched the right of provincial governments to regulate schools and, at the same time, guaranteed both Catholic and Protestants educational rights. Many Ontario Protestants, believing that common schools would unite the population, were disappointed by the continuation of separate schools. The Catholics of Ontario obtained less than they had wished; they could not select purely Catholic textbooks without government approval. They could not cancel school on feast days without permission from the superintendent, and they could not continue to use untrained nuns as teachers. The Catholic Acadians in New Brunswick were also unhappy their rights had been ignored because they had not had officially approved schools prior to 1867 (Hamilton, 1970 a). Each new province that came to the union brought with them some different circumstances that were not anticipated by the Fathers of Confederation. One constant that did remain for nearly a century after 1867 was the tension between Catholic and Protestant Canadians who often viewed the other as a threat. The fear was that when one group was in minority, the other group would force their brand of religious education on that minority (Huel, 1978).

With the passage of time came changes in population and new concerns, unique to each area of the country. The French/English division of Canada became more complicated by immigrants from many other lands bringing with them their cultures and religions. The British North America Act remained the cornerstone of establishing public and separate schools in Canada, but these schools were influenced by the cultural and religious complexion of the provinces in which they were developed. It was rare for separate schools to be established without some form of tension. This tension still exists in many areas of Canada (Lupul, 1974).

Language and religion have often been linked with Catholic and Protestant education. At times it was difficult to separate the two and at other times language and religion have been clearly separate (Sheehan, 1979). The French/English language issue is still of concern today and still plays a role in the public/separate school debate (see page 10).

In 1867, three of Canada's provinces, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick had English majorities with French minorities, but in Quebec the demographics were reversed. The yet unenumerated indigenous peoples of Canada were, at the time, not considered in the equation (Cook, 1966).

The British North America Act placed the responsibility for education in the hands of each province. Provisions in Section 133 included some language guarantees, but they were limited to the federal parliament, courts, laws and proceedings, and to the legislative laws, proceedings and courts of Quebec. Importantly, Section 133 did not directly address the issue of language education.

Challenges to Catholic Schools – Newfoundland and Quebec

As each province entered Confederation, decisions were made as to whether the Catholic or Protestant minority would be granted separate schools based on Section 93 of the British North America Act. After 1867 only Saskatchewan and Alberta chose to establish separate Catholic schools. Where separate schools status was granted, supporters believed that separate schools would be entrenched for all time. However, two events occurred at the end of the twentieth century that challenged both this belief and the section of the British North American Act that granted religious minority educational rights.

The provincial governments of Newfoundland and Quebec demonstrated that the entrenchment of Catholic schools in the British North America Act might be eliminated if another concern, such as consolidation or language rights, replaces it. In 1997 the Government of Newfoundland amended Term 17 of the Terms of Union between Newfoundland and Canada. There was debate among the population whether schools should be religious-based or secular. Not only did Newfoundland have separate Catholic schools but also a number of other schools with various religious affiliations. Some of the population questioned whether religion was dividing the population. The government held a referendum that asked the question: "Do you support a single school system where all children, regardless of their religious affiliation, attend the same school where opportunities for religious education and observation are provided?" (*Newfoundland Term 17, 1997*) Only 53% of the population turned out to vote on the referendum, yet the government accepted the responses and proceeded to make sweeping changes to the education system of the province. This was exactly the kind of threat that the Catholic minority of Canada had always feared- a majority non-Catholic government was making changes to a minority's religious education rights without the consent of that minority (*Catholic Civil Rights Bulletin*, May 1997). Catholics would lose their schools because a more powerful majority was capable of taking them away.

Of equal concern for those who had a vested interest in public funding of Catholic schools were the events in Quebec. In November 1997, the House of Commons amended section 93 of the constitution to remove the rights to denominational education in Quebec. The government of Quebec asked for this amendment so that it could replace the rights that were initially entrenched for religious education of its schools with rights

that would protect the linguistic concerns of the province (*Catholic Civil Rights Bulletin*, May, 1997). The Catholic Church, strangely silent on this issue, seemed to show support for the government's decisions. For years the Church had been a major factor in the life of Quebec, but for many modern Quebecois the Church no longer seems to speak to them. "*L'enseignement religieux catholique ne correspond plus à ce qui se rencontre dans le milieu qu'il vise.*" (Dontigny, 1990). Almost like a rebellious teen that questions and challenges the authoritarian parent, Quebec seems to be testing its ties to the Church and leaning towards a more secular ideal. The province still claims 158 school boards of which 18 are Protestant and 137 are Roman Catholic, but there is some question whether this is a cultural Catholicism or whether it retains the vibrancy of a lived faith tradition.

Whether Quebec is justified in its distancing itself from the Catholic Church is of little concern for advocates of public funding of Catholic schools in other parts of Canada. Of more concern is the fact that recent events in Newfoundland and Quebec have set significant precedents that could further threaten the public funding of Catholic schools (Huel, 1980).

Many Catholic school boards of the country have looked at these two events with trepidation. They fear losing their schools and have reacted by increasing their effort to maintain the religious nature of the schools (see Mission Statements pg. 17) and in some cases have introduced a new era of protectionism that has not been seen since the pre-Vatican II era (*Catholic Civil Rights Bulletin*, May, 1997)

The Saskatchewan Story

Because the non-Catholic parents in this study live in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, it is beneficial to look at the unique situation that has developed between Catholics and non-Catholics in the area.

Every province that has separate and public schools has had a history involving some form of tension and compromise in order for the two systems to come into being, and Saskatchewan had more than its fair share of interesting and difficult hurdles to overcome. The fact that some non-Catholic parents in Saskatchewan now have the option of choosing to send their children to Catholic separate schools is remarkable considering the colorful past that the province experienced. Some of these events are notable because of the immense impact they had on the people of the time; so significant was the impact that current events are often evaluated in light of them.

Three eras of Saskatchewan's history led toward a protectionist attitude of the province's Catholic population towards their faith and their schools. These events are still well remembered in some parts of the province, so much so, that the relationship between Catholic and non-Catholic is still somewhat strained. The first era involved the Ku Klux Klan's presence in the province. After the Great War (1914-1918), the Klan attempted to establish itself in the province. It targeted Catholics and non-Nordic immigrants (Kyba, 1968). Where the Klan was active in certain parts of the province a rift emerged between Klan supporters and the Catholic population (Appleblat, 2001). Although the Klan vanished from the province as quickly as it came, the scars remain.

The second era involved the provincial government passing an act in 1931 that required all public schools to remove symbols of a religious nature. This was known as

the “Garb and Symbol Law” (Sissions, 1959). In some areas of the province, the majority of the area was Catholic and the public schools were therefore Catholic; often run by religious orders (McLeod, 1968). The result of this law was to make many Catholics of the province wary about governments that were unsympathetic to their schools.

The third era that encouraged Catholic school protectionism involved the passing of the Larger School Act in 1944. The purpose of the Act was to reduce the number of school boards in the province. The restructuring was intended to create larger, more efficient school boards. But for many of the province’s Catholic citizens, what they saw was the closing of small Catholic schools in the process of creating larger public schools (Sissions, 1959). Had these occurrences been the most significant events in the province’s history, it is doubtful that the doors of Catholic schools would ever have been opened to people outside of the faith. It is not that the events have been forgotten, but the Church and local school leaders introduced an era of openness and reconciliation to the province.

Saskatchewan Catholic High Schools and the Second Vatican Council

In spite of these three historical obstacles between Catholic separate school supporters and non-Catholics, the open door to Catholic separate schools was not shut. Two events occurred in the mid 1960s that made the Catholic Option more appealing to non-Catholics. The first involved public funding for separate high schools in Saskatchewan; the other was the Second Vatican Council in Rome.

In 1964, following lobbying by concerned parents, educators, and politicians Saskatchewan amended the Secondary School Act to permit funding for Catholic high

schools. Over the next decade there was significant construction of Catholic high schools in the province (Noonan, 1979). Prior to this funding amendment, separate schools could only offer elementary grades, which limited the opportunities available for Catholic students. Then, with separate schooling being made available through to grade 12, separate schools began to grow and to offer more opportunities for to their students. Today most separate school systems in larger communities offer educational opportunities equal to their public school counterparts.

While Saskatchewan was debating and eventually accepting public funding of Catholic High schools, Pope John XXIII called leaders of the Catholic Church to Rome. The second Vatican Council was opened in 1962 and closed by Pope Paul VI in 1965. In particular, the Council dealt with two declarations that would have an impact on Catholic schools and non-Catholics parents who may wish to choose Catholic schools for religious education. *The Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis* (Paul VI, 1965) emphasized the importance of Christian education and stressed the importance of Catholic schools. *The Decree on Ecumenism* (1964) spoke of the importance of Catholics sharing with fellow Christians that in which they have in common, and called Catholics to share with all of humanity the universal truths that were revealed by God to all. For non-Catholics who wished to attend Catholic schools, this declaration meant that the schools should be willing to open their doors to them.

A Question of Who Can Support Catholic Schools

Even though the Second Vatican Council decreed that Catholics should be open to others who wished to dialogue with them, the Council did not directly deal with separate Catholic schools and whether Catholics should open their doors to non-Catholics. This

issue would be something that Catholic school boards would have to determine for themselves. As well, provincial and municipal governments had to deal with who could and should pay for public and separate schools. Since separate schools were established for a minority religious group and public schools for the rest of the population, it would seem logical that the religious minority would support its schools and that everyone else would support the public systems. In most cases it would mean that if one were Catholic, his or her taxes would support separate schools; likewise, all non-Catholics would support the public system.

Several court cases, *Pander v. Town of Melville* (*Western Weekly Report*, 1922) and *Bintner v. Regina Public Schools Board District No. 4* (*Dominion Law Reports*, 1996), challenged this thinking. As a result of these cases, taxpayers would identify themselves as either public school supporters or separate school supporters and their tax dollars would be then assigned to the appropriate school board. However, in order to protect the religious nature of the separate system, only members of the minority religion that were granted separate school status would be allowed to vote for trustees in that system. This designation poses a dilemma for people who are not of the faith of the separate school in their area. For example, if the separate school is Catholic, it is possible for non-Catholic parents to send their children to a separate Catholic school, but be denied the right to vote for a school trustee or stand for office themselves. As unfair as this system may seem, initially, this structure makes it impossible for a group opposed to separate schools to register as separate school supporters in order to undermine the right of the minority. Without this restriction, if a large group of people wished to abolish

separate schools they need only elect a like-minded school board that could then vote itself out of existence.

Prior to 1995 the term “separate school supporter” was an issue. Some non-Catholics wished to send their children to Catholic schools and simply identified themselves as a separate school supporter and had their municipal taxes directed to the separate schools. This was in contraction to the intention of the taxation declaration; the term “separate school supporter” was originally understood to be people of that faith.

In 1995, section 145 of the Saskatchewan Education Act gave parents the option of enrolling their children in either a separate or public high school regardless of religious affiliation. In the case of separate Catholic schools, however, non-Catholic parents are expected to abide by the policies of the school regarding religious instruction and participation.

Although non-Catholics are free to choose Catholic high schools, they cannot support them with their municipal taxes. The provincial government supplies a grant to schools for the actual number of pupils who attend the schools (Saskatchewan Education Act, 1995, Section 310), but non-Catholic attendees still remain a financial burden for Catholic schools, as do identified Catholic students in public schools. In 1998 the provincial government changed the wording of the 1978 School Act that allowed parents to support financially any school board they chose while allowing only Catholics to vote for trustees on Catholic school boards. No longer were taxpayers referred to as “supporters,” rather they were asked to actually declare their religion. As a result only Catholics were allowed to designate the education portion of their municipal taxes to the Catholic separate system. This ruling was challenged in 1998 in the Humboldt area.

Ironically, the challenge was made in an area of Saskatchewan where the public system is Catholic and the separate school is Protestant. In April of 2002, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal confirmed that taxpayers could not choose to direct their taxes to the separate school board unless they were members of that religion (Hall, 2002). Therefore, when Catholic schools accept non-Catholics, the school board will receive a grant from the provincial government for those students; however, most finances for the school boards come from municipal taxes, which provide no support for non-Catholic students. The case is the same for Catholic students who choose to attend public schools.

Mission Statements

As Saskatchewan Separate Catholic schools became mainstream, they desired to re-emphasize the original purpose of their existence. Public funding of Catholic high schools provided those schools with more financial support, but no longer being private schools, had to become fully answerable to the Department of Education. Catholic high schools had to ensure their curriculum and school operations were in line with provincial regulations; in many ways, Catholic high schools began to resemble public schools.

To counterbalance this trend, most Catholic schools made sure that their stance on religious education was made clear in their mission statements and policies effecting non-Catholics who chose to attend Catholic schools. It was important for a separate school to maintain its identity and try to be true to its designed purpose -- that of providing a Catholic education for Catholic students. The Catholic section of the Saskatchewan Schools Trustee Association (S.S.T.A), in the report *Catholic Education: Search for Truth Formation in Faith* (Appendix A), developed one such measure in 1994. The report developed a mission statement for Catholic education in the province of

Saskatchewan. A mission statement is a written statement of purpose. It acts as a road map showing the direction a school intends to go. The mission statement identifies Catholic schools' right to exist and defines the importance of Catholic education for Saskatchewan Catholic students.

The challenge from outside the Catholic community for definition and purpose of Catholic schools continues to be an issue for Catholic schools. In response to such challenges to Ontario Catholic schools, Father James Mulligan responded that Canadian Catholic schools are currently at a "defining moment". As non-Catholics in Canada look at Catholic schools and ask why they exist, Catholic schools are forced to define themselves in clear and concise ways. In his book, *Catholic Education: The Future is Now* (1999), as well as through the Mission Statements of the S.S.T.A. and Saskatoon Catholic School Mission Statements, Catholic schools are defined as places that proclaim God, provide a space and time for the sacred, and promote the development of moral and ethical human beings (Mulligan, 1999).

The Relationship Between Saskatoon Separate and Public Schools

The history of Saskatoon is quite different from the history of the rest of Saskatchewan. Although at the beginning, Saskatchewan separate schools found themselves in conflict with those who opposed the existence of separate schools, the relationship between the Saskatoon Separate and Public School Boards has always been relatively amiable. Former Catholic School Board Directors, Denis Dibski and Walter Podiluk, provided information to the researcher about events that occurred between the Catholic and Public school boards. It is the researcher's observation that creating the

common partnership that the two systems have today was largely the result of the people who held positions of leadership in the two systems.

Prior to the 1964 public funding of Catholic high schools, the two systems were rather independent. Because the public system had more schools and because they provided publicly funded secondary education, high schools were largely in their hands. The Catholic system was an elementary system and the then-existing Catholic high schools were private ones, which did not have access to many of the curricular and extracurricular amenities that the public system had. This situation changed in the mid-1960s in Saskatoon. At that time the directors of the two systems, Dr. Denis Dibski and Dr. Fred Gathercole, were personal friends. Both were members of the Rotary Club; their relationship was cordial, and they chose to meet once a week to discuss common educational concerns of their respective school systems. The idea of directors meeting and sharing concerns was a concept that would be adopted by future directors.

When Dr. Walter Podiluk took the role of Director of the Saskatoon Catholic School District, Fred Gathercole still held the position of Director for the public system. Gathercole's openness, honesty, and trusting nature contributed greatly to the mutual support that the two systems would have (Podiluk, 2001). Podiluk and Gathercole continued to discuss ways in which the two systems could work together. Of primary importance to these directors was the best interest of all students in the city of Saskatoon.

Another factor that influenced the relationship of the two boards was a change in the attitude of those associated with Catholic schools. For years the Catholic schools saw themselves as institutes whose primary purpose was to preserve and protect their Catholic faith. This protectionist attitude placed the public system as the "other" from whom

Catholic schools must distance themselves. With the emphasis on ecumenism initiated by the Second Vatican Council, Saskatoon Catholic schools took a change in direction. Under Podiluk's leadership the Catholic schools initiated an agreement of openness with the public schools. It began with the Fee for Service Agreement, in which the tuition would be paid according to the schools the students actually attended. Students could choose either system without parents having to worry about transferring taxes -- the tuition would be transferred at the board level. As a result, an increasing number of families chose a high school according to what it had to offer. With choice came more options. In the 1960s and 1970s the various collegiates began to develop reputations for excellence in specific academic and athletic undertakings. Catholic high schools began to be seen by both Catholic and non-Catholic parents as being a viable option.

As part of the changing attitude that was developing in Catholic schools was the concern of Catholic school identity. As the protectionist attitude began to disappear, it was replaced with the concept of uniqueness. In the late 1980s and 1990s Saskatoon Catholic schools emphasized the fact that a difference existed. This difference between them and the public schools allowed Catholic schools the responsibility to ensure that a Christian Catholic message was taught and shared with all who would care to listen.

Saskatoon Catholic schools sought to maintain their Catholic identity. As the city grew the Catholic system began to grow in size and in acceptability. There was a concern that both the staff and the general public might simply come to view the Catholic system as not merely being equal to, but also no different than, the public system. Father Ron Beechinor, Pastoral Service Associate for Saskatoon Catholic Schools, in a presentation

given to Catholic school administrators, November 6, 2001, described a concern in that some people view Catholic schools as “an alternative system not offering an alternative.”

Prior to the inclusion of funding for Catholic high schools, and to their consequent growth and development, many people often had a simplistic definition of what was unique to Catholic schools. They saw these schools as being named after a saint, having religious symbols, Catholic teachers, prayer, religious programs, and good education. The separate system was separated from the public school system; it was in isolation, protecting itself from the rest of society. With the Catholic Church’s new emphasis on ecumenism, Catholic schools moved from being isolated and protective to opening their doors to all who shared the belief in God and in worshipping God.

To express their uniqueness, the Saskatoon Catholic School Divisions developed a Mission Statement that specifically identified what made them both distinctive and necessary. Rather than emphasizing a protectionist attitude, the Saskatoon Catholic School Mission Statement stressed the importance of the schools being based on Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church (Appendix B).

The hope of the Mission Statement is to drive home the point that Saskatoon Catholic Schools are primarily places of instruction based on a Catholic religious foundation. The Mission Statement ensures that the institutions are first, Catholic and second, schools. This is a message that the ancestors of modern Saskatchewan and Saskatoon Catholics would no doubt be pleased to hear.

There have been disagreements and conflicts between Saskatoon’s two school boards, but they have managed to find compromises to resolve them. One such event occurred in the early 1970s when separate high schools were being built. Saskatoon

Catholic ratepayers complained that they had paid municipal taxes for years to the public school for high school education and that the Public Board owed them a collegiate. The complaints were heard and discussed and they worked towards a common understanding. Rather than having the public board handing over a school to the Catholic system, agreements were reached so that a new school would be built. Such was the relationship between the two boards.

The early history of Saskatoon Catholic Separate Schools and the Public Schools does not indicate any formal agreement of mutual participation, but the leaders of both boards definitely nurtured it.

The teaching staff also had an effect on the collegiality of the two systems. When Catholic high schools were being established, the teaching staff and administration was largely chosen from Catholic teachers who were then teaching in the public collegiates. Thus, the teachers who worked in the high schools of the two systems knew each other on a personal level and would continue this amiable relationship while teaching in their respective school jurisdictions.

For a variety of historical reasons, the Catholic Separate and Public Schools of Saskatoon find themselves in a situation today that is rare in the country. The two systems have virtually open doors that allow any parent; anywhere in the city to choose any school they wish for their children to attend.

Summary

The relationship between Catholics and non-Catholics in Canada and especially in Saskatchewan has undergone a significant evolution. Much of this change may be attributed to the role that religion plays in society. When separate schools were first

established, religion was often viewed at the core of the community. Religion was seen as an acceptable part of education. This ideal was simple when Canada was basically divided between Protestants and Catholics. While this dualistic identity existed, religious intolerance and ignorance lead to events that created a gap between some Catholics and non-Catholics.

With time and changes to Catholic thinking (e.g., the Second Vatican Council) as well as changes to Canadian society itself, separate schools found themselves in a position where they were the only publicly funded institutions that maintained religion as the core of their schools. For some of the non-Catholic population, Catholic schools are attractive. Catholic separate schools are publicly funded and yet they maintain their religious-base. For non-Catholic parents who wish for a religious-based education for their children, Catholic schools may be seen as a realistic option.

Chapter Two

RELIGIOUS-BASED EDUCATION – THROUGH THE EYES OF NON-CATHOLICS

Introduction

This chapter examines religious education through the perspective of non-Catholic parents who wish to have such an education for their children. It examines how religious education has been continually reduced in Canadian public schools, and at legal challenges in Saskatoon that have limited the amount of religious education available in public schools.

The chapter explores why some non-Catholic families may want to have the experience of religious education in their lives. It also examines what choices are available to them and the costs of such choices. Because of the nature of the case study in chapter four, one specific choice, the parental option to choose separate schools for religious education is the emphasis of this section.

Finally, this chapter looks at the high school situation in Saskatoon separate schools and what demands are placed on non-Catholic attending such schools. It surveys some of the problems and benefits of the Catholic option for non-Catholics and legal issues that surround the choice.

Religious-Based Education

In 1911, when the Department of Education agreed that a Roman Catholic Separate school system would be established in Saskatoon, most non-Catholic taxpayers could not anticipate or foresee what the public system of the future would be like. In 1911 Saskatoon's public system served the religious needs of the majority of its

ratepayers. The Lord's Prayer, Bible readings, and even religious observations were not only accepted without opposition, but the city's Protestant majority expected them. Moreover, the readers used in Canadian schools contained Bible passages and history books were openly pro-Christian (Van Brummelen, 1993).

As the city began to grow, so did the ethnic and religious diversity of the population. Parents, who wished for a religious based education for their children, would be faced with several challenges, and their options would become limited.

The first challenge came from society itself. The trend for public school education to distance itself from a strictly Protestant orientation became prevalent as the population of the city became more cosmopolitan. By the end of the twentieth century Saskatoon was still largely of European origin and nominally Protestant (Statistics Canada, 1996), but many of its citizens did not share the same value base that characterized that of the city's early population. In order to be more acceptable to the entire population, the public system adapted to the changing value base. Depending on the make up of the school, some schools reflected a secular environment; others maintained a Christian environment. These latter schools faced their second challenge in the Provincial courts.

Challenge to Religion in Saskatoon Public Schools

In 1901 the North West Territories passed an ordinance governing schools in the territories; Saskatchewan was a part of these territories. Since 1901, Saskatoon Public schools operated under the direction of the *Ordinance*. Section 137(2) of the 1901 *Ordinance* minimized the teaching of religion in schools. Schools could begin with the Lord's Prayer, but religion would only be taught, if the district so chose, for one half hour

at the end of the school day. Over time, the exact wording of the *Ordinance* would be altered. The first changes were subtle. Although schools were allowed to use the Lord's Prayer and Bible readings, some began to use secular readings or more inclusive reading and prayers.

During the 1960s and 1970s the North American culture increasingly reflected secular and pluralistic attitudes towards religion. It was not surprising when the role of formal religion in a public setting was questioned.

A legal challenge came in 1993 with a court case in which the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission questioned if Saskatoon's public schools could incorporate Christian prayer and practices in its school activities. The case challenged the 1901 *Ordinance*, which had remained relatively unchanged over time, although the population of Saskatoon had undergone significant changes.

The population of Saskatchewan had changed remarkably from its 1905 origins. As the province entered Confederation, its population was divided into two factions, Protestant and Catholic. Even as immigration changed the ethnic face of the province, the religious duality remained. By the end of the twentieth century the ethnic and religious diversity of the province were continuing to change. In 1981 Statistics Canada reported that the Catholic population of Canada made up 45.7 % of the population, but by 1991 it had dropped to 35.7. Similarly, the Protestant population changed from 41.2 % to 36.2 %. By contrast, other religions grew from 4 percent in 1981 to 5.3 % in 1991, and people claiming no religious affiliation grew from 7.4 % in 1981 to 12.5 % in 1991. These same trends were occurring in Saskatchewan; of its 976,000 population, 316,900

registered as Catholic (32 %), 521,700 Protestant (53.5 %), 30,500 of other faiths (3.1 %) and 107, 200 (11%) stating no religious affiliation (Statistics Canada, 1996).

On December 21 and 22, 1993 the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission challenged the *Ordinance*. The complainants were parents who sent their children to public schools and who had issue with the use of the Lord's Prayer and a Bible passage reading that the Saskatoon Board of Education allowed school assemblies to use. The parents charged the:

Board of Education of Saskatoon Schools Division No 13 of Saskatchewan ("the Board of Education) (with) interfere(ing) with (their) right to freedom of religious practice and deny the children's right of education without discrimination because religion, as guaranteed by ss. 4 and 13 of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*, by sanctioning the use of the Lord's prayer and Bible readings in public school. (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 1999)

They further charged that allowing a specific religion's prayer and worship was an act of discrimination.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission established a Board of Inquiry, led by Justice Halvorson. Witnesses verified the fact that the Lord's Prayer and a Bible passage reading did, indeed, occur in the school that their children attended.

The Board of Education argued that the use of the Lord's Prayer and the Bible readings were used in assemblies because, even though there were many minorities represented in their schools, the majority of the school population was Christian.

During the inquiry it was acknowledged that the majority of students who attended the public schools mentioned was Christian. But Dr. Karen Mock, National Director of the League for Human Rights of B'Nai Brith, Canada was recorded as having "little patience for the position that a majority favour the Lord's prayer in schools, so the democratic process is simply at work". She preferred to label the situation as "the

tyranny of the majority” (Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, Board of Inquiry Decision, July, 23, p.12).

The complainants won their case because, though section 137(2) of the *School Ordinance* did allow for the use of the Lord’s Prayer in school assemblies, the assemblies in question took place after the students first reported to their classrooms and attendance was taken; therefore, too much time had lapsed and it was no longer the opening of the day. Because the Bible readings did not take place in the last half-hour of the day, they were considered religious education. The Board of Inquiry recommended that:

- a) The Legislature of Saskatchewan repeal section 137(2) of the *Education Act*
- b) The Board of Education decline to “direct” under section 137(2) of the *School Ordinance 1901*, that the Lord’s prayer be recited at openings of public schools;
- c) The Board of Education develop a multicultural religious policy

The Board of Education was required to pay the costs of the appeal of \$15,000

(Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, Board of Inquiry Decision, July 23, 1999, p.33)

Although, many Christians, upset with the Board of Inquiry’s decision, launched appeals, the Saskatoon Board of Education was obliged to comply with the decision. Saskatoon public schools did not challenge the Board of Inquiry’s decisions or recommendations; it chose to live by the findings. This challenge did not remove religious education in Saskatoon’s public schools completely, but it did alter the way the Saskatoon Public schools would conduct themselves. The Human Rights Commission’s decision did not apply to the Catholic Separate Schools of Saskatchewan; their rights for religious instruction are clearly entrenched in law.

Until the Inquiry, the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation had two policies in place that agreed that each school community should be free to set what religious

activities they wished to incorporate in their schools. The Federation policies, dated from 1972, stated:

6.7.1 Legislative provisions regarding opening exercises and time for religious instruction should be retained

6.7.2 The school community should retain the right to decide the type of religious instruction carried on in the school.

Spurred by the Inquiry's recommendation, the Saskatchewan Teachers

Federation passed the following resolution at the Spring Council 2000:

BE IT RESOLVED that policy 6.7 of the *STF Statement of Policy and Bylaws* on Religious Instruction be rescinded and that a new policy be developed by the STF Executive. In formulating the new policy, the Executive should consider the decisions and recommendations of Justice Halvorson, Board of Inquiry and the Human Rights Commission.

By the fall of 2001, the STF had drafted a discussion and feedback paper. The resolution was clear that it would apply to public schools only and not effect "separate schools for students of designated minority faiths, and 'conseils scolaires' for students of the designated minority language." (STF Draft Policy, 2001, p.5)

The Halvorson Board of Inquiry's recommendation to be more multicultural is difficult to enact for Saskatchewan schools and teachers. To be multicultural suggests that schools be open to everything for everyone; however, the secular approach, "to be nothing to everyone," is easier to implement. If schools were being challenged because they favoured a certain religion, then rather than trying to please all people, many schools would find it easier to leave religion out all religious practices.

The Saskatoon case did leave room for the possibility of including some form of religious education in public schools. The Halvorson Board of Inquiry's

recommendations seriously restricted non-Catholics who desired religious education in Saskatoon public schools.

Additional Legal Challenges

There have been similar cases elsewhere in Canada that have demonstrated that the role of religious education in public schools is disappearing. In the 1980s, two significant events occurred in the Province of Ontario that involved the role of religion in their public schools. The court cases were similar to the one in Saskatoon. The first one involved public funding for Catholic secondary schools. Before 1980, Ontario did not fund Catholic separate schools beyond grade 10. In 1985 the provincial government extended funding to all high schools grades in those schools.

It appeared to many observers that Catholics were being given special treatment in Ontario. Confederation and the events that led to the British North America act seemed far removed from the average Ontario taxpayer. The early French/English and Catholic/Protestant split had undergone many changes. Many people began to wonder why public schools still maintained the Protestant Christian leanings and why Catholics were the only religious group in the country to have their own schools that were supported by public tax dollars.

The second event was a series of legal battles known as Zylberberg and Elgin County Cases. These cases emphasized the religious concerns of a minority group in their respective areas. The outcome of these cases made school prayer and instruction of religion illegal in public schools.

In January of 1991 the Ontario government issued Policy/Programme Memorandum 112, which prohibited religious indoctrination within the public school

system (Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, 1999). The Zylberberg case involved the mandatory recital of the Lord's Prayer. The court decreed that public educational systems could no longer hold mandatory religious exercises.

The Elgin County case dealt with religious instruction in public schools. The court ruled that mandatory religious instruction violated the religious freedom of non-Christians. Initially the cases were intended to remove the dominant Christian perspective of religion from schools, but in effect they removed all religious practices. Memorandum 112 prohibited religious instruction and exercises in publicly funded public elementary and secondary school during the school day. Even voluntary religious action such as noon hour Bible study or meetings of religious-centred clubs were not allowed between the hours of school opening and closing.

Especially hard hit was The Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program in Stratton, Ontario. The Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program was an American-based Christian school that had been accepted as an associate school by a local school board and was fully funded by the Ontario government. After the passing of Memorandum 112, the Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program was told to "de-Christianize" or it would lose its provincial funding (Christianity.ca, 2000).

As a result of these court cases, two politically active groups were formed; the Multi-Faith Coalition for Equity in Education (OMCEE) and a coalition of the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (CJC and OACS). The Multi-Faith Coalition was made up of Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Mennonite, and Reform Protestant parents, who wished to establish alternative religious schools within the public system. The OMCEE approved of the court rule that prevented a dominant Christian

majority from implementing mandatory Christian instruction and prayer, but disapproved of eliminating all religious practice from school. It advocated that the government support accommodating all religions and allowing more religious schools. The CJC and OACS wanted the government to expand their funding to include their existing independent schools. These groups have placed an interesting twist to the idea of what is a minority. They claim that parents of faith are being discriminated against because of their religious beliefs and that, if public schools serve a predominantly secular populace, then by definition the schools will be secular; therefore, faith-filled people must be a minority and need protection (Christianity.ca, 2002).

The OMCEE challenged the provincial government, alleging that in denying public funding for alternative faith-based schools, the government violated parents' freedom of expression and equality of rights that are protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Ontario government responded that religious freedom and expression does not mean that the public is responsible for funding schools in which this freedom can be expressed, and that public schools should be available to everyone rather than dividing its schools into various factions.

In December, 1995 the Ontario courts ruled that Memorandum 112 did not violate religious or expressive freedoms. The court ruled that secularism is neutral and, therefore, everyone is treated equally. In 1997 the Ontario Court of Appeal agreed with the Ontario Court's ruling. Furthermore, the court of appeal indicated that what was at issue was public funding, not freedom of religion and expression.

Parallels between these cases and the Justice Halvorson case in Saskatoon are many. For example, none of these cases initially intended to remove religion from public

schools. Although many observers hoped that religious education would be expanded, the result was that, rather than expanding religion education, it was further limited or removed all together.

Why Religious-Based Education?

In light of the challenges to religion in public schools, it is clear that there exists a significant sector of the Canadian population that does not want to have any specific religion taught in public schools and some who do not want any religion whatsoever present in public schools. There still remains a portion of the Canadian population however, for whom a religious-based education is not only desirable, but also important.

Parents are the first and most important educators of their children and, for many of them, the freedom for their children to express religious beliefs and discuss religion is an important issue (Strommen & Strommen, 1985). The role of the school is often interpreted as *in loco parentis* - -that is “in the place of a parent, instead of a parent” (*Gage Dictionary*, 1982). Schools may view *in loco parentis* as occurring when the school administers care and control of students in absence of the physical presence of the students’ parents (*Black’s Law Dictionary*, 1999). In Canada it is never expected that schools will usurp the role of parent; most parents expect schools to reinforce what is taught in the home.

Canadian culture has changed dramatically in the past half century, however, and Canadian families have become more culturally diverse. For the public school to attempt to reinforce the various values that are held in multicultural and multiethnic homes would be difficult and complicated. The Fathers of Confederation in 1867 tried to accommodate the minority English-speaking Protestants of Quebec and the French-speaking Catholics

in Upper Canada by entrenching their educational rights in the constitution. However, for Canada in the twenty-first century, the situation is much more complex.

Religious influence in public schools had been considered part and parcel of Canadian living for almost a hundred years, but if one looks at recent events in Ontario, perhaps a glimpse of the future of religion in public school in Canada may be seen. In the 1960's the cultural structure of the country changed. The baby boom produced a more youth-centred population that wanted to bring Canada in line with the "Hip Generation" of the more liberal post-war society. For some, religion with its rules and regulations did not fit well with the attitudes of the sixties. Rather than to teach about all faiths, it is much easier for public schools to teach no faith at all. Moreover, there are citizens who feel that religion should have a place in public schools.

Proponents of educating across religious boundaries, such as Boys, Lee, and Brass (1995), contend that studying other religions is a worthy academic process. Mezirow (1991) identified six advantages that are gained from learning about other faiths: an enhanced level of awareness of the context of one's own faith; a critique of other faith assumptions and premises; an assessment of alternative perspectives; an opportunity to change old perspectives and develop or synthesize new ones; the ability to act upon new revelations and insights; and finally an opportunity to bring new insights into a broader context. Lee (1995) states that a fear exists, that cross religious education may lead either to indoctrination of the student, or to the development of a blended faith.

Harmonization and homogenization of faiths is not what our society needs, for the result is religion, which neither challenges, nor gives meaning to life. If religion is to challenge our society's norms and to bring the sacred into the public realm, it must be rooted in religious sensibilities that are more than an extension of being a good American and a good person. Coming to grips with our own distinctiveness within the family of diverse religious communities is critical for contemporary

Jews. They will be able to appreciate that distinctiveness only in the quest for learning how we are different, not just what we share as religious people of conviction. That is the crucial task of educating across religious boundaries (Boys, Lee, and Bass, 1995, 267).

Some Protestants took for granted that Christianity would always be a part of their children's education, but it was never legally protected. Religious education was not entrenched in public schools as it was for Catholic schools. Catholics were originally given these rights because they were a minority in most of Canada. Protestants, who were and are the majority in this country, gained a reputation of being oppressors of minorities. The result is that some liberal Protestants refrained from acknowledging their faith out of fear that they would be labeled the oppressor once again. So great was this fear that many Protestants lost all reference to their faith in their schools (Boys, Lee, and Bass, 1995).

What has developed in parts of Canada, including Saskatoon, is that Catholic parents can choose either a secular education or a religious education for their children, both of which are fully publicly funded. Non-Catholic families do not have this choice.

If a religious-based education is important for non-Catholic parents in Saskatoon, they can no longer depend on the public school system to provide it as it once did. They must look for alternatives. For non-Catholic parents in the city the choices are available; however, they must weigh the strengths and weaknesses of them.

A Matter of Parental Choice

In Canada, non-Catholics who wish for a religious-based education for their children have several options available to them. Not all of following options are available to everyone and each comes with potential positive and negative aspects to them, yet some options do exist.

Choice A: Home schooling.

Home schooling is hardly a new concept. Some parents feel that schools are not an environment in which they want their children to grow and develop. For these parents, the problem with publicly funded schools is that they teach to the masses and all students are expected to follow a set path. Curriculum and educational policy are meant to move students at a set rate; the individual is often relegated secondary to the group. Parents who home school their children believe that they, personally, can do a better job. Home schoolers feel that they have more control over the content of what their children learn, the methods in which their children will be instructed, the people with whom their children will interact in a given school day, and the timing of what and when subjects will be taught (Colfax, D. & M. 1988). What is crucial for people who choose to home school is that the parents have full autonomy. They can control many more factors of their children's education. This control takes the primary role of parents as educators to its highest form.

Religious value-based education is easily implemented into home schooling. There is no fear of conflict in religion between school and home because school is home. Home schooling allows parents to instill all the values that they feel are important and at the same time fulfill the academic requirements established by provincial departments of education. Many advocates of home schooling believe that the home can be a more God-centered environment. Home schooling can easily teach the Bible and other sacred books without fear of reprisals. Parents are free to incorporate their heritage, church, and extended community in the educational lives of their children (Davis, 1991).

In 2000 the Saskatchewan Department of Education had 1686 Saskatchewan children registered as being home schooled (Saskatchewan Home-Based Educators, 2002). The obvious drawback about home schooling is that it is not an option for everyone. In spite of the fact that home schooling is virtually impossible for some families, it is growing in popularity. This may be due to a popular trend or it may reflect a growing dissatisfaction with the public systems (Davis, 1991).

Choice B: Independent schools.

Advocates of independent schools shun the term “private schools” because they feel that the term seems to imply exclusivity and preferential treatment. They prefer to define independent schools as schools that are not operated by a municipal school board. Independent schools may be autonomous from the provincial department of education and can be based on religious, cultural, philosophical, or pedagogical ideology (Hepburn, 1999). The advantage that parents find in independent schools is the element of choice. Independent schools allow parents to shop around; they can visit schools, see what they have to offer and make decisions much the same way a person researches before purchasing an automobile.

The Canadian Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) recommends independent schools that provide specialized parental choice of schools. The schools are expected to:

- Be non-profit institutions with elected boards of governors who are at arm’s-length from the daily operation of the school.
- Be schools, which set high standards of character and behaviour for their students, while providing outstanding academic preparation for university;
- Be inspected by CAIS prior to admission. They must also be inspected by the ministries of education in their respective provinces. Many members are also evaluated and accredited periodically by the Canadian Educational Standards Institute (CESI)

Be committed to educational excellence through professional teachers who deal with students and parents on a direct, personal level. Although particular programs and emphases will vary, all member schools must view education as including the intellectual, moral, physical and emotional development of each student. (Nowers and Bell, 1993).

Each province determines what expectation and policies must be in place for an independent school to be granted status.

The Saskatchewan Education Act allows for independent schools, but makes them answerable to the Minister of Education. The Act states:

Part VII, section 361(1)

The governing body of every private school or other educational institution which provides educational services to pupils in courses of instruction prescribed under this Act shall, when required by the Minister, furnish information in the department in such form as (the minister) may prescribe with respect to the pupils, teachers, curriculum of studies, facilities and equipment of that school or other educational institution. (Saskatchewan Education Act, 1995)

Independent schools have increased in numbers in the last decade. In 2000, Saskatchewan had 49 independent schools registered with the Federation of Independent Schools (FISC). These schools serve 3,910 students, which is only 1.98 percent of the school population of the province. This number is rather small compared to the Canadian average for students in independent schools of 5.76 percent (FISC, 2001).

Gary Duthers of the Federation of Independent schools has stated that many Christians from all over Canada have contacted him because they are disenchanted with their public schools (Sweet, 1997). Many of these families believe that public schools have been transformed from purveyors of Christian values to agents of secularism. If given a choice, these parents would prefer to send their children to school with their neighbourhood friends, but they believe that public schools, in attempting to not teach

one specific religion's values, not to teach any religion's values thus leaving a void in their children's education (Sweet, 1997).

Saskatchewan makes funding available for independent schools, but it is restricted to historical schools, associate schools, and alternative schools. Private independent schools receive no funding (*The Public Funding of Private Schools in Canada*, 1992).

Choice C: Vouchers.

Although not currently available in Saskatchewan, several American states, Denmark, Sweden, and New Zealand have provided an alternative to independent schools being entirely self-funded. They have developed educational vouchers (Hepburn, 1999). Vouchers are government monies that are made available to parents for the purpose of educating their children.

In the United States several jurisdictions have experimented with school vouchers, as have other European countries (West, 1996). Milwaukee is a notable example, although Cleveland and Florida have also implement similar programs. Milwaukee's program is directed towards low-income students and their families. One of the strongest arguments in favour of the voucher system is that it is beneficial for the poorer segment of the population. In many places, where students are required to attend schools according to their place of residence, there is little opportunity for students to enroll in better public schools in other locations, let alone to enroll in private schools. With Milwaukee's introduction of school vouchers, students in poverty-stricken areas of the city have the choice to attend the school of their choice (West, 1996). The premise

behind vouchers is that it makes independent schools more accessible to people who may not be able to afford full tuition for schools that would be their first choice.

Vouchers do not, at present, seem to be a popular option in Canada, nor is there much interest in granting any tax support for private schools. In May, 2001, the Ontario government researched the possibility of providing tax vouchers for parents who chose the independent school option. The government proposed that it would allow parents to use a portion of their children's tuition as a tax deduction in the provincial portion of their tax forms. In a June 4, 2001 reader's poll, *MacLean's* asked its readers, "Should there be a tax credit for enrolling in private school?" The readers responded 35 percent in favour, 65 percent opposed (MacLean's, 2001).

Although vouchers may not be as commonplace in Canada as they are elsewhere, many parents believe that publicly funded schools are not adequate and that the private sector offers more. This issue is contentious in both Canada and the United States.

Choice D: Charter or Associate Schools.

Another alternative to the public schools is charter or associate schools. Charter or associate schools are synonymous terms for schools that have a charter from, or a contract with, a sponsoring school board. The charter is a contract that details the purpose and mission of the charter school. It would include information such as programs taught, goals, who the schools serves, and methods of evaluation. Charters usually allow for sponsoring schools to have full access to the sponsored school such as using another school's facilities such as gymnasias or libraries. Charter school students can often participate in the school board's extracurricular activities. The charter schools are accountable to the sponsors and their charters are periodically reviewed and if the

sponsor is not satisfied the charter can be canceled. The proponents of charter schools have much in common with supporters of vouchers in that both involve parental choice as well as public funding (Hurlbert, 1996).

The advantage to parents of charter schools is that the charter gives the schools a degree of autonomy as well as accountability. Charter schools are similar to independent schools except that are totally or largely supported by tax dollars. Like independent schools, charter schools can pilot their own course. As far as religious value-based education is concerned, charter schools are free to incorporate whatever religious values the school and its community support.

The province of Alberta began to allow charter schools to be established in 1994. Shortly after Saskatchewan followed suit. Both Catholic and Public systems in Saskatoon prefer the use of the term “associate schools” for the schools with which they have established agreements. These associate schools are similar to charter schools in that parents originally established the schools and still provide school direction through a parent committee board. In the Saskatoon Public system an association was established with the Saskatoon Christian School in spring of 1999 and renewed in May of 2001. The Saskatoon Christian School is a Kindergarten to grade nine school that is interdenominational in character. It is operated under the direction of the Saskatoon Society for Christian Education as well as the Saskatoon Public School board from which it receives partial funding.

There is a dilemma for charter or associate schools in that they are accountable to the system that sponsors them. If public opinion so directs, there is a possibility that charter schools may be forced to conform to the public demands or lose public funding.

Agreement to comply could, in effect, turn the charter or associate schools into status quo public schools instead of the schools they were initially intended to be. In Ontario, the Sturgeon Creek Alternative Program, with its Christian centred curriculum came in conflict with its sponsor when the government changed the laws.

All of these educational alternatives have positives and problems associated with them. One concern is that home schooling and independent schools, whether privately funded or supported by charter or voucher, cater only to a select few. There is also concern among non public school supporters about the fate of students left behind to fend for themselves in publicly funded schools. Publicly funded schools are accountable to the public; the other options have considerably less accountability. Many parents favour this autonomy, but advocates for equality for all are concerned about the perceived elitist nature of such schools. Considering that religious value-based education is a significant reason for parents choosing home schooling and independent schools, a concern about separation of religion and state arises. This concern comes to the forefront when the question about funding for non-public schools is raised.

Choice E: Programs within Public School:

The Logos Alternative. Several Canadian communities, including the Saskatoon Public School Board, have looked into the possibility of providing a religious-based education for its students, while still providing for the needs of the general population of the school.

With some Christian parents disenchanted with public schools, alternatives must be available. In regard to religious education, some parents feel that a problem with attempting not to offend anyone has resulted in a feeling of alienation for the majority.

In September, 1996, the Edmonton Public Schools Board opened five schools that followed an interdenominational curriculum that they felt would address the concern of Protestant Christian parents who wanted religion included in its curriculum. The schools are called Logos, a Greek word meaning “The Divine Word.” Logos is an alternative program that offers a Christian perspective in the programs it teaches. Edmonton schools that offer the Logos program are not independent schools, nor are they charter or associate schools. Rather, they are public schools that offer a religious, Christian-based program. In Edmonton, Logos has grown to seven schools that offer its program from kindergarten to grade nine. In its curriculum, Logos follows the Alberta Program of Studies, but includes activities such as prayer, Bible readings, religious songs, and Christian assemblies. It encourages memorization of scripture but, being interdenominational, it does not include religious instruction as part of the program. The center of the Logos Alternative School is Christian education. Rather than trying to isolate students from other faiths, the program attempts to ground their students to understanding who they are and what they believe. In its mission statement Logos states: “That students taught in a spiritually nurturing, intellectually challenging and disciplined environment, acquire the knowledge, attitude, skills and training necessary to seek after ‘whatsoever things are true.’”(Logos Christian School Program, 2001)

Logos is exclusively Christian in nature. In its *Society Statement of Belief*, a definition of Logos schools, Logos identifies five basic principles of the schools (Logos, 2001). These principles first acknowledge that a loving God creates people. Second, the statement of belief acknowledges that there are certain fundamental truths such as the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes and that human behaviour should be modeled on

these truths. Third, it recognizes the nature of sin, the forgiveness of sins, and that people should be forgiving of others. Fourth, Logos states that people have been placed on this earth to serve God by serving others rather than for self-interest or personal pleasure. Finally, Logos states that God works in peoples' everyday lives and in people around them and that people should spend time with God in prayer (Logos, 2001).

The Edmonton Public system uses the Logos model as an attempt to keep Christian children in its schools, rather than to have parents who want religious education for their children to go out of the system to get it. In using the Logos model, Edmonton allows children the use of public schools and to interact with other public school students in the various school-sponsored activities such as sports and music. Christian teachers want to teach in a Christian environment, and who teach at Logos schools, are legally protected and can remain members of the Alberta Teachers' Association. The Edmonton School Board monitors the program and students are evaluated on core curriculum (Sweet, 1997). Of importance to many parents is that the public funding of the Logos program makes it accessible to everyone. On the other hand, tuition fees are charged by most independent and private schools and attendance in such schools is often limited to those families who can afford the additional cost.

In January 2001, after the events of the Halvorson Board of Inquiry that led to the banning of the Lord's Prayer from school assemblies, the Saskatoon Board of Education examined the Edmonton Logos Program, but chose not to go in that direction. While researching the program, the Saskatoon Public Division noted the events that occurred in the canceling of the Logos Program in Calgary. The first Logos Program in Canada was established in Calgary in 1979. In 1980, when the Calgary Board of Education was

approached to open a second Logos school, several issues of contention arose. There was concern about the equity of service and curriculum between the Logos school and the regular public schools. There were a number of trustees affiliated with Logos on the school board, and some trustees feared that Logos was getting preferential treatment. There was also concern about the hiring practices of teachers employed at Logos schools; although the teachers were part of the Calgary Public schools, Logos teachers were questioned about their religious philosophy in the interviews for Logos schools; a practice that did not occur in any other public school. These issues came to a head in the 1983 trustee election. After much debate during the election, the Calgary Board of Education chose to end their experiment with Logos schools. (Logos, 2001)

The problems associated with Calgary did not appear in Edmonton, nor have they appeared in the smaller Alberta communities of St. Albert and Sherwood Park where Logos schools have also been established.

As a result of the Halvorson Board of Inquiry, and of having had prayer and Bible readings legally challenged, the Saskatoon Public School Board examined its legal position carefully. The Saskatoon Public School Board's legal advice stated that the School Division had no legal basis upon which to incorporate religious instruction in a public school, with the exception of religiously based independent schools that have agreements with the Board of Education. In 1998 the School Division entered into an agreement with the Saskatoon Christian School. The school teaches a provincial curriculum in a Christian environment but, as an associate school, charges tuition fees. Legal advisors believed that it would be unconstitutional for the Saskatoon Public School Division to deviate from the limitations of beginning a day with prayer or to have

religious instruction one half hour previous to closing in the afternoon (Logos Christian School Program, 2001)

Also at issue would be the funding of Logos schools. Several Alberta divisions attempted to implement the Logos program without additional cost, but in every division additional expenditures were necessary. Transportation of students to these schools was estimated as the largest area for additional expenditure. The Saskatoon Public Division estimated that if they had to transport 100 students to a new school site the annual cost would be \$90, 000 (Logos Christian School Program, 2001). While the Saskatoon Christian School charges tuition fees, the Saskatoon Public School Division believed that charging parents for transportation might be challenged because it does provide free transportation for student taking other programs in the system. Another cost that the Saskatoon Division felt would be intrusive would be the inclusion of professional development of teachers and teacher associates who would be teaching in Logos schools as well as the acquisition of new Christian Library resources and other educational material that would be necessary for such schools. Consequently, the Logos Alternative was rejected.

At the heart of Saskatoon Public School Divisions reason for not adopting the Logos program was the issue of having religion in Public Schools at all. Having just been challenged in court, losing the case and being forced to pay the cost of the legal battle, the School Division was careful in its approach to taking on another potentially risky endeavor. The approach that was recommended was to look at programs in their system that did not necessarily identify one particular religion alone and at the same time not abandon spirituality in education. Citing Alison Taylor's article *Children, Go Where*

I Send You: Christian Programs in Alberta, the report on Logos Schools suggested to the Saskatoon Division that “the challenge is therefore to develop alternatives that help children and adults to respond to the impact of societal changes, that contribute to intercultural and interreligious understanding, and that promote education which recognizes the complexity and multifaceted character of human experience” (Logos Christian School Program, 2001.)

For non-Catholic parents who want a Christian education for their children the choices were limited by the Board’s decision not to adopt the Logos Program, nor to examine any other religious specific program. Although they could send their children to the alternative Christian school, tuition fees and transportation costs would be an issue for many.

World Religions 30: A Locally Developed Course. In May, 2001, after investigating the Logos Alternative, the Saskatoon Public School Board looked at another possible alternative. The Logos Alternative did not fit into the recommendations that came from the Justice Halvorson Board of Inquiry and the Human Rights Commission; so the board looked at establishing its own program that would allow religion to be taught with a multicultural emphasis. The result was the World Religions 30 pilot program.

The recommendation of the Public Board was to offer a grade 12 elective class that would study World Religions. The aim and rationale of the course was to provide for study of religion, but not to sponsor the practice of religion. It is also intended to expose students to a number of religious views, but not impose any particular view (World Religions 30, May, 2001).

The recommended program would look at world religions in four units: (1) Religion: Examining the Characteristics; (2) Religion: Origins, Development, Teachings, and Beliefs; (3) Religion: Practices and Rituals; (4) Religion: Its Influence on Society.

The proposed World Religions 30 course is strictly an academic class that may be offered to public high school students. Although the students are encouraged to “celebrate their differences” the course would not actually allow the students to express their religious differences through prayer and worship. For proponents of a religious-based education this course would fall well below their expectations. The proposed World Religion course does not study religion; it is studying “about” religion.

Choice F: The Catholic Option.

The matter of parental choice may occasionally move in a variety of directions. In Saskatoon there exists a Public and Separate Catholic system, each with a number of elementary and high schools. Each system has a few associate (charter) schools available. The city also has an independent French school and a number of independent (private) elementary schools.

If non-Catholic parents wish to send their children to a school that is based on religious values, the options are limited. As far as high school options are concerned, there exist only two options. In Saskatoon there is one private Christian high school. High school students enrolled in that school have to write provincial departmental exams in order to qualify for entrance into university. The only other choice for parents who wish for religious based value education is to choose a separate high school.

The Catholic option is appealing to some parents for several reasons. Separate schools provide an education based on Christian values, but with two unique points; they

are evangelical and at the same time ecumenical. Although Catholic schools are, by definition, Catholic and preach Catholic doctrine and encourage evangelization, they are also ecumenical and open to dialogue with other religions. Pope John Paul II has called upon Catholics and especially Catholic schools to find what common ground they have not only with other Christian communities, but also with other religions.

From the beginning, Christian Revelation has viewed the spiritual history of man as including, in some way, all religions, thereby demonstrating the unity of humankind with regard to the eternal and ultimate destiny of man. The Council (Vatican II) document speaks of this unity and links it with the current trend to bring humanity closer together through the resources available to our civilization. The Church sees the promotion of unity as one of its duties: There is one community and it consists of all peoples (John Paul II, 1994).

It is, therefore, not merely a pleasant gesture, but the duty of Catholics and Catholic schools to be open to dialogue with members of the whole community, Christian and non-Christian alike, and to share the message, which Catholics believe, was meant for all humanity.

The Church precisely because it is Catholic is open to dialogue with other Christians, with the followers of non-Christian religions, and also with all people of good will, as John XXIII and Paul VI frequently said. *Lumen Gentium* explains convincingly and in depth the meaning of "people of good will." The Church wants to preach the Gospel together with all who believe in Christ. It wants to point out all the paths to eternal salvation, the fundamental principles of life in the Spirit and in truth (John Paul II, 1994).

Of special concern for Catholics is the concept of ecumenism. Ecumenism is explained in a document of the Second Vatican Council (1964).

The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided. [1] Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature. DECREE ON

ECUMENISM UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO Proclaimed By His Holiness,
Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964 Introduction 1.

Furthermore, John Paul II expanded on the topic of Christian unity and called for sharing of the common word.

Peter's task is to search constantly for ways that will help preserve unity (among Christians). It therefore must not create obstacles, but must open paths. Nor is this in any way at odds with the duty entrusted him by Christ: "strengthen your brothers in faith". (Luke 22:32) (John Paul II, 1994)

Saskatoon's Catholic schools appear to have embraced the concept of ecumenism in opening its doors to non-Catholics who wish to share the belief in God and the Word of God. For many non-Catholic parents, the Catholic option is welcome in that it is publicly funded and allows for a religious based education. The choice may be between having to listen to a Catholic interpretation of doctrine or to listen to no doctrine at all.

Concerns About the Catholic School Option. All parents who choose to send their children to Catholic schools are made aware of the expectation Catholic schools make about mandatory religious study and participation in liturgy. In regard to non-Catholics who choose to send their children to Catholic schools, specific policies are in place to promote the Catholic faith and may therefore inhibit admission of non-Catholic students. A 1994 study found that all but one separate school division in Saskatchewan had provisions for allowing non-Catholic to attend Catholic schools. Several school boards have put limitations on the percentage of non-Catholic students who may attend, and non-Catholic can be refused admission (Jelinski, 1994). A consistent policy involves non-Catholic parents signing a declaration that indicates the parents support the expectations of the school. Some policies even contained a protocol regarding the legal status of non-Catholic parents regarding such issues as taxation and election procedures.

Consistent with all Catholic schools, once a non-Catholic student was admitted to a Catholic school he or she was expected to take a Christian Ethics class as well as to participate in liturgies and other religious activities that are a part of the school day (see page 52). The policies are not meant as means of conversion of non-Catholics. Many schools still expect non-Catholics to participate in classes preparing for sacraments such as communion, reconciliation, and confirmation, but they are not allowed to receive those sacraments. The classes are taught as part of the religion program in elementary schools (Jelinski, 1994).

The rationale that Jelinski (1994) found for many Catholic administrators admitting non-Catholics into their schools was that the administrators felt the parents had a sincere interest in a Catholic education for their children. Jelinski's research ended there; no means of gauging the sincerity of the parents was undertaken.

When in-school administrators were asked what benefits admitting non-Catholics to their schools, they cited such positives as helping reconcile Christian denominations and appreciating each other's differences. They felt it promoted tolerance and understanding of others; it increased the opportunity for introduction to the Catholic faith, and it assisted families in faith development (Jelinski, 1996).

The High School Twist

In the Saskatoon Catholic system, when students move from elementary schools to high schools they are registered into their programs. For most grade nine students their programs are relatively simple. They are given options such as taking General Fine Arts or Band, French or other Language Arts and Industrial Arts or Home Economics. The rest of their classes are mandatory. They need two English or Language Arts,

Mathematics, Science, History, Physical Education, and a General Practical Arts as well as Christian Ethics. As the students move to higher grades the number of optional classes change, but mandatory Christian Ethics remains a constant. For students who require senior matriculation for further study, the mandatory Christian Ethics poses an interesting problem. Although many post-secondary programs in Saskatchewan allow grade twelve Christian Ethics to be used as an alternative grade for entrance, none consider it a compulsory class. In all of the mainstream high schools in Saskatoon Catholic schools, the prestigious honour roll of the respective schools require a grade in Christian Ethics in determining the roll; therefore, the compulsory Christian Ethics class plays a rather significant role in Saskatoon Catholic High Schools.

For non-Catholics attending Catholic high schools the expectations for them are the same as Catholic students.

In Saskatoon Catholic high schools the policy states:

Non-Catholic children whose parents or guardians reside in Saskatoon will be permitted to register providing:

- a) They meet age and academic requirements for admission.
- b) Their parents or guardians complete the necessary documentation indicating that their children will participate in the formal religious instruction offered at the school (Saskatoon Catholic Board of Education, 1982)

Although some administrators of Catholic schools may be concerned about non-Catholics in Catholic schools, Pope John Paul II's views are clear. In an address April 28, 2001, to participants in an international meeting sponsored by the European Committee for Catholic Education, the Pope indicated that schools that are clearly Catholic but also welcome non-Catholic students make a concrete contribution to the building of peace. He stated that the job of the Catholic school is to offer an education "which allows the young not only to acquire human moral and spiritual maturity, but also

to see how they can work effectively for the transformation of society.” The Pope was clear that schools are mandated to help their students and their societies. Catholic schools are to offer a truly Catholic education; one “proposing a Christian vision of the person and the world, which offers youth the possibility of a fruitful dialogue between faith and reason” (John Paul II, 2001). Finally, the Pope identified the teachers in Catholic schools as important, in that Catholic teachers must witness through their lives the truth that Christ exists and that he is the most solid base for hope.

Summary

For Catholic families in Saskatoon, a religious or secular education is readily available to them, but for non-Catholic families the choices are rather limited. If non-Catholic families wish a religious-based education for their children, they can choose to home school or send their child to an independent religious school. Both of these options are costly to the family, both financially and in personal commitment. There is a religious-based associated school in Saskatoon, but it is only available to elementary students and is only partially funded. Saskatchewan does not have education vouchers available for parents so that all can afford independent schools, but even if it had, many independent religious-based schools are not located in Saskatoon; therefore families would have to be committed to having their children educated in a different town or city. What remains an option for many non-Catholic parents are Catholic schools. Like all the other choices available to non-Catholic parents, the choice of the Catholic option comes with many conditions and personal sacrifices, yet a significant number of parents choose this option. The reasons for those who chose the Catholic option have never really been fully investigated.

Chapter Three

STUDY DESIGN

Introduction

This chapter describes the design of the model used to gather the opinions and observations of a sample of non-Catholic parents who are sending their children to Saskatoon Catholic high schools. It explains the methods used in selecting the respondents and the questions that were asked of them.

The Current Situation Involving Non-Catholics in Saskatoon Catholic High Schools

Saskatoon separate schools have a policy in place that allows non-Catholic to attend their schools; there are no limits to the number of non-Catholics who wish to attend. The schools do not charge fees for non-Catholic parents who choose the Catholic option, but there are conditions attached. The policy states that the students must be academically eligible, as well as asks the parents to provide documentation that indicates the students will fully participate in religious instruction and services (see page 52).

The document that parents or guardians are required to sign states:

“I agree to have my child attend a Catholic school and to meet all the enrolment requirements including participation in the regular Catechetical courses”. (Appendix C)

Although there may be no financial cost associated with non-Catholics attending Catholic schools, the personal cost is significant. Non-Catholic parents who choose the Catholic option must allow their children to be exposed to Catholic teaching and ideology. The teaching is Christian, but it is specifically Catholic. In Catholic schools, students and staff are exposed to Catholic instruction, prayers, and liturgies. Saskatoon Catholic high schools require that all students take a compulsory Christian Ethics class in

each grade. Yet, despite these conditions, there are a significant number of non-Catholic parents who choose to send their children to Catholic high schools

The Problem

The reasons that non-Catholic parents may have for sending their children to a Catholic high school are as unique as the people themselves. Each family's background is different, but the reasons for a parent's choice for the Catholic option are not probed as a part of the schools' entrance process, nor are any follow-up done. There are many possible reasons why these parents may choose the Catholic option: the school's proximity to home, academic or extracurricular programs offered, school size, and others. However, it has been the researcher's observation that there is a significant number of parents who choose the Catholic option based on their personal religious values; they expect that Catholic schools will support them in their desire for a religious education.

Other factors may be issues such as selective programs available in only certain schools or parents/family financial restrictions that would prevent transportation to the school of their choice. The question in this study is to ascertain the reasons the non-Catholic parents had for choosing a Catholic school for their children. If a religious-based education important to the parents, it would be significant to discover what religious values the parents hope to have reinforced in Saskatoon Catholic high schools. The problem is that Catholic schools have expectations of what classes students (Catholic and non-Catholic alike) are expected to take and that students are expected to participate in the religious life of the school, but there has been no attempt to ask parents what they feel about these expectations.

The Design

In order to actually listen to what parents had to say about their choice of a Catholic high school, it was determined that the best approach be a case study. A case study involves a researcher meeting with an individual or group (cases) and documenting what or how they feel about a certain issue (Stake, 1994). The advantage that a case study had is that it allows the researcher to observe individuals and listen to these families' stories. Case studies can go deeply into the individual and personal points of view of parents and listen to their reasons, opinions, and feelings about the importance of religious values and education (Stake, 1994). This study examined the reasons non-Catholic parents have for choosing to send their children to Catholic high schools. The respondents were selected based on their opportunity to choose between a public and a separate Catholic high school. Choice and the reason for the choice is the phenomenon examined (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

The interview questions reflect this issue (see page 60). The methodology is an instrumental case study that examines the respondents' insight into the issue and finds any generalizations that may be evident (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The actual design has its origins in mathematics concept suggested in Gleck's *Chaos: Making a New Science* (1987). What exists is parents who want something for their children – a religious education. What results is the parents choosing a Catholic high school. Somewhere, in between what parents want and what parents choose, are “Strange Attractors” that draw the problem to the solution (Gleick, 1987)

When looking for a high school for their child(ren), parents start with the values that are important to their family. This study investigated at the parents and their family

values. Who are the parents? What do they value? What do they want for their children? In choosing a high school, do they look at what schools have to offer? What exactly attracts various families to a Catholic school may be as diverse as the families themselves.

After parents have experienced a Catholic high school, they can evaluate how and if the school reinforces what the family understands in its own religion (Strommen & Stommen, 1985). They can reflect on the signs and symbols of their faith, their culture, what they believe to be moral living, and if (and how) these are reinforced in Catholic high schools.

To examine answers to these questions, parents needed to be allowed to use their own vocabulary to express their opinions (Leenders & Erskine, 1978). The interview questions guided the family to explore how their religious values compare to the policies, environment, programs, and religious values of Catholic high schools. Parents were asked their opinions of the policy Catholic high schools had in regard to non-Catholics having to participate in compulsory Christian Ethics classes and Catholic worship. They were also asked questions about their perception of the school environment and its programs as well as the religious values the school taught and how those values compared to their own values. The families' religious background as well as their understanding of the symbolic nature of religion, their personal culture, their life style, and their beliefs influenced the answers to all of these questions.

Selection of the Respondents

Because the research involved human subjects (cases) it was first necessary to get the approval from the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Committee. After

ethical concerns were addressed, parents from Holy Cross, E.D. Feehan, St. Joseph, and Bishop James Mahoney High Schools were solicited and interviewed. The reason for choosing these four schools because they are mainstream schools; other than education based on Catholic religious values, they do not offering specialized programs that may attract students from the public system. Secondly they all have public high schools in the near vicinity so choice is an option. A sample of parents² with children from all high school grades was included. There was no attempt to restrict the choice of parents to those with only one child. Parents with a single child or children in several grades were surveyed in this study.

The first step was to find out who might qualify as appropriate respondents. With the approval of Saskatoon Catholic School Board, the researcher contacted the principals of the four Catholic high schools and asked if they could identify two families from each school. Often with the aid of the school chaplains and Christian Ethics department, the schools came up with a list of potential candidates for the study.

Parents who had indicated on the registration as being non-Catholic qualified. Parents were defined as mother, father, or both. Finally, the choice of school must have been made by a personal choice based on religious values. Only parents who chose the Catholic option based on religious values were included. These families were identified for the researcher by the principals who were privy to such knowledge. Parents who sent their children to Catholic high schools for reasons other than for religious values were excluded.

The researcher solicited the parents by telephone and informed them of the nature of the research and the type of questions the selected parents would be asked. Once they agreed to be a part of the study arrangements were made to meet and discuss the issues.

Identification of the Respondents

Eight parent units participated in the study. A parent unit was defined as any parent or parents who were non-Catholic and who chose the Catholic option. The parent units were mother and father, or they were a single parent, or a non-Catholic parent who was responsible for choosing the Catholic option for their children. For the purpose of this study no names are to be used. When necessary, such as in citing direct quotations, each case is identified as Family A, Family B, and so on. No distinction is made between a couple and a single parent. Neither is a distinction made between a single child family and a multi-child family.

The parents all resided in Saskatoon or the surrounding area. An interesting note was that half of the families' children traveled a significant distance, passing several other schools to get to their school of choice.

Before the parents were interviewed there were two notable observations, the first of which was evident when attempting to get possible subjects from the high schools. Each participating high school's computer database was capable of identifying students registered in their school who indicated being non-Catholic. It was interesting to observe the reaction of principals and other teaching staff to the compiled list. While some principals and teachers were aware of whom the non-Catholic students were, for the most part, being a non-Catholic was not a visible factor in Saskatoon Catholic high schools.

A second interesting and unexpected finding that emerged during the selection process was the ease of obtaining participants for the study. In each high school the principal and participating teachers made several recommendations as to who might fit the criteria of the study. Eight cases were needed for the study; the first eight contacted parents enthusiastically agreed to participate.

Methods and Procedures

Once the parents agreed to be interviewed, the researcher met with them in their homes. Because the researcher was looking for the personal story of the parents, it was necessary that they felt at ease to speak (Seidman, 1998). The interviews were recorded on audiotape, notes were taken, and transcripts were made.

The Interview Questions

Parents were asked to express their feelings and impressions on several issues based on the interview questions. The questions were designed to gather information on the following issues:

- 1) How important was it for them as parents to be given a choice of religious education?
- 2) How did they feel about the Saskatoon Catholic schools' policy that mandated compulsory religious education for their children, as well as how they felt about signing documentation to that effect?
- 3) Did they have any experience with the public system, and if so, did they notice any difference between the general environment of the two systems, and more specifically, did they notice a difference between the physical environments? If they noticed a difference they were asked to comment about what they observed.

- 4) What did they feel about the religious program in which their children were being educated? Specifically, they were asked how they felt about their children having to take compulsory Christian Ethics.
- 5) How did they feel about their children being exposed to the Catholic interpretation of curriculum issues?
- 6) How did their beliefs, ways of worship, and ideals of a moral lifestyle compared to what their children were being taught in Catholic high schools, and did they feel they were being supported by the Catholic school their children attended?
- 7) Were there any unexpected positive or negative experiences in the children's Catholic high school education, and what were the unique contributions of Catholic high schools?
- 8) What did they feel a publicly funded high school would be like if they were allowed to create their own public school?

When the researcher came into each of these families' homes it was rare that it was even necessary to ask the questions. Often during the interview, once the parents were asked the first question they proceeded to answer it and the other seven as well. The respondents were eager and more than willing to volunteer their opinions. They all commented that they were pleased to have someone hear their stories. Many of the parents made similar observations; therefore, in the following chapter, which reports the findings, rather than duplicating similar responses, the researcher chose just one example to cite directly. What follows are the observations based on the opinions and comments of the eight families.

Chapter Four

THEIR VOICES HEARD: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter examines the phenomenon of non-Catholic parents who choose to send their children to Catholic high schools in Saskatoon. The purpose of this chapter is to listen to what these parents had to say about why they chose Catholic high schools, the reasons they had for their choice, and how they felt about their decision. Stories are a way of knowing (Seidman, 1998); by allowing non-Catholic parents to tell their stories it is possible to get an understanding of what these parents saw as the benefit of choosing the Catholic option and how they felt about their choice. The questions were designed to examine if non-Catholic parents believe that Catholic schools are supporting them in the religious education of their children. This chapter allows the reader to share the stories of several families who consciously chose the Catholic option for their children based on the religious dimension of the Catholic schools.

Disclaimer

At this point it is important to note that the respondents made a conscious choice of the Catholic high school and that a definite bias is in effect. The researcher acknowledges that there are many other parents and children who choose the public high school system for many valid reasons. The researcher acknowledges the importance and professionalism of the Saskatoon public schools. It is not the intent of this thesis to pit one school system against the other, nor to paint one as superior to the other. The parents' opinions reflect their personal observations and reasons for choosing the Catholic system, and they therefore state their personal bias. If a parallel study were done to show why some Catholic parents chose the public school system for their

children, there might easily be equally valid findings indicating those parents' preference for the public system over the Catholic system.

Findings

After interviewing the families, the researcher went through the notes and audiotapes of the interviews. What follows is an analysis of the common observations and statements made by the families. Often the families gave similar responses, rather than repeating them, generalities are reported.

Choice

Consistent among all parents were the appreciation of having a choice as to which school they sent their children. Several of the parents were new to Saskatoon; others had lived in Saskatoon for some time. Those who were new to the city were pleased with their freedom to choose between separate schools and public schools. Every one of the families indicated that it was important that they could choose a school with a religious educational base.

Having the ability to choose between one (high school) that has morals, that has a set of rules that is more in line with what we want to teach our children is very important. Being Christian, having a little study of the Bible doesn't hurt anybody and gives them a good background for their moral and spiritual beings. That was very important for us. (Family A)

One family (Family C) had had experience in both the public system and a private Christian school. The parent wanted a Christian education for the child and felt that the cost of tuition and transportation to a private Christian school was inhibitory.

A number of families stressed the importance of making choices for children who were too immature to make such choices on their own.

It was important for me that they (my children) were taught the values of how to live life, rather than allowing them to make whatever choice they felt like. This is what you need to do.” (Family D)

It was our choice because they were too young when we made the choice... We liked the Catholic system. It is very important to have a choice. We could see the different types of school systems and we believed the values were better (in Catholic schools). Maybe the schools were smaller in some instances, but we just liked the way they ran things. (Family H)

Policy

None of the families expressed any negative concern about the policy that Catholic schools have requiring children in their schools to take religious instruction and participate in Masses and other liturgies. Rather, the non-Catholic parents interviewed were in favour of the policy and supported it. Not all parents remembered having to sign documentation stating that they agreed to the policy, but all understood the necessity of such a policy and documentation.

The parents believed that the policy was good because it included all students and avoided a “we/they mentality” (Family A). They recognized the necessity of the document that they, as non-Catholics, were expected to sign.

Family B was aware of the policy and felt that “it was a plus.” They were happy with the student handbook that the child brought home. The handbook contained school philosophies, policies, and programs, but what impressed the family was that it had a school prayer and other prayers in it, and it indicated that students would learn about Jesus. The parents were “very happy about that.”

Others were equally pleased:

(The policy) was perfectly fine with me. We (the family and Catholic schools) are not complete strangers in what we believe. We have a lot of common ground

between what Catholicism believes. Because of the closeness in those beliefs I did not feel in any way compromised in what I was teaching. I felt I had the support of the school from a “God matters; God has a point of view; God has something to say about things”. (Family C)

I think it’s great. I have no problem with it. Of course there are some differences in our beliefs, but when you get down to the basics, I believe they are much the same. There is more the same than there is difference. (Family D)

The parents’ attitude towards the policy demonstrated an understanding of ecumenism, both from the Catholic and non-Catholic perspective. Rather than concentrating on the difference the two faiths had, both the school and home emphasized the importance of sharing the common faith.

In regard to having to sign documentation agreeing to the policy, one parent stated:

It wasn’t an issue. When I do things like this (signing the document), I try to see it through the eyes of the kids. The parts that would probably be of most concern would be how they (the children) felt if they were left out. If they wanted to participate and came home and were told that they couldn’t because they were non-Catholic - that would bother me. There are some things that they can’t participate in (like communion) when they go to church, but it’s okay. (Family D)

I am in total agreement. I feel that if we are joining a specific religious program then, if we want to be effective, we must follow their curriculum and do what ever is expected. (Family E)

Only one family pointed out that the policy and documentation might have a detrimental side to it.

Maybe in some ways you feel that you are different from others and you are the one who has to sign. But then again, if you are a non-Catholic and going into their school it’s okay. That (participation) is what I expect of my child anyway. (Family H)

The document that Family H referred to was signed when the students were first registered into the separate school they chose. What is also notable about the document

indicating whether the student is Catholic or non-Catholic is that it does not seem to have an effect on how the student is seen or treated by others in the school. In trying to find respondents to participate in the study, the administrators and teachers had to search these records. They seemed to be unaware of who were the non-Catholics in their schools, which shows that often non-Catholics are not a visible minority.

The Environment

All of the parents had experience with public schools and some also had experience with private schools. Most of the parents commented that the physical environment³ of Catholic schools is easily recognizable. Not only do most Catholic high schools have names that identify them as Catholic, but the schools are also filled with religious art and symbols. Only Family B indicated that they really didn't notice any physical difference between public and separate Catholic high schools; however, they did notice a significant difference in the general environment.

Consistent among all parents was that they felt that the general environment of Catholic schools was different from public schools. The parents indicated that the environment of Catholic schools is effected by the religious values that are taught.

(The religious art) keeps it (religion) in head. It keeps it in mind. You look at these signs and symbols and think, "Look at what this man (Jesus) did for you". In public schools it is not advocated or allowed.

There is an expectation level that is a lot higher at the Catholic schools, that you will be respectful of others, friends and family, your peers and teachers and property. You will be more respectful of what is there. (Family A)

Absolutely, icons and crucifixes, prayers, much of the art; it was very significant (student) art. If I were still (a member of a non-Catholic group that has problems with physical religious works of art) some of that, like the crucifixes might grate on me slightly. But I think that many (non-Catholics) are desperate enough that

they will overlook the things that may have slight differences of opinion because they want the moral perspective. I am certainly happier to see (such things). I think the more visual things that we have around us (is positive). Kids take it in. Just the fact that it is there will have a positive influence. (Family E)

The parents believed that the physical environment of the schools had a definite effect on the general environment of the school. They believed that what their children saw and heard about religion determined how they treated one another in the schools.

Generally, I feel that (the Catholic high school) has a very positive environment. I know that that doesn't exempt it from the same (negative) elements that exist in other high schools. But you have a predominant group and a tone and atmosphere. I would say that the tone and atmosphere is very positive, very inclusive. It is accepting of different interests, different pursuits; different ideas. It has been an excellent place for my child. (Family C)

In Catholic schools there is more cohesiveness, more togetherness. Teachers can pray with their classes. They can celebrate with religious ceremonies. The environment is intelligent and is well thought out and is a definition of what Catholic schools should be. For example at graduation there were many Biblical references and a strong focus on the Bible. (Family G)

I think it (the environment) is positive. (The schools promote) Christian values and that kind of thing. Kids are expected to behave better. I really like the religious connotations, like in special occasions like Lent. For a lot of kids this is the only time when they get it. If they don't go to church it is the only time that they get a lot of that education. I think it lends richness to schooling. (Family H)

Several parents believed that it was the religious environment of Catholic schools that marked the difference between separate and public high schools.

I believe that it all starts with prayer.

Being that I was in a public school (seeing) some one wearing a cross or even mentioning God was just . . . right away you would be shunned like you were not one of the cool kids. You just don't belong. I find it really interesting that when these kids get together that they can talk about things and they are very comfortable because it (faith) is a part of their life. Not only their home life but at school.

When I first became a Christian, it was really hard to admit it, but kids talk about it on a day-to-day basis. It's just there. That's not to say that every person who goes to a Catholic school is Christian either. I'm not naïve either. But when you hear kids talking about things, at least they're open to it. (Family D)

Removing prayer from (public) schools has opened up more tolerance to everything, including violence. (Family B)

Program

In Catholic high schools in Saskatoon all students are required to take a Christian Ethics class in each grade. All of the parents interviewed felt that this policy was a good idea. In fact, for most of the parents, religious instruction was the reason why they wanted their children in the schools. None of the parents complained about losing an elective possibility. They believed that compulsory Christian Ethics was a positive element of Catholic education.

The parents were glad that the class was compulsory. Some felt that their child would probably not have taken it otherwise.

We want (our child) to be exposed to the different kinds of thought processes around religion (taught) in Christian Ethics. I have thought this as a plus.

We saw through (the elder child who attended a public school) some of the deterioration of the school system. The so called "norms and values" that are supposedly pushed through the public school system go against what a lot of people believe. I think the minority is forcing their values on everyone else. I was quite happy when (the child) decided to go to a Catholic school because there was still prayer and I wanted (the child) to be in a school where there is prayer because I feel that it is very, very important. (Family B)

We have incredible discussions around the kitchen table about the (Christian Ethics classes). And there are debates. It doesn't always mean we agree, but it is great conversation. (Family D)

What is taught in the school is an extension of what we as parents taught and believe. (Family G)

(In Christian Ethics classes) you have a chance to answer questions, express your feelings. It's just valuable from that aspect. (Family H)

Catholic Interpretation

The parents were asked how they felt about the fact, that in Catholic schools, there would be a Catholic interpretation of all elements of education. The parents were all aware of this. All of the families agreed with the interpretation of most things, but acknowledged that in some instances they held significantly different positions. The parents anticipated that they could deal with the differences at home in discussions. They strongly believed that there was more in common than in conflict, and that being exposed to Catholic interpretation was better than no religious interpretation at all. Most of the families indicated because there may have been some differences in the way the family understood an issue and the teachings of the Catholic high school on that issue, it brought the family together for discussion.

I am so glad that they are exposed to it because that is the way I feel. They are against abortion, and I am against abortion. There are so many things that I believe that they are taught. They come home and talk about it. Interesting enough each night when we come together at the supper table and we ask them, "What did you learn today?" Most of the time it is something religious. One or two will come up with, "In Christian Ethics today we learned . . ."

It didn't matter that if what my children were taught had a Catholic slant to it. When they came home and we would talk about what they learned today, I would ask them, "What do you think about that?" And we would talk about it. (Family A)

You are showing kids that there are choices. Here is the information. You analyze it and you decide whatever works best, or whatever you think is best. The more that kids, at an early age, can learn that there is a power out there to help them through and the more that it is intertwined in other subjects, the better. We try to figure out where Catholic teaching comes into play, and what we believe. (Family D)

What is taught in school has less to do with denomination and more to do with the Bible and ethics. Most of what is taught is quite similar to what we believe.
(Family G)

One of the families (F) was more in conflict with the teachings of the Catholic schools than were any of the children. The parent expressed a different understanding of Saint Mary and the other saints. She felt more personally at odds with some issues, but fully supported what the school was teaching the children because the children accepted and believed it. Another family considered the conflicts that might exist between their church and Catholic teaching as easier to tolerate than what their children would be exposed to in secular schools.

Some of the issues regarding the Virgin Mary may have been the only bit of contention of disagreement. I look at it this way. If I were in a public school, I would have to discuss many more issues that we were in disagreement. Here, I have far more in common. It is good that at home we should discuss what we think differently. Why we think differently. It still cultivates respect for other people's beliefs. (Family E)

Prayer, Worship, and Moral Living

The question on Catholic interpretation asked the families to indicate if there were any conflicts between their personal beliefs and the beliefs of the Catholic high schools. Parents were then asked to identify any conflicts between the methods of worship in Catholic high schools and what the schools taught and modeled as proper moral living. Some differences between parents' personal methods of prayer and worship were noticeable. Coming from many different denominations, the families had different religious traditions. Not all prayed regularly nor formally, but all agreed with the importance of prayer and their children being allowed and encouraged to pray at school. Not all students' families attended liturgies or religious services in their respective

churches or communities, but they all believed that attending liturgies and Masses in school was good for their children. There were many interpretations as to what is a good and moral lifestyle, but all parents felt that their children should be taught about what is right and what is wrong.

Prayer. All parents in the study recognized the importance of prayer in the educational life of their children. There was no consensus as to what type or style of prayer was better suited in an educational environment, but all parents accepted the fact that at a Catholic school, Catholic prayers were used.

To me that's important to have that as a part of your life. Whereas, in the other school system, they wouldn't even mention about thinking about anyone else. In class (the child) would tell me how they prayed for other students, and pray for people with problems. They were asked to think about other people. The other thing I like was that (the child) had to do volunteer work for other groups and organizations. (The child) had to work with handicapped people and children. He would never have done that on his own. (Family B)

I believe so (that the children are supported in their prayer life) because when you have celebrations, which is something that not all religions do, including mine. Sometimes we forget to have celebrations and get together for them and not just the hard moments. It seems that the school has a lot of celebrations and during the celebrations they pray. (Family D)

It is tragic that in the public schools they have eliminated the Lord's Prayer. I believe that any kind of prayer will most likely enhance their moral choices in life. Some more than others depending on how open they are to it. Prayer is vital. It makes us connected to God. (Family E)

They (the Catholic schools) are much more ecumenical. We are very pleased about that. It gives (the child) the opportunity of expression in prayer. In the public schools they allow nothing in regard to any type of prayer. (Family G)

Even in things like sports. I'm glad to see that prayer is there. (Family H)

Worship. As with prayer, the parents in the study had different opinions as what they personally understood and accepted as their form of worship. The parents did, however, recognize that Catholic liturgies and Masses would be practiced in Catholic high schools and that their children would participate them. At best the parents viewed participation in Catholic worship as the opportunity for their children to worship God in a community of believers. At worst, it was viewed as a chance to observe how others (Catholics) worshipped.

That's part of the curriculum (participation in Masses and liturgies). That is what is expected. I trust the Catholic school system would not do anything that would mentally, physically, or spiritually damage my children. (Family A)

The basis of the preaching is the same (as ours). So long as the services are keeping with the Bible then that's what is important. It is a time when (the child) can have some personal reflection. (Family B)

There is something about the traditions of the Catholic Church, which is quite honorable. It is important to have traditions. (Family D)

I'm happy that they (Catholic high schools) do not insist on them (the children) taking Communion. That is a personal choice. It is sad that it has to be that way, but rather than looking at it as an exclusion, I think it should remind us of the brokenness of the church. It would be a wonderful thing if all of us as Christians could be united. (Family E)

Moral Living. All parents recognized that education is the starting point of moral education. Some had definite opinions on issues such as sexuality, abortion, and homosexuality. Some of them disagreed with the Catholic Church's stand on the issues, but all were pleased that such issues that dealt with moral living were discussed and taught in Catholic schools. They were also in favour of education taking an approach where it taught definite values and beliefs in right and wrong.

Education is the ability, the power, to make good decisions. The background of knowledge that you get from the moral stories, those teachings, gives an avenue of defense against peer pressure that is constantly upon them. So they can stand up and go in the opposite direction and not have to follow the herd. They can be the shepherds. Be the leader. (Family A)

Personal accountability, integrity, honesty, respect for other people's property, respect for other people. To consider (the child's) ways. I find that very commendable in the Roman Catholic system. I stick my nose in (the child's) work. When we were just beginning our exposure to the Catholic system I was very interested in what he was learning in religious studies because I was so unfamiliar with Catholic teaching. (Family C)

God is vital to our lives and a necessary part of life not to be ignored or thought about only on rare occasions like marriage, baptism and death. Sex education is important. I know that the Catholic schools certainly teach sex from a marriage perspective, which is very important to me. I'm quite pleased with their whole handling of the gay issue. They don't bash gays, but they say if you are of that inclination you still have to live a chaste life. (I've appreciated the) assignments regarding abortion, alcoholism, some different assignments (were impressive when) they had to do research on scripture. (The schools emphasize) honesty, the basic values, truthfulness, acceptance of others, tolerance, and respect. (Family E)

(They teach) the importance of God and their fellow man, respect for them. To never lose hope and that they would know that there is always some place to go for help. Just to be good people. (*Family H*)

Family G taught their children about living a moral lifestyle by "promoting service to the rest of the body (the community.)" They felt they modeled things such as moderation and talked openly about important moral issues. They tried to live by Biblical principles. The family hoped that the Catholic school would "reinforce Christian values. All of the above. It is not just the motions; it is lifestyle."

Unexpected Positive, Negative, and Unique Contributions

Since none of the parents had ever attended a Catholic high school themselves, most often identified some unexpected experiences. These positives and unique contributions were largely covered in the preceding sub-section. Most of the negatives had to deal with matters of faith and differences of perspective or with the parents' experiences with certain educators.

Unexpected Positives

They certainly are learning a lot more about the Bible than I expected. Which is wonderful. My children are very respectful of elderly people and young people and they were encouraged to be involved in the community service project. (Family A)

The sexuality section on dating. That maybe people should not be exclusive at an early age. Hearing this in school when your friends are there with you is supportive. It's okay. You don't have to be dating. (Family B)

I was surprised to see how all-inclusive it was. I was surprised to see that because it is also a "public" system. I hadn't anticipated its emphasis on chastity. I hadn't anticipated that they would take such a "this is right and this is wrong" kind of line about things. I found that more supportive to what I was trying to teach (the child) at home than I expected. (Family C)

One family stated that it was impressed with the mission projects in which the school participated during Lent. They were also impressed with the community service projects that were part of the Christian Ethics classes.

It is an opportunity to reach out into the community and we fully support them. We also appreciate (our child's) Catholic friends. They help (the child) and see beyond denomination. (Family G)

I was really overwhelmed at the graduation, at how they (the students) really seemed to be close knit as a group and to stick up for one another. We have a lot of handicapped children and some kids that really don't always fit in. I was impressed at graduation how really welcomed they made everyone feel. (Family H)

Negatives

The only thing that really shocked me was that when they went on a band trip they had to attend church, and I thought that was funny. They can't miss one Sunday. They can miss Math, but they can't miss a Sunday. (Family A)

I have some concern about where a person confesses (one's) sins to a priest. Then that person has the power to forgive you. In my own personal belief God and god alone is the one who can forgive. Nobody else and God and God alone is the one with whom you must make peace. No man can fix that for me. (Family C)

The only problem we have is in the time of the year when there are prayers to Mary and the Saints. (Family D)

We would sometimes question the teachings. For example, there are differences in practice and interpretations, such as with communion. There are differences between child and adult baptism. There are also similarities. We practice child dedication, which is somewhat like baptism. We have adult baptism, which is somewhat similar to Confirmation in the Catholic Church. (Family G)

Unique Contributions. Some of the parents felt that the schools provide a general atmosphere that promotes closeness and a personable outlook.

We like the fact that the school is smaller than the public ones around it. Emotionally, we feel that the teachers are going to love these children and they know who they are. Just the atmosphere of the school; it's safe, gentler, more comfortable. It is more community. (Family A)

All of the families recognized that it was the religious dimension of the schools that made them unique.

Prayer is a big one for me. People need exposure to prayer and need to practice it daily. By taking it out of schools was the wrong direction to go. I think that people should be able to talk freely about Jesus and God. They should be able to understand what are the teachings of the Bible other than in Sunday school and Bible school. Where is (my child) going to get exposure to that? Too often in public schools kids spout off what they hear their parents say - "The Bible doesn't

make sense.” - “It has contradictory messages.” - because they have no frame of reference for it. (Family B)

Definitely it would be the Christian aspect. They have a program where teachers are assigned certain students (mentors). Which means there is someone (a teacher) who gets to know them (the student) and who they are and maybe read them (get an understanding) if something isn't quite right with them. (Family D)

Prayer is a big one. The religious ceremonies. Christian Ethics, I really think that is important. So much of what they teach is, working with other people whether it be with seniors or under privileged countries. I feel that is important. (Family H)

Your Own School

The parents were pleased, for the most part, with what Catholic high schools were doing. Almost all the parents indicated that the schools that these parents would design would look very much like what Catholic schools are today. What they would like to add would be a religious, pluralistic approach to education. The following comment is typical of what the parents expressed:

The school should be one based on acceptance and recognition of a higher power of God. It would be modeled after the Bible with prayer. It would have acceptance of religious themes throughout the year like at Christmas. There has been a movement away from the Christian faith in schools and the movement away from Biblical ideals. Everything is accepted. High schools should be a place to train for adulthood. Schools are not just a place where academics are taught. ((Family G)

Other Comments

Parents were given the opportunity to comment about anything they felt was relevant to their choice of a Catholic high school for their children.

Overall I am thankful that we have the ability to have had the choice and to be able to put our children in an area where they will be taught the morals we believe they should be. (Family A)

When I grew up we were a Christian country and now we are a pagan country. . . I don't think it speaks of the majority of the people. It's one thing to practice religion at home but the children can't take it with them. People are being

persecuted because they have a Bible. There seems to be a correlation between lack of religion and increase in lack of morality.

Over all, I have been pleasantly surprised with what I have come to discover about Catholicism. It has been a very good decision for my (child). I have no regrets about the choice that I made. In fact, I don't believe that it was any accident that we ended up where we did. (Family C)

One family felt that secular schools were doing a disservice to society.

If all schools would be teaching from a Godly, moral perspective, I think our whole society would be different. I'm convinced that when children are left to determine values on their own as they are in the whole values neutral mentality, "you have to decide what is right for you" that is a direct quote out of that curriculum regarding sex education. I don't think children, yes they eventual have to define what is right for them as they become adults, but I don't think children should be given that choice. They could have some level of choices because that teaches them how to make responsible choices, but they have to have choices based on good moral teachings. If you think of all the schools shootings and all the lack of respect, I think it is a direct reflection of what children are being taught, or not taught which is more likely, both in the home and in the school. (Family E)

Another family commented on the growth of ecumenism in their lives.

Catholic and other Christian denominations need to pull together instead of franchising. There is room for pluralism of Christian views. There should be more working together with each other. Not "them" against "us." ((Family G)

One family commented that, rather than feeling ecumenical at times, especially during Mass, they felt somewhat like outsiders.

Communion, that really bothers my kids. To the point where we say, "Maybe we should become Catholic." Overall they are far happier. Everything else, I just love about the Catholic schools. (Family H)

Summary

The parents who were involved in this study gave some key insights into the nature of Catholic education. As non-Catholics in a Catholic school, they saw the

schools from a new perspective, a perspective that was different from that of many Catholics who take their Catholic schools for granted. These parents relished in the religious nature of the schools for their children and were pleased with the opportunity to have a choice, especially in a school system that had historically viewed outsiders as potential threats. What they wanted from these schools was the opportunity to educate their children in a religious environment. They were pleased with the ecumenical ideals of the modern Catholic Church.

Rather than viewing the policies involved in accepting non-Catholics into Catholic schools as negative, these parents saw a significant opportunity to enhance their children's personal faith lives, as well as to understand the faith and traditions of the Catholic Church.

The parents were willing to be a part of this study; these families wanted their children to participate in the full religious-based school life of Saskatoon Catholic high schools. They felt that in Catholic schools their children could learn about God, and pray and worship. A religious-based education, for them, was of utmost importance in their choice of education for their children.

Chapter Five

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter describes and explains the findings of the study. It first summarizes at what the selected parents had to say about their reasons for choosing a Catholic high school for their children. Second, the chapter examines these reasons and compares them with the aims and objectives of Catholic schools, both in the past and the present. Finally, this chapter makes recommendations on the research and findings.

Non-Catholic Parents Choice to Send Their Children to Separate High Schools.

There is no doubt that the parents involved in this study appreciated the freedom to send their children to Catholic high schools. The respondents represented a select group of parents. They specifically chose a separate high school because they wanted a religious-based education for their children.

One unexpected result of the case study was the parents' enthusiasm to participate. When the respondents were first contacted, they were somewhat concerned and apprehensive as to why the research was being done. Upon reading the nature of the study and its purpose, they responded in a unified manner; they were more than willing to present their stories. This enthusiasm seemed to stem from the nature of the people themselves. They were religious families and wanted to have their children educated in a religious environment. They had actively searched for a school for their children. They made a conscious and informed decision to send their children to a separate school. In fact, most of the families were obligated to travel a considerable distance to get their children to their school of choice. Even though the school of choice was specifically

selected, the parents found themselves in a unique situation. They were attending a religious minority school, and they were a minority in that school, non-Catholics attending a Catholic school. No one had ever before asked their opinion about why they choose that school. A case study, they felt, was an excellent way to have their voices heard. They responded with enthusiasm.

The issue of choice can be examined in many ways. There are probably many parents in both public and Catholic separate schools who feel that choice is an important issue. The reasons that they want such choices are varied. Parents may choose a school because of location, academic needs, extracurricular activities, specialized programs, or other reasons. The fact that the parents in this study chose a Catholic school because they wanted a religious-based education puts them in a unique situation.

Choice was important to and appreciated by these families. They were not satisfied with the secular orientation of the nearby public high school. All of them indicated their gratitude that both Saskatoon school systems allowed parents to send their children to the school of their choice regardless of where they lived. Choosing to send their children to a Catholic school came with a number of concerns. The parents recognized that, because of their personal religious beliefs and ideals, they had much more in common with Catholicism than they had differences, but some of their differences were significant. As one individual indicated, prior to the Second Vatican Council and a move towards ecumenism, the Catholic Church and his personal denomination thought of each other as the antichrist on earth (Family A).

Although these parents were non-Catholics, the reasons for their choice is in line with the reasons that Catholic schools were established. They wanted an educational

environment in which their children can be personally exposed to religion, can feel free to talk about personal faith, and can worship God. It is doubtful that every Catholic parent who is currently sending his or her children to Catholic schools can make the same claim. The reasons that the non-Catholic parents in this study had for choosing a Catholic school were similar to the reasons that Catholic parents historically had for wanting to establish separate Catholic schools. What both groups of parents wanted was a religious-based education for their children.

Much of the literature reviewed for this thesis dealt with the possible problems associated with non-Catholics being allowed to enroll in Catholic schools. Although the problems that were identified are real and relevant, they flow from examining non-Catholics who are in Catholic schools and do not agree with the philosophies and policies of those schools. Understandably, any person or group of people who are in conflict with the ideologies and practices of an institution will tend to be an irritant, or worse, a serious threat, to that institution. This lack of support is not the case of parents who participated in this study; they fully endorsed what Saskatoon Catholic schools have identified as their purpose in their Mission Statement.

In an ideal world, all parents, students, and staff in separate schools should share these same ideals. The non-Catholic parents of this study were no threat to Catholic schools. They were strong advocates of the schools. They have indicated that it would be good if they had the type of schools Catholic have within their own denominations, but they expressed gratitude to have had the opportunity to share with their Catholic brothers and sisters an educational system in which their children could learn and live with faith.

Why the Non-Catholic Parents Choose Catholic High Schools

The primary reason that the non-Catholic parents of this study had for choosing Catholic high schools was that they want a religious-based education for their children. The parents indicated that they felt a religious based education was found in what is taught and that it has an effect on the environment of a religious-based school.

What is Taught

The parents involved in the study were aware that students attending Catholic high schools are required to take classes in Christian ethics and to participate in all religious activities in the school. The parents fully understood the reasons for such a policy. The most significant reason that the parents had for choosing Catholic schools was what that policy implied. The policy is a practical manifestation of the fact that the Catholic high schools are religious; religious-based education is exactly what the parents in the study wanted for their children.

A negative aspect of this policy was that it considers non-Catholics to be outsiders and not in full communion with the Catholic population of the school. The parents in this study understood the protective nature of the policy and recognized that it was a means of Catholic schools protecting their autonomy

The respondents appreciated the Christian Ethics classes and were glad that they were not only offered for all students but that they were mandatory. They felt that the classes provided a base that is necessary for faith development. The parents believed that these classes were important and should be required.

The non-Catholic parents believed that the Christian Ethics classes served three important purposes. First, they believed that the classes taught common religious values

that were important to their children. Second, they believed that because these classes were mandatory, children would be introduced to Biblical value-based education that they probably not receive in the public schools. The parents indicated that exposure to religious education has the ability to evangelize and help form a positive and healthy environment. Finally, the parents observed that by making the class mandatory everybody was included; Catholic and non-Catholic are not separated. The faith-filled students and those struggling with faith are treated as one.

The Effect of a Religious-Based Education

One of the most common observations made by the parents in this study was that they felt that because Catholic schools are religious-based, the religious teachings and separate school policies attribute to a unique environment. They believed that both the physical environment (where religious symbols are present) and the general feeling one experiences in the school, have a strong effect on the overall environment of the school.

For the most part, the parents liked the physical environment of Catholic high schools. They indicated that the environment made it clear that the school was religious in nature, and that the signs and art were positive reminders for the people in those schools that faith and living of the faith was the designated purpose of the schools.

The parents recognized the general environment of Catholic schools as different from that which they, themselves, had experienced in the public school system. They saw Catholic schools as safer environments than were the public schools. They also believed that Catholic schools placed higher expectations on the people in the schools. Some parents attributed these differences in the general environment to the fact that Catholic high schools are usually smaller than the neighbouring public high schools. Most of the

parents attributed the differences to the religious nature of the schools. They felt that because Catholic high schools taught from a religious value base these teachings became evident in the general environment.

The parents spoke positively of the environment of Catholic high schools, and they preferred what they saw in these schools to what they experienced in the public system. But they were not naïve. The parents recognized that Catholic high schools had many of the same social problems that all schools encounter and that these problems needed to be addressed. It was their belief, however, that the social problems that exists in Catholic high schools were not as severe or as evident as they were in the public system because the schools were smaller and because of the religious approach to education.

The observations made by the parents of this study were similar to the observations made by Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) when they studied the environment of Catholic parochial schools in the United States. The researchers found that:

Catholic schools are more appropriately characterized by shared beliefs about school purpose, student capabilities, and norms of behavior. They provide more common activities – both academic and nonacademic – for students. Teachers in Catholic schools are more collegial and much more likely to exhibit extended teacher roles. It seems safe to conclude that when Catholic school personnel proclaim, “we are community,” they are describing an organizational reality that does differentiate their schools from public high schools. (Bryk, Lee, & Holland 1993)

Saskatoon Catholic schools do have the same-shared beliefs about the purpose of the school and shared common activities that are based on religious ideals, as identified in the Mission Statements. “We are community or family” is a common phrase used in the Saskatoon Catholic school system. Catholic schools often incorporate the talents and resources of their local parishes. The Saskatchewan Task force on the *Role of the School*,

(Saskatchewan Education, 2001) suggested that all schools could benefit from the resources of the communities.

For the parents in this study, there was more to the choice of a Catholic high school than the compulsory Christian Ethics course. The parents had to judge between having their children exposed to Catholic religious beliefs or what they felt was no religious beliefs at all. The parents made it clear that if the choice was Catholic thought, Catholic prayer, and Catholic traditions or what they experienced in the public system, that they would choose the Catholic option. The parents emphasized wanting a religious-based education system for their children, and they felt that the secular approach that public schools seem to embrace was not to their liking. The parents were much more ecumenically minded and possibly even more pluralistic than they believed the public schools to be.

Saskatoon Catholic Schools and the Non-Catholic: Yesterday and Today

If the Saskatoon Catholic school trustees of 1905, 1964, and today were to meet at a common table to discuss what to do about non-Catholics who wished to attend their schools, they would be hard pressed to come to any decision. The problem would not be one of change in faith, but rather in the change of society. By its very definition, Catholicism is universal. These imaginary schools trustees might be able to agree on prayer, worship, and ethics (admittedly, the modern Catholic trustee might have to brush up on Latin), but when they approached the issue of allowing non-Catholics into their schools, they would encounter problems because their individual societies would be quite different. The trustee of Confederation would know a society in which religion was an accepted part of everyday life, and Saskatchewan was basically divided between Catholic

and Protestant, each with their own schools (at least at the elementary level). The Trustee of 1964 would be witnessing greater secularization in society, and would be more concerned with establishing public funding of separate high schools than whether or not non-Catholics should be allowed in Catholic schools. His or her concern would probably be more influenced by whether or not the non-Catholics would support the funding of Catholic schools. The trustee of today would face a different world all together. He or she would be caught between a need to maintain separate Catholic schools and a call for ecumenism.

In a world where religion and secularism are constantly at odds, today's Catholic trustee (as well as all who are a part of Catholic schools) has to be aware of the greater role "protectors of the faith" must play. The trustees of the past would have maintained a protectionist attitude, but today's trustee would be expected to modify that perspective. Not only would today's trustee be answerable to the province's Department of Learning, he or she would also be answerable to the church, especially the teachings of the Second Vatican Council that calls Catholics to ecumenism. Added to this would be the concern of maintaining a Catholic identity. If non-Catholic parents, choosing the Catholic option because they wanted a religious-based education for their children, were to become a significant trend this could greatly affect the very nature of Catholic schools. Much research and work has been done by Catholic educators, parents and trustee to assure that non-Catholics coming into Catholic schools are aware of policy and participate in the religious life of the school, but it may be possible that some Catholic schools may be religious based, yet be populated by a majority of non-Catholics. This research had no

intention of addressing this issue, but it is a possibility that may some day have to be addressed.

Today's Catholic schools often enroll children of parents like those who participated in the study. These parents feel that the public schools do not meet the religious needs of their children, and they come to Catholic schools because they feel that Catholic schools are more in line with what they believe than what other alternatives are. The protectionist approach of the past would maintain the Catholicity of Catholic schools, but it would not be true to the ecumenical nature that Vatican II called believers to embrace. The very fact that the parents in this study chose Catholic schools for their children is recognition of the concepts of ecumenism. Likewise the Christian faith itself calls all believers to:

Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do unto others, as you would have them to you. (Luke 6:30-31)

Recommendations

The first recommendation of this work deals with the relationship between Catholics and non-Catholics who wish to receive a religious-based education in Saskatoon's Catholic schools. The non-Catholic parents interviewed in this study, often indicated that education was more than learning about academic subjects; it was about learning to live proper Christian lives. The Catholic system would do well to acknowledge this fact. Being Catholic is about being of a certain belief and lifestyle. Being a Catholic is not merely a birthright but rather involves all elements of life. Being a Catholic school should be more than carrying a readily recognizable Catholic name; the school itself has to be Catholic. If, in fact, a Catholic school cannot be recognized as

being different, being obviously Catholic, then the questions must be asked, “Why does it exist?” “Is it merely a redundant school?”

Many non-Catholics recognize that history has placed them in a difficult situation. Protestant public schools no longer exist in Saskatoon. Parents who wish for a religious-based education often feel that the public schools can no longer meet their children’s needs. The fact that some parents may be choosing a system other than the one they are encouraged to support, may be a point of contention that could cause some conflict between the two systems. It is important that Saskatoon Catholic schools continue to work with the public system to further enhance the amiable relationship they have historically had with each other. Catholic schools however must be diligent. They need to protect themselves from dangers and possible threats that exists from those who do not support their cause, and, at the same time, provide welcome to those outside of the faith who wish to be educated under their protection.

The researcher recommends that non-Catholic parents who choose Catholic schools for their children so that they may have a religious-based education should be welcomed and protected within Saskatoon Catholic schools. If the sample described in this research, are representative of the non-Catholic population of Catholic schools, then they fit the description of ecumenical cooperation that the Second Vatican council recommended. They and their Catholic schools both benefit. The families themselves pose no threat to Catholic schools. Catholic schools have benefited from past generations of Catholic parents who have lobbied for Catholic education, but these non-Catholic parents are equally as supportive of Catholic schools as their Catholic predecessors.

In light of the fact that the non-Catholic parents in this study often said that they felt that the public schools had allowed a secular society to erode the role of religion in public school (history supports this observation), the second recommendation of this work is that the Catholic system needs to guard itself from a similar occurrence.

The open-door system allowing parents to choose any high school for their children and the policy that allows non-Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic high schools have been in place for some time. It is important for parents and the school systems to be aware that what currently exists in Saskatoon has not always been the case, nor are there any guarantees that it will remain this way, especially if numbers begin to significantly drop in the public system. It is also important for all parties to be aware that the Saskatoon situation and the Catholic option do not exist everywhere in Canada.

Current events in Newfoundland and Quebec have demonstrated that the continued existence of Catholic high schools in Saskatchewan may not necessarily be guaranteed. Likewise, the history of Catholic high schools has shown that many long and difficult battles have been fought for Catholic parents to have such an option. Some publicly funded systems, such as those in Ontario, are relatively new while those in Saskatchewan have been in existence for nearly forty years. But age is no guarantee that public funding of Catholic schools will continue, as was shown in the case of Catholic school systems in Quebec and those in Newfoundland. There can be no promise that Catholic schools will always be accessible for Catholic parents. This precarious existence is something that must be understood by the entire Catholic system.

Because they have been faced with a conscious choice, non-Catholic parents who chose the Catholic option are probably more aware of the benefits of having a religious-

based education, than are many of the system's Catholic parents. In 1964, when Saskatchewan granted public funding for Catholic high schools, most of the current population of parents, teachers and administrators were either not born or very young. After nearly forty years it is quite feasible for many people to believe that the current system will always be in place. The non-Catholic parents recognized that the religious component of their children's education is something that is precious and hardly something that should be taken for granted. These parents had to make a choice that involved personal and financial sacrifices, but it was a choice that they desired. The sacrifices that Catholic parents and teachers make are often not as profound.

It is recommended, therefore, that Saskatoon Catholic schools place into policy the continual educating of its staff, students, and community about the nature and history of Catholic schools. This education is especially important because there are potentially two generations of teachers who were born after the Second Vatican Council and granting of public funding for Catholic high schools in Saskatchewan. These individuals may not know of the threats that Catholic schools may live under, nor may they be fully aware of the teachings of ecumenism.

This study opens the door for further studies. Only eight families were asked to voice their concerns about the Catholic option. It would be valuable to discover other reasons non-Catholics have for attending Catholic schools. Likewise it would be interesting to hear what committed Catholics, who have chosen public school education, have to say about their choice

The participants in the study all came from Christian backgrounds. Further study may wish to inquire as to what parents of different faiths have to say about their reasons for their choosing to send their children to Catholic schools.

This study looked at some of the events in history that formed and developed the current situation in Saskatoon Catholic schools. Additional study may wish to focus on one of these events to see what specific impact they had on Catholic schools and non-Catholics who wish to attend Catholic schools. Study may also look at the effect these events had on committed Catholic who do not send their children to separate Catholic schools. Two such events, recommended for further study, are the Second Vatican council and the greater involvement of laity in Catholic schools and Catholic educators, and their roles in making Catholic schools more appealing to non-Catholics. The reason for suggesting these two related events and developments is that they appear to have significant impact on the current situation in Catholic schools.

At the time of publication of this work, Saskatoon Catholic high schools were growing in population. The growth was larger than statistically anticipated. Study would be beneficial to discover why they were growing and if being religious-based had anything to do with the growth. The study also focused on Saskatoon Catholic high schools. It would be of interest to see if non-Catholic parents in elementary schools have similar opinions about religious-based education or if their reasons for choosing the Catholic option are different from the respondents in this study. It may also be interesting to see if non-Catholic parents in other parts of the country feel about their reasons for choosing the Catholic option.

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APPENDIX A

CATHOLIC EDUCATION ... SEARCH FOR TRUTH, FORMATION IN FAITH

Appendix A

I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:6)

CATHOLIC EDUCATION . . . SEARCH FOR TRUTH, FORMATION IN FAITH

Catholic education exists in the province of Saskatchewan by virtue of the inalienable right of Catholics to provide an education that is God-centred and rooted in the Catholic tradition. That right is enshrined in the Canadian constitution and the Catholic community recognizes its responsibility to exercise this right.

We, the Catholic Trustees of the Province of Saskatchewan, acting as the elected representatives of parents and the total Catholic community, commit ourselves to creating and sustaining schools that are:

- Centres of Learning founded on a common faith in Jesus Christ as understood within the Catholic tradition, in accord with the Second Vatican Council and the teaching authority of the Catholic bishops of Saskatchewan
- Centres of Learning that are committed to the growth and development of the whole child
- Centres of Learning that are dedicated to academic excellence and to the achievement of the provincial goals of education as determined by the Province of Saskatchewan
- Centres of Learning which strive to recognize the special dignity of all people as daughters and sons of God
- Centres of Learning which seek to encourage children to develop their individual gifts and talents in an atmosphere that is characterized by both freedom and the moral responsibility that is found in the teaching of the Catholic Church
- Centres of Learning which seek to promote Gospel values in a nurturing environment of Faith, Hope and Love
- Centres of Learning which express a genuine Christian ecumenical spirit
- Centres of Learning which are dedicated to social justice and which promote responsibility to the needs of all people

We, the Catholic School Trustees of the Province of Saskatchewan, pledge to create and sustain these schools in full cooperation with the home, the Church and the community. We will strive to bring together the wisdom of age and the

imagination of youth to allow for the development of responsible citizens and committed Catholics. (SSTA Nov.1994)

APPENDIX B

SASKATOON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS MISSION STATEMENT

Appendix B

The Saskatoon Catholic Separate School has presented its Mission Statement as:

Philosophy

The Catholic Board of Education believes that parents, students and staff must work together to ensure that learning takes place in a safe, orderly and nurturing environment. All interactions respect the dignity of the individual and focus on the principles of justice and forgiveness.

In addition, Catholic schools look to the message of the Gospels and the life of Jesus Christ as a source of information and inspiration for developing policies and practices. Catholic schools have a unique mandate to support families through shared beliefs and a common faith, combined with academic learning and skill development.

Saskatoon Catholic Schools follow the curriculum requirements outlined by Saskatchewan Education for each subject area.

The Role of Religious education and instruction is clearly outlined.

Rooted in the Gospel values of Christ, religious education in Saskatoon Catholic Schools recognizes the parent as the primary educator and the Church as spiritual leader. The school division supports the commitment of both family and Church to lifelong religious formation of young people. Inspired and strengthened by the Gospel, Catholic schools equip students with attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to live their faith in an increasingly complex and ever-changing world.

The Born of the Spirit Catechetical Program, produced by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops through the National Office of Religious Education, provides a progressive and systematic presentation of the basic teachings of the faith from Kindergarten to Grade 8. Themes include Scripture, Doctrine, Prayer, Celebration and Witness to the teachings of the Church. Attention is given to inclusion of elements of the Byzantine (Eastern) Catholic Tradition.

APPENDIX C

DECLARATION OF STATUS BY PARENTS OF NON-CATHOLIC CHILDREN

Appendix C

SASKATOON CATHOLIC BOARD OF EDUCATION

Surname _____ Given name(s) _____ Middle Name _____

Date of Birth: _____

Department of Education Student Number: _____

Religion: _____ Gender: _____ Male _____ Female

Mother/Guardian's Name: _____

Father/Guardian's Name: _____

SCHOOL	DATE ADMITTED	GR.	DATE WITHDRAWN	GR.

by Parents or Guardians of Non-Catholic Children

(To be completed prior to the admission of a Non-Catholic student to a Catholic School)

I agree to have my child attend a Catholic School and to meet all the enrolment requirements including participation in the regular Catechetics courses.

Date of Registration _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

=====

SACRAMENTS	PLACE	DATE
Baptism		
Confirmation		

APPENDIX D

ETHICS

Appendix D -1

University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science**Research****Application for Approval of Research Protocol****Researchers:**

Researcher: Archibald G. McKay

Supervisor: John Lyons (Educational Foundations)

Type of Study

Master's thesis

Title of Study:

The Catholic Option: Non-Catholic Parents' Choice of Religious Education of Their Children in Saskatoon Catholic Secondary Schools

Anticipated Dates of the Study: June - July 2001

Abstract

The thesis will examine the phenomenon of non-Catholic students in Catholic high schools in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. At the time of writing of this thesis, the public and separate school systems of Saskatoon do not have a policy in place that prevented non-Catholic students from attending Catholic high schools. There are many possible reasons why non-Catholic parents may have for sending their children to a Catholic high school, but a number choose a Catholic school because it has religion permeated into its curriculum. *Gravissimum Educationis*, a document of the Second Vatican Council clearly defines the unique nature of Catholic education.

The Catholic school pursues cultural goals and the natural development of youth to the same degree as any other school.. What makes the Catholic school distinctive is its attempt to generate a community climate in the school that is permeated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and love. It tries to guide the adolescents in such a way that personality development goes hand in hand with the development of the 'new creature' that each one has become through baptism. It tries to relate all of human culture to the good news of salvation so that the light of faith will illumine everything that the students will gradually come to know about the world, about life, and about the human person. (Paul VI, 1965)

Non-Catholic families may have differences with the Catholic church in what they believe, how they worship and what they believe is a moral lifestyle, yet a significant number of non-Catholic parents take advantage of the open door and send their children to Catholic high schools. The question that this thesis will examine is why do non-Catholic parents send their children to Catholic schools knowing that their children will be exposed to the religious beliefs, practices and teachings that are present in Catholic high schools in Saskatoon. This thesis will examine if parents feel that Catholic high schools reinforce their own family's beliefs, ways of worship and moral beliefs.

Funding:

No funding necessary

Participants:

Participants will be non-Catholic parents who have identified themselves as such in registering at a Catholic High school. They will be chosen, with the cooperation of the high school principals, as having chosen the school for their children based on the religious nature of the schools. Two families will be chosen from each of Holy Cross High School, E.D. Feehan High School, St. Joseph and Bishop James Mahoney High

School. The researcher will meet with each of the parent participants and conduct a structured interview with them.

Consent:

Written letters of consent have been prepared.

Method and Procedures

Formal interviews will be conducted using designed questions. The interviews will be taped and the researcher will make transcripts.

Risks

There will be no deception used in this study. Participants will be informed about the purpose and the nature of the study. Participants will be informed about when and where the interviews will take place, the length of the interviews and the amount of time they will be asked to give. Interviews will take place in their homes or in a comfortable place of their choosing. The interviews will last no more than one hour. Once interview transcripts have been made, participants will be given them to edit, add or delete information.

Storage of Data:

All tape-recordings, transcripts and field notes will be stored according to the guidelines established by the University of Saskatchewan. They will be kept and secured for a minimum of five years. Dr. John Lyons will assume responsibility for storage and security of the data.

Dissemination of Results:

The data collected will be used as a part of a master's thesis. The study may be used for further study and be made available to other school boards interested in its findings.

Withdrawal:

All participants will be informed that they will be free to withdraw from the study at any time during their participation.

Confidentiality:

Pseudonyms will be used in reporting the case studies to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

Debriefing and Feedback:

Participants will be given transcripts of the interviews they have given. The will be allowed to edit, add or delete information that will be used in the study. They will also be informed that if they so wish, they can have a copy of the completed thesis.

Signatures

Dr. John Lyons

Date

Archibald G. McKay

Date

Graduate Student Researcher

Appendix D-2

Letter of Consent for Parental Interviews

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in my research on *The Catholic Option: Non-Catholic Parents Choice of Religious Education for their Children in Saskatoon Catholic Secondary Schools*. My research will examine the reason why some non-Catholic parents choose to send their children to Catholic high schools in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

I would like to meet with you to conduct an interview. The interview will take approximately one hour. The questions I will ask will be to obtain your perception on your child's or children's education in a Catholic setting. In order to assure an accurate reporting of your response, I would like your permission to tape-record the interview. Once the interview has taken place I will provide you with a transcript of the interview from which you may add, alter or delete information from them.

From this and other interviews I will report in my thesis any common themes discovered. I may present the results of the study to professional and scholarly meetings and in published papers. Any unanticipated future use of the research data not stated above will only occur with your informed consent. When the thesis has been completed and published you may request a copy to read at your convenience.

There is no anticipated risk from participating in this study. A pseudonym will be used to assure anonymity of your comments. The interview will take place at your convenience and a copy of the transcripts of the interview will be given to you as soon as possible. Your involvement will be to be interviewed and to read, approve or edit the

transcripts. After your approval of the interview transcripts your participation in the research will be complete.

The University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research has approved this research. You may choose not to participate in the study or to withdraw at any time during the interview and transcript approval process.

Transcripts and audio-cassettes of the interviews as per the requirements of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research. They will be securely stored at the University of Saskatchewan and will only be available to my research supervisor and me.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me personally, or my research supervisor, John Lyons at the University of Saskatchewan. For further information or clarification as to your role as a participant, you may wish to contact the Office of Research Services at the University of Saskatchewan

I, _____, acknowledge that the research and contents of this consent form have been explained to me. I understand the contents and have received a copy of the form (parent).

I, _____, acknowledge that the research and contents of this consent form have been explained to me. I understand the contents and have received a copy of the form (parent).

Signed:

Participant(s) Signature(s) _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date: _____

Appendix D-3



**UNIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON ETHICS IN BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE RESEARCH**

NAME: J. Lyons (A. G. McKay)
Department of Educational Foundations

BSC#: 2001-123

DATE: June 21, 2001

The University Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research has reviewed the Application for Ethics Approval for your study "The Catholic Option: Non-Catholic Parents' Choice for Religious Education of Their Children in Saskatoon Catholic Secondary Schools" (01-123).

Your study has been APPROVED subject to the following minor modifications:

- Please modify your initial letter to prospective participants (Appendix 4) as follows:
 1. Describe the methods you will use to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of responses
 2. Describe how the data will be disseminated (i.e., thesis, publications, etc.).
 3. State that the participant's agreement to be contacted does not imply agreement to participate in the research. Clearly indicate that they may decide not to participate after hearing a more complete description of the study.
- Please provide us with a copy of the transcript release form that you plan to use, prepared as per our guidelines.

Please send one copy of your revisions to the Office of Research Services for our records. Please highlight or underline any changes made when resubmitting.

The term of this approval is for 5 years.

This letter serves as your certificate of approval, effective as of the time that you have completed the requested modifications. If you require a letter of unconditional approval, please so indicate on your reply, and one will be issued to you.

Any significant changes to your proposed study should be reported to the Chair for Committee consideration in advance of its implementation.

I wish you a successful and informative study.

Valerie Thompson, Chair
University Advisory Committee
on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research

VT/sjc

End Notes

1. In 2002 Saskatchewan's Department of Education was re-titled The Department of Learning.
2. The choice of high schools is often a complicated issue. It is often made by the students themselves or by the students with consultation of family. The parent sample was made up of parents who are actively involved in their child(ren)'s attendance of a Catholic school by choosing the school themselves or in consultation with their children.
3. Physical environment refers to signs, art, and other visible items in a school that identifies it as being Catholic.