The question of the necessity of Catholic teachers to Catholic education is one with deep historical, political and philosophical roots in Canada. It has been argued by those of either opinion that Catholic education necessarily requires Catholic teachers and that non-Catholic teachers can equally impart a Catholic education. Logically, the first step in determining the answer to this enduring question must be to define Catholic education. Depending on our philosophy of education, the answer to this question will change. The following essay will show that given the philosophy of education held by the Catholic Church and the Catholic School Board, Catholic schools necessarily require Catholic teachers.

The Catholic philosophy of education has been articulated by various people at different points in time. In 1857, Bishop Pinsoneault drew a distinction between “teaching” and “education” where “...teaching...was merely imparting knowledge” and “education was a much graver matter, and was especially attended to in the Catholic schools and institutions, vis., training the young in morals, in deference to authority, in mutual respect, and in submission to their parents; in fact, forming their characters.”\(^1\) According to his definition, which was in line with that of “the entire Catholic church hierarchy,” Catholics held a philosophy which stipulated that education as carried out in Catholic schools was chiefly concerned with and aimed at the moral development of the student.\(^2\) In 1997, Robert Sharpe, a judge from the Ontario Court of Justice rearticulated this philosophy thus: “...the Roman Catholic philosophy of education.... is that education is not merely the transmission of knowledge and development of skills but rather

\(^2\) Ibid.
the integral formation of the whole person according to a vision of life that is revealed in the Roman Catholic tradition.” Judge Sharpe was at the time pronouncing judgement in a case concerning Section 136 of the Education Act and the right of Catholic boards to take into consideration the faith of teaching applicants in the hiring process. The Catholic applicants argued that “the religious faith of the teacher is an essential element in the delivery of this vision of Catholic education.” Judge Sharpe at the time ruled in their favour, and by so doing defended the claim that Catholic educators were necessary to Catholic education.

Sharpe’s argument was essentially that while the “rare non-believer” may be able to indoctrinate and teach the tenets of the Catholic faith adequately, a non-believer could not effectively “urge a faith-based approach upon students” given that they themselves did not live according to such a view. To use Pinsoneault’s words, non-Catholic teachers could “teach”, even teach religious topics and religious views, but they could not properly “educate” Catholic students according to a Catholic vision of life which they did not share. Following Sharpe’s logic, the formation of the student according to the Catholic vision of life was dependent upon their teacher sharing this vision. The faith of the teacher thus became the all-important means by which Catholic education is imparted.

This notion is by no means a new one. According to the 1846 Common School Act, which was at the very roots of the historical emergence of Catholic schools in Ontario, the role of the teacher was “to inculcate by precept and example.” In 1843, the legislature in Upper Canada introduced two bills which gave the right to Catholics or Protestants to establish a separate

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4 Ibid., 23.
5 Ibid., 34, 36.
school where “the common school teacher belonged to the other major body of Christians.”\(^7\) The reasoning behind the provision for dissent was clear: it was strongly believed that the schoolteacher’s faith would be passed onto their students. As stated by Dixon, the “formulation of the right to separate schools demonstrates the perceived importance of the faith of the teacher.”\(^8\) To return to our initial question, we might therefore remember that the oldest working definition of a Catholic school in Ontario is “a school where the teacher is Catholic”. Moving into the twenty-first century, we will see that the importance of the teacher’s faith is still considered fundamental to the mission of Catholic education.

Given the perceived relationship between a teacher’s and a student’s faith life, the religious commitment of teachers in Catholic schools was always of the utmost importance to those concerned. Simply put, to “inculcate by example” a Catholic teacher could not be Catholic in name alone, but had to live the faith he or she professes. In the nineteenth century, there were enormous demands placed upon teachers to be “living example[s] of the moral citizen personifying the virtues referred to in the goals of the [sic] schools.”\(^9\) The teacher was to be an exemplary British subject, a minister, a scholar, an exemplary and practicing Christian or Catholic, a convincing orator, a stand-in parent.\(^10\) Going back once again to Pinsoneault, if the curriculum was the material of “teaching”, the teacher’s life and example were the material of “education”. Indeed, “everything the teacher did...was educational.”\(^11\) Therefore, non-Catholics were considered unsuitable to teach in Catholic schools: given that they did not follow the Church, they could not “be expected to produce, either by word or example, proper Catholic


\(^9\) Dixon, “The Role of the Teacher in Education,” 52.

\(^10\) Ibid., 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58.

\(^11\) Ibid., 55.
impressions on [the minds of the students].” Thus, a school which aims at inculcating the Catholic faith and understanding of life requires teachers who follow and model the practices of the Church for their students.

Well into the nineteenth century, Catholic teachers were considered necessary to the project of Catholic education, and were even the defining element of a Catholic school. Bishop Charbonnel believed that the fate of Catholic schools depended “on the choice of the trustees and of the teachers.” In the early years of Catholic education, religious orders were often appointed to teach in Catholic schools. When the teaching body in Catholic schools was mainly made up of members of religious orders, the faith commitment of the teachers was not in question. However, with the influx of lay teachers and the decline of religious teaching orders in Catholic schools following the Seath Bill in 1907, the faith commitment of the teacher was no longer a given. Catholic teachers were carefully selected (often by the bishop or local pastor) to make sure they were suitable candidates. The pastoral letter, which is still required for entry into Catholic boards today is a measure in place to verify that teachers would be persons of faith. However, these measures no longer ensure the presence of faithful Catholic teachers in Catholic schools.

In *Catholic Education: Ensuring a Future*, James T. Mulligan argues that privileging the bias of Catholic education means not only hiring Catholic teachers, but necessarily the continued formation of these teachers according to the Catholic faith. Mulligan’s claim is simple: “Nemo

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12 Ibid., 59.
13 Ibid., 56.
14 Paul Reale, “The Living Endowment: Men’s and Women’s Religious Orders” (lecture, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, October 2, 2013).
17 Ibid., 163.
\textit{dat quod non habet}”: if Catholic teachers are to “inculcate by precept and example”, they must necessarily \textit{know} the content of their faith and be living lives that are in line with the precepts of the Church.\textsuperscript{18} Teachers cannot give what they do not have. Mulligan’s book, which is concerned with the future of Catholic education in Ontario, gives central importance to teacher formation. He believes that if the Catholic education system in Ontario is to survive and flourish, and if it is to be “the authentically alternative education system described in our vision...we must get serious about faith formation for all the partners in Catholic education...”\textsuperscript{19} Catholic teachers must know and live their faith. They must also understand and be committed to the Catholic vision of education. Mulligan, like Charbonnel, shows us that Catholic education still hinges upon the faith of the teacher.

While Mulligan’s argument is rooted in a philosophy similar to that of nineteenth century educational experts, he also shows that Catholic teachers alone are able to participate with their students in the Eucharistic Celebration. The Church defines the Eucharist as “source and summit of the Christian life.”\textsuperscript{20} The Ontario Catholic Graduate Expectations state that the graduate is expected to be “A Discerning Believer formed in the Catholic Faith Community.”\textsuperscript{21} Mulligan argues that the Catholic school intends itself as the faith community mentioned above. This suggests a further specification to the philosophy of Catholic education: the “inculcation of a particular religious faith” and the “formation of the whole person” as envisioned by Catholic educators is to take place within and through a Catholic community, namely, the Catholic school itself. The Catholic Church envisions community through the Eucharist. Mulligan argues that to be part of this Catholic community, indeed to transform a school into a Catholic community, the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 238.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 223.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} CCC 1324.
\end{itemize}
Eucharist must be celebrated together. Educators must be able to participate with the students in Eucharist, which binds them together as a community. Furthermore, Mulligan argues that “Eucharist [is]...both the source and the summit of all evangelization.” If the mission of the Catholic school is the formation of students according to the Catholic vision of life, and if this Catholic vision understands Eucharist as central to this formative process, then educators must be able to participate with them in the sacramental life. To draw once more from Dixon, “Catholic education...most of all require[s] Catholic teachers to share with their pupils in the sacramental, communal life in the Church... and to encourage commitment to the faith by precept and example.”

To summarize what has been said thus far, the Catholic philosophy of education holds that the formation of the whole person according to the Catholic vision of life (which is the purpose of education) depends necessarily upon the teacher sharing this vision of life and living it out in community with their students. The teacher must, in order to inculcate “by precept and example”, be well versed in the theology and history of the church and must practice their Catholic faith. Thus, the ongoing faith formation of the teacher is indispensible to the project of Catholic education. When educators in Catholic schools cease to be practicing Catholics, the schools will cease to be Catholic communities. Thus, as with any Catholic community, it is not the building or the name of the organization that matters, but the people within. Just as the Church is the people of God, the members of Christ’s body, a Catholic school if it is to be a Catholic community, must be made up of Catholics.

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23 Ibid. 245.
There remains to be explored the issue of curriculum. We have focused mainly on the lived faith of the teacher, their moral example and lifestyle as the primary way by which education occurs in Catholic schools. Of course, Catholic schools also differ from public schools with regard to curriculum. While both schools will teach academic subjects, the way these subjects will be explored in a Catholic school will and should involve a Catholic bias. The Catholic teacher is in a position to infuse curriculum with a Catholic perspective which they share. Going back once again to the case ruled over by Judge Sharpe, one of the arguments presented in favor of giving non-Catholics the right to teach in Catholic schools was that non-Catholics could easily learn the Catholic perspective on various issues and teach it to the students.\(^{25}\) Sharpe refutes this argument by showing how teaching faith from an intellectual perspective conflicts with the mandate of the Catholic school. Separate schools, says he, “do not aim to teach their students *about* these matters from a neutral of objective point of view” but aim precisely at having their students embrace a Catholic bias.\(^{26}\) This process of inculcation, as we have shown above, can only be achieved when the teacher embraces the faith. Furthermore, the prior arguments emphasize the need for teachers to participate fully in the Catholic life of the community, not only in word but in action. Thus, while the Catholic curriculum content may be clearly and tangibly different to that of public schools, the presentation of this curriculum in a way which achieves the goal of Catholic education depends once again upon the teacher embracing these Catholic biases.

In conclusion, the Catholic education philosophy and mission make it necessary for Catholic schools to employ Catholic teachers. The enormous expectations placed on Catholic teachers by the Church and the Catholic system make attending to the teacher’s formation and


\(^{26}\) Ibid., 36.
nurturing their spiritual life ever more important. Ideally, teachers will tend to these themselves, but those at the head of the system must also be held accountable for supporting the teachers they employ in their vocation and ministry. If Catholic schools are to achieve their mandated mission, formed and faithful Catholic teachers are indispensable.
Bibliography


