Primary Document Analysis of Religious Education

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History 3510: The History of Childhood Education in Canada

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A) R. A. Hiltz was a man of the time in speaking that he was a religious man with a lot of power. This article is heavily influenced on his opinion and by part in religion, as the General Secretary, on the Board of Religious Education of the Church of England in Canada. There were certain aspects of religious education that Hiltz thought most appropriate and thought were customs Canadian society should have. It was also insisted that children should get teachings of religion through education at school and at home. [[1]](#footnote-1)

Hiltz discusses that, “the religious instruction is given in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the supports of the school.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Which shows the leaders at the time, who were from various churches, would be able to dictate their views on what education should be for children. Hiltz then goes on to talk about the different provinces and their rules or regulations in accordance to who was in charge of the school district. There are three organizations within the article that are significant so education during that time: The Canadian Educational Association, The Canadian Teachers’ Federation, and The National Council of Education. [[3]](#footnote-3)

B) The document was created in 1927, so in that time there was educated reformers, looked to make the education system more about academics, and not just about morally instructing children through religion. So, it is a plea to male religious men, or men in religion to take on the task to educate the children of Canada. Ken Osbourne talks about the fives crises starting from the 1980s.” In the 1920s a second crisis emerged when it was discovered that, through curricula and textbooks now told a fairly uniform story of nation building."[[4]](#footnote-4) What is also stated that in the years 1920 and 1923 in two towns, clergy men were given the opportunity to take a few classes and instruct their teachings, “apparently this plan has worked satisfactorily, the inspector speaking in the highest terms of the work done.” [[5]](#footnote-5) This could help the article to be viewed as an attempt to demonstrate to people, maybe educators, that religion in the school was appropriate, successful, and to negate the crises that were happening at present time.

Something that could be interpreted in regards to time period is the use of “he” in regards to Hiltz addressing parents, which could be seen as a man-to-man talk, and the superiority and decision-making of the father, man of the house. “The parent has a right to ask that time shall be set apart for the religious instruction of his child”[[6]](#footnote-6) insinuating the father has the demands, and a mother is simply in the background not demanding anything for the child. Also, with an aspect of time in the article, the fact that Hiltz is the secretary of the Church of England in Canada, while in Canada, demonstrates the weight that England still had over certain aspects in Canada, including education.

C) The purpose of the document is to discuss the indirect way of teaching religion, to better the morality of the middle class, white children in Canada. “Our presentation will include not only those more direct and formal methods of Bible reading, Bible study, and worship periods, but those indirect or informal methods which are often more effective just because they are indirect and informal.”[[7]](#footnote-7) The purpose is also to demonstrate that teachings can be done by both teachers, and “open to church representatives.[[8]](#footnote-8)” This article could essentially be a plea to more clergy men in church to move into teaching roles to solidify teaches of religion being made in schools. The purpose of the document could also be interpreted as a job description for church men, or men that have a wide knowledge of religion. With the educational system described in the article, it could almost be interpreted as the agencies in which the church needs to rally against.

D) The article reveals the assumption by the churches that teachings of religion will be the saviour of children and the future society. Churches were already running residential schools, “successfully” in the sense that children were becoming wildly detached from their family and culture. First Nations children were already being heavily taught morals through religion. Hiltz is describing the possibility of more time throughout the day to teach about religion and morals, and discusses that administration and members, have the final say on whether religion will be taught in the classrooms or not, because there is a separate board of educators overseeing education province to province. This did not need to happen in residential schools, because churches had autonomy over what would be taught in those schools. The differences of power are what are different from provincial community school’s province to province and residential schools scattered throughout Canada.

This document shows the ability of choice that is essentially given about religious instruction in schools. While it is forced in residential schools for First Nations children, it was simply an option, that should be emphasized, but ultimately it is not demanded. The differences are the cultural and racial context of the time. While First Nations children and families had to change, the children in public schools, were given the option of changing, being slightly nudged by the governing bodies. This demonstrates the othering, talked about in class by Dr. Penny Light, by how “the other” in society is not given a choice, but the children attending the schools as talked about by Hiltz, likely white, middle-class children, were given a choice.

Bibliography

Hiltz, R. A. (1927). Religion in state schools of Canada.*Religious Education, 22*, 606. Retrieved from <https://ezproxy.tru.ca/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.tru.ca/docview/1296904801?accountid=14314>.

Osborne, Ken. “‘Our History Syllabus Has Us Gasping’: History in Canadian Schools--Past, Present, and Future.” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 3 (September 2000): 404. doi:10.3138/chr.81.3.403.

1. 1. Hiltz, R. A. (1927). Religion in state schools of Canada.*Religious Education, 22*, 610. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2. Hiltz, 607. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3.Hiltz, 606. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4.Osborne, Ken. “‘Our History Syllabus Has Us Gasping’: History in Canadian Schools--Past, Present, and Future.” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 3 (September 2000): 404. doi:10.3138/chr.81.3.403. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 8. Hiltz, 610. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 5. Hiltz, 610. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 6. Hiltz, 606. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 7. Hiltz, 607. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)