

**SPIRITED TEACHING: THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND  
LEARNING IN  
THE TEACHING OF BIBLE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

by

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The integration of faith and learning has been the object of study of men and women in the Canadian Calvinistic school movement ever since Dr. Abraham Kuyper pointed out that there could be no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular in the life of a Christian. Acting on the traditions, influences and beliefs these 'Reformed' Christians had imbibed in their homeland, the Dutch Calvinistic immigrants who came to British Columbia after WW II built Christian schools as soon as they arrived. As they became more established, they formed curriculum committees of teachers who wrote curriculum for each subject area from a Christian perspective, intentionally planning to integrate their faith and learning in all subject areas.

By looking at the history and Bible textbooks of not only the Calvinistic (Reformed) Christian day schools in British Columbia and then branching out to the history and Bible textbooks of three other denominational schools, the Mennonite, the Pentecostal and the Lutheran, I have tried to discover how the faith beliefs of each of these groups are brought to bear on the teaching of Bible. In soliciting the strengths of each of these groups from their history, current practise and teacher comments, I have pitched my own proposal as to how the integration of faith and learning can be enhanced in the teaching of Bible.

By blending goals, curricula and best practice, as well combining certain faith belief frameworks in interpreting God's Word, by learning in community, and by listening to the Holy Spirit in the text, I believe the teaching of Bible can become 'Spirited teaching'.

**KEY TERMS:** Bible teaching; faith; learning; integration; Reformed; Mennonite; Pentecostal; Lutheran; curriculum; community; canon; storytelling; incarnate; transformation; Trinitarian, Holy Spirit.

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I also want to thank my colleagues for their interest and encouragement in this project. RuthAnn Raycroft has given me some valuable suggestions in the formatting and proof reading process.

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Thanks also goes to all the teachers in the trenches, whose insights, comments and help have given me valuable tools to continue my journey of investigation of how Bible is actually taught in our schools.

Above all, I wish to thank my God for allowing me to integrate my faith and learning as I completed this thesis. Each time God brought me new ideas, insights and inspirations; often He brought people on my path to inspire or give suggestions; He let my eye fall on certain relevant books and articles and He prompted me to keep going by putting on my heart a passion for teaching and disseminating His Word. Soli Deo Gloria!

**JC**

## PREFACE

### A Teacher's Prayer

Almighty Father,  
Redeemer, Son,  
Living Spirit,  
Three in One:  
Ignite our music  
Fill our chords,  
Your theme of love,  
Our transformation.

Living Word,  
Our lamp, our light,  
Pluck our strings,  
That all our gifts  
May honour You,  
And we become  
Your instruments  
Of incarnation.

God, the Spirit,  
Holy Flame,  
Your rushing wind  
Our taut-set harps  
In eager expectation:  
Unleash the melody  
Divine arpeggios  
Improvisation.

We join our music,  
Lyre, strings and harp,  
An orchestra of love:  
Tho' flawed in execution,  
Transpose our keys  
Lift up our hands  
In honoured stance  
Of coronation.

JC

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### I. History of the Project

This study and investigation was born of affliction. When one of my daughters came home during her high school years, she would often comment how much she hated the subject “Bible”. This statement saddened me because one of the very reasons we were sending our children to a Christian school was to give them a more thorough knowledge of and appreciation for the Word of God, the Bible. During the elementary years we had been so pleased with the teaching of Bible; why did it have to be so different in high school? Later we discovered that this attitude was prevalent among the other students as well. It was just not cool to study Bible, as the interview with Ms. MP indicates.<sup>1</sup> Why was this happening we wondered? Was it merely an attitude fostered by peer pressure? We knew the teachers were dedicated Christians and wanted to foster a love for God’s Word.

There was another issue. Having grown up in the Free Reformed Church (the Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerk in Holland), I was given a certain perspective on (among other things) the sacrament of baptism: Yes, you are baptized, but you still need to be converted. We were strongly urged to ask for ‘a new heart.’ We were also often pointed to the ‘errors’ of the other Reformed churches: some viewed baptism as a ticket to heaven while others viewed it as merely an outward symbol of belonging to a church denomination. Which view was deemed to be correct? Or which view was according to Scripture? Did any one denomination

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<sup>1</sup> D:3, pp.353, 354.

have a patent on the truth? These questions prompted me to investigate, study and learn more about what God's Word said about these matters. I wanted to study Hebrew and Greek so I could see for myself. I wanted to live in such a way to receive all that God had for me, to experience all there was in the Christian life, to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to be led by His Spirit.

Thirdly, in the summer of 2003, I taught a course for teachers entitled: *Curriculum and Pedagogy: Biblical Studies*. This course allowed me to interact with twenty four Christian teachers who were busy in the trenches, teaching Bible as a subject in the various Christian schools in British Columbia. We discussed many of the issues covered in this thesis: influence of historical background in faith beliefs, various points of view relating the student, including the perspectives on believer and infant baptism, what the role of the Holy Spirit could be in the teaching of Bible, and what methodologies could be used to enhance and improve the teaching of Bible. As we studied the various sections of the Bible together, I gleaned valuable insights and new tools from 'my' teachers to reach and teach the students. This course opened my eyes to some new possibilities (new to me, that is) discussed in this thesis.

Finally, when I met and married my husband, who was not of a Reformed background, a totally new dimension of the Christian life opened up to me: God was a God of love, not only a God of wrath who hated sin. The realization of God's love for me opened my eyes to the joy of the Christian life. It also taught me that growth and change was always to be a part of a vibrant Christian life, since the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of a Christian's understanding. Having children of my own made me realize all the more how important the faith

upbringing is in our lives. What we learn when we are young colors us for our entire lives. How we teach Bible matters a great deal. I wanted to investigate how this teaching could become more 'alive', more relevant to the students' daily lives, more of a joy to the students rather than a drudgery.

These aspects and events in my life spurred me on to write this dissertation. For the sake of my children and 'my' teachers, I wanted to know more about how we could improve the task of transmitting the truths of God's Word to our younger generation. I wanted to see if there was a way to make students enjoy the subject of Bible more; I had a burning desire to learn more about the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Bible, I hoped to find out whether or not how we viewed the students made any difference in our teaching of Bible. Would that view alter our pedagogy? Would a change in methodology make any difference in how we studied Bible? How could faith beliefs and learning about the Bible be integrated? These questions spurred me on to this journey of investigation.

## II. Methodological Considerations

### 1. Historical Investigations

Since I myself grew up in one of the branches of the 'Reformed' churches (see "Immigrant Experience" in Chapter Two), I wanted to discover the historical roots of this branch of the Reformation. I began with investigating the historical roots of the various 'Reformed' churches in the Netherlands, beginning with the time of the Reformation. How did the works of Calvin, Luther, Zwingli and other reformers influence the people of 'Les Pays Bas' (The Low Countries)? How did

these doctrines spread? How did the views of infant baptism color each 'Reformed' denomination and was their paedo-baptist position an impetus in the starting of Christian schools, first in their homeland and then in Canada? By examining primary and secondary sources, I hoped to find out some answers to these questions.

Then I examined how each of the 'Reformed' churches began their schools. What was their prime motivation? What were the underlying faith beliefs that prompted them? Were there any cultural reasons? Did the 'schoolstrijd' (the battle to legitimize Christian schools in The Netherlands) spur the immigrants on to do the same in British Columbia? After the schools were established during the post war decades, the 1950s and 1960s, how did these schools teach Bible? I investigated this progress for the schools of 'Christian Reformed' origin, beginning with the immigrant years of the 1950s right up to the present. I tried to do the same for the Canadian Reformed schools and those of the Netherlands Reformed Church (and its break away group, the Netherlands Reformed Congregation of North America), although information about the latter two schools has not been archived as yet.

After delving into the history of each of these 'Reformed' schools, I examined their textbooks, trying to discover how the position of each textbook or curriculum outline looked at the Bible, the student, the teacher and the role of the Holy Spirit. Was faith and learning being integrated?

Once I had looked at these aspects of the 'Reformed' Schools, my appetite was whetted to take a more in depth look at some other Christian schools as well: those of the Mennonite, the Pentecostal and Lutheran

persuasion. What were their root faith beliefs, how did they transfer them to British Columbia, what textbooks did they use and how did they integrate their faith with the actual learning and teaching of Bible? I employed the same methods, using primary sources (the works of Luther, Menno Simmons and sermons of the first Pentecostal preachers) as well as secondary sources from each 'camp' to aid in my investigations. I also examined their textbooks currently in use, keeping the same questions in mind. At the end of each 'examination', I give my summative perspective on each of the textbook series and how Bible is actually taught in each denominational school according to the teachers I interviewed (see 'Qualitative Research' #3 below).

## 2. Research Questions

"Research can be regarded as a process of asking a question (or a related series of questions) and then initiating a systematic process to obtain valid answers to that question."<sup>2</sup> The questions I posit in this thesis are mainly 'existence', 'descriptive' and 'composition' types of questions, trying to determine what actually happens in the schools.<sup>3</sup>

During the entire process of examining the textbooks and the curriculum, I kept five key research questions in mind:

1. How the topic of the Holy Spirit was dealt with in the text books.
2. How the Bible itself was viewed by the textbook authors.
3. What methodology the textbooks used in the teaching of Bible.

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<sup>2</sup> Julian Meltzoff. *Critical Thinking and Research*. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1998), p.13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.14-17.

4. How the textbook authors and teachers viewed the students.
5. Was the subject 'Bible' taught in community?
6. How was faith and learning being integrated in this process?

For the first question, I mainly tried to discover whether or not the Holy Spirit was mentioned in the textbooks, whether the fruits of the Holy Spirit were ever studied and whether or not the gifts (charismata) were ever discussed. The second question dealt with the Bible itself. Was the Bible given equal authority with the denominational creeds, was it viewed as the living and active Word of God, was it viewed in accordance with the denominational creeds or was interpretation left up to the teacher? Was the Bible viewed holistically or were snippets and pieces taken from hither and yon to present only one perspective? What was the aim of teaching Bible in each of these denominational schools? Was the Bible taught merely to pass on historical truths, merely for the sake of doctrinal issues, or mainly for moralistic and ethical implications (or various combinations of all of these/or other reasons)?

The third question focused more on how the textbook authors suggested the teachers teach Bible (methodology). Was story telling used? What about filling in the blank exercises? Were students merely encouraged to complete exercises or was there room given for discussion and interaction? Were questions mainly posited for factual answers, or were higher levels of critical thinking skills involved? Were stories mainly taught for moralistic purposes? Were students given the entire picture? How did each denominational stream go about teaching Bible? What was the purpose of the Bible lessons? Was there discussion, student input, or brain storming of ideas? Was it strictly a question of

memorizing biblical facts or doctrines? These were some of the questions that went through my mind.

The fourth question dealt with how the textbooks and teachers actually viewed their students. This, I thought, could be related to the question of baptism, because in the 'Reformed' schools, as well as the Lutheran ones, infant baptism is viewed as efficacious in various degrees from yes, the child is baptized, but s/he still needs to be converted to yes, the child is baptized, a member of the church and a believer in Christ. For the most part, I saw that members of the Christian Reformed community held to the position of presumptive regeneration while members of the Netherlands Reformed community saw baptism only as a rite which incorporated the child into the visible body of church membership. On the other side of this investigation, I discovered that the Pentecostal stream as well as the Mennonite, saw their schools more in an evangelistic role, always leaving room for the invitation to come to Christ. Did these perspectives change the way Bible was taught?

The fifth question dealt with the entire classroom as a body: were students given opportunities to participate in the Bible lessons? Was the classroom viewed as a community of learners? Was room given for open-ended questions? Was there any discussion or sharing allowed? Was the Holy Spirit considered working in the hearts of the students as well as the teachers? Did the textbooks give any suggestions about this perspective?

### 3. Qualitative Investigations

After taking an in depth look at the history of these 'Reformed' schools regarding faith beliefs and textbooks, I interviewed three teachers from each Christian School (a primary, intermediate and high school teacher) to hear from the actual teachers in the trenches how they taught Bible. I wanted a well rounded, holistic picture of how Bible was actually taught in these schools. By conducting this qualitative research I desired to give a more 'human' face to the process of teaching Bible in these Christian Schools. As Bogdan and Taylor state in the introduction of their work *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, a researcher should "go to the people".<sup>4</sup> They define qualitative methodologies as "research procedures which produce descriptive data: people's own written or spoken words and observable behavior."<sup>5</sup> By doing these interviews, I wished to obtain a phenomenological perspective of the teaching of Bible in BC schools, by listening to the actors (the teachers) in the process themselves.<sup>6</sup> Thus, not only were the textbooks examined, the teachers who implemented the goals of the textbooks were interviewed as well. In this manner, I sought to gain insights and understandings from the people in the trenches, just as I had learned from the teachers in the course I had taught. The only teachers I actually observed while teaching Bible were those in my course who were assigned to teach a lesson to their peers, using some of the methodologies I advocate in Chapter Four of this work. This qualitative research then, has no 'participant observation' as such (participant observation being defined as "a

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Bogdan & Steven J. Taylor. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*. (New York, NY.: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), pp.1-21.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.2.

period of intense social interaction between the researcher and the subject, in the milieu of the latter").<sup>7</sup> Nor was my interaction with each of the teachers totally detached; I knew most of the teachers personally, I empathized with them, and, in some cases I prayed with them. The questions I asked were the ones I thought I needed for this thesis, overlapping with and perhaps giving deeper insight into the doctrinal position of each of the schools, or perhaps giving added insight to improved ways of teaching Bible using various textbooks or shedding more light on how the teaching of Bible could 'come alive' in the classroom. By giving me their answers, I also gave the teachers the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching of Bible, as teacher Ms. B quoted at the end of our interview<sup>8</sup>.

#### 4. Data Collection and Interview Guide

I obtained most of the Bible textbooks by going directly to the schools involved and asking the principal or various teachers for copies of textbooks and curriculum materials. The remainder of the materials I obtained from retired teachers and from the archives in the library of the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia (SCSBC), situated in Langley, BC.

I went directly to schools of each denominational persuasion to ask the teachers themselves the burning questions I had been wrestling with. Of course, the questions I asked were born out of my particular religious framework, experiences and beliefs. Before the actual interview, I explained to them briefly what my purpose was, namely that I was doing a study about the teaching of Bible in our Christian schools. I did not mention the word dissertation, as I

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<sup>7</sup> R. Bogdan & S. Taylor, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> D:2, p.352.

thought that might color their answers unnecessarily. As I learned through this experience, I noticed that “researchers and their communicative competencies are the main ‘instruments’ of collecting data.”<sup>9</sup> After the interview, I asked each teacher to sign the paper on which the questions and answers were recorded. In the transcription process, I have changed the names of all teachers, using only certain letters of their names to ensure privacy.<sup>10</sup> This was done in accordance with the laws concerning privacy in the province of British Columbia.

I started with five questions, initially, followed by a section entitled ‘comments’:

1. What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?
2. What is your view of the Bible?
3. Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?
4. How do you view your students?
5. Do you teach Bible in community?

Additional comments?

After asking each of those questions, I allowed time for comments and discussions. Several teachers gave me their own Bible programs for perusal.<sup>11</sup> In this way I received some personal data from teachers, documents that “reveal in their own words” their own interpretations as to how Bible is to be taught in their particular Christian school.<sup>12</sup> I documented the interviews and numbered them mostly according to the dates I conducted them, always grouping the interviews from each denominational school in consecutive order. (‘D’ refers to

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<sup>9</sup> Uwe Flick. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. (London, Eng.: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1998), p.55.

<sup>10</sup> D:10, p.361.

<sup>11</sup> D:3,D:4, D:6, D:14, D:17, pp.353,355,357,365,370.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Bogdan & Steven J. Taylor. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, p.6.

interview document and each number is assigned to a particular teacher: D:1 refers to document number one, assigned to teacher Ms. H., p. 351).

In Chapter Four, I narrow the questions down to four:

1. What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?
2. (a) What is your view of the Bible?  
(b) Do you use storytelling as a means of teaching Bible?
3. How do you view your students?
4. Is your Bible classroom a community of learners?

I combined questions 2 and 3 to make 2 (a) and (b) because they related to the Bible and how it was viewed and taught. Not all teachers answered all questions in equal detail, especially not the last question, since some did not understand its meaning.

Any additional comments were used to buttress the teachers' perspective, to shed more light on the issue at hand or to add another dimension to the teaching of Bible in that particular Christian school system.

Sometimes it was not possible to interview three teachers from each school. In that case, I included at least an interview with the principal. All interviews are documented in the Bibliography of Interviews. I saw this qualitative research as a valuable "tool for exploring a topic or problem that has not previously been researched."<sup>13</sup> It provided insights for me from those in the field who were implementing the textbooks and Bible curricula of their particular schools.

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<sup>13</sup> *Qualitative Research in Psychology: Expanding Perspectives in Methodology and Design*. Paul M. Camic, Jean E. Rhodes, Lucy Yardley, editors. (Washington, DC.: American Psychological Association, 2003), p.8.

## 5. Data Analysis and Comparison

By examining the Bible curriculum of these schools, both past and present, by interviewing current teachers and by searching out the faith background of each of these schools, I first endeavored to obtain a clearer picture of how Bible was actually taught in the 'Reformed' Christian schools. Was faith and learning being integrated? Did the Bible have any practical relation to every day life? What methodologies were being used in teaching Bible? Was the role of the Holy Spirit important? By allowing each teacher to give added comments on what elements they considered important in the teaching of Bible, I was able to glean some insights into how the textbooks were implemented, how they were viewed and how and if the teachers actually followed them. Thus, by interviewing the teachers I hoped to facilitate a deeper analysis of the everyday situations in the schools. As Uwe Flick notes:

“Conversation analysis is less interested in interpreting the content of the texts which have been explicitly produced for research purposes, for instance interview responses. Rather it is interested in the formal analysis of everyday situations.”<sup>14</sup>

After interviewing teachers from three other denominational schools, I then compared the answers to these questions for each denominational stream. What were the strengths and weaknesses of each stream, from my perspective? Could a blending of methodologies, curricula, and faith beliefs actually improve the integration of faith and learning in these schools? This blending of strengths became more and more of a possibility to me as I continued my research.

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<sup>14</sup> Uwe Flick. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, p.200.

After analysis of each textbook, as well as the progressions of the teaching of Bible in the 'Reformed' schools, I gradually noticed certain strengths and weaknesses that were inherent in the teaching of Bible. From my perspective, the blending of these strengths would enhance and improve the integration of faith and learning in the teaching of Bible in these Christian schools.

By adding to these discoveries the perspectives of live practitioners in the field, I tried to obtain a clearer picture of how Bible was actually being taught. Each interview is documented beginning with my first visit to Ms. H on August 19, 2004.<sup>15</sup> After interviewing three teachers from each denominational school, I looked at the data to analyze how each answer fit with the school's denominational position, the textbooks used in that school as well as the methodologies described by the teachers. Did all teachers believe in the role of the Holy Spirit? Did all teachers view the Bible as God's infallible Word according to the creeds of their denomination? Was the Bible considered 'alive' in and of itself or was it used as just another textbook? What about the child? Did the teachers view them as children in the covenant who were "in process", was the student body a "mixed multitude" that needed to come to Christ or were all students considered non-Christians? Did teachers follow the textbooks slavishly, did they add more discussion and communal learning than the textbooks suggested and did they see the Holy Spirit as working in the students as well? Was there communal learning taking place, even though the textbooks did not allow or suggest any discussion, interaction and/or cooperative learning? At the

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<sup>15</sup> D:1, p.351.

end of each denominational section, I posit my own summary comments relating to the four questions in the interviews and those involving the textbooks.

This comparison of denominational perspectives, textbooks emphases and teacher comments led me to posit a blending of the strengths of each of the denominational branches, so that, in my view, the faith of the students and the process of studying and learning the Bible could be improved in the actual teaching of Bible.

In Chapter Four, I endeavor to bring the entire process together by looking at the answers to the questions and positing a blended approach, combining the strengths of each of the streams to improve the integration of faith and learning in the teaching of Bible. I did this after comparing the current websites of each denominational school, using the website of Abbotsford Christian School to represent the 'Reformed' schools, since that school was one of the oldest of the Christian Reformed persuasion. I then moved on to the website of a representative Mennonite school, a Pentecostal school and a Lutheran school. I tried to bring the entire process into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by comparing the websites in how they answered each of the four questions. I compared website comments relating to the four questions to representative comments by interviewees and by answers I had gleaned from the textbooks used in each school. In that way, I had three sources side by side in chart form from which to glean answers to the four questions: the websites, the textbooks and the teachers. By blending what I saw to be the strengths of each of these streams in the teaching of Bible, I discovered that by relying on the work of the Holy Spirit, teaching Bible in community and viewing the Bible as the active and living Word of God, as well as

using story telling as one of the major vehicles for learning Scripture, students would be in a much better position to integrate their faith with their learning of Bible and thus put the truths into practice incarnationally.

### III. Purpose, Structure and Intent

#### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to discover, by looking at the faith roots, the historical growth and the current practice of four groups of Christian Schools: the Reformed, the Mennonite, the Pentecostal and the Lutheran, a way to blend the strengths of each faith group so as to improve and enhance the teaching of Bible in British Columbia Christian Schools. I did this research in order to examine how the faith emphasis and current practice of each of these groups has aided or perhaps hindered them in integrating their faith and their learning as they study and teach the Bible. In other words, how to integrate faith and learning in the process of teaching Bible is the main thrust of this thesis. By 'integration', I mean interpenetration, intertwining and interweaving of faith and learning so that the warp and woof of faith and learning become part of the daily fabric of living. By 'faith' I mean the actual living out of beliefs (as opposed to a body of knowledge).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Clarence Joldersma. "Faith/Learning Integration: A Substantive Example That Transcends Sloganeering" in *Journal of Research on Christian Education* (Berrien Springs, MI.: Andrews University, Vol. 5, No. 1, Spring 1996), p. 67.

## 2. Structure and Progression

In Chapter Two, I have related the story of the 'Reformed' Christian schools, their origin in The Netherlands, their arrival in British Columbia, their humble school beginnings and their growth and development into the schools they are today (section I). Is faith and learning being integrated as their teachers study God's Word with their students? Not only did I examine the text books being used from the early 1950's to the present, I also interviewed teachers, some retired and some current, who helped me answer four cardinal questions related to the study of God's Word (see above). I not only studied schools originated by Christian Reformed parents (section II), but also schools other Reformed denominations: The Canadian Reformed Church, the Netherlands Reformed Congregation and the Netherlands Reformed Congregation of North America (section III). The reason I asked each teacher how s/he viewed their students is that each of these denominational schools was partly based on how parents viewed the sacrament of infant baptism: the teaching of Bible in each school reflected the various emphases related to their paedo-baptist position. The integration of faith and learning in the teaching of Bible also related to how the student was viewed and taught. I examined the Christian Reformed schools in greatest detail since they started their schools almost as soon as they came to this province in the 1950's and since their history was most readily available to me (sections I and II). After each investigation, I posit my summary conclusions on how the teaching of Bible has been conducted during this time period of about fifty years.

In Chapter Three, I examine schools of other denominational stripes as well: the Mennonite (section I), the Pentecostal (section II) and the Lutheran schools (section III). Each of these schools also has a history in their coming to British Columbia; each has a different emphasis in presenting God's Word. Each has varied cultural and faith emphases that are brought to bear upon the teaching of Bible. These schools, too, used various textbooks that showed evidence of these emphases in their teaching of Bible, their view of the student, how they viewed the work of the Holy Spirit and whether or not Bible was taught in community. By looking at their historical roots, how they came to British Columbia and how they started their schools, as well as by examining their current textbooks, by listening to their teachers and by looking at their doctrinal positions, I have attempted to glean a picture of how Bible is taught in these schools too, giving my summary comments at the end of each section.

In Chapter Four, I attempt to bring all this information into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, looking at the current websites of a representative school from each denominational stream, comparing them with textbooks and teacher comments. By soliciting what I have found to be the strengths from each stream, I have posited how these schools can improve the integration of faith and learning as they teach Bible. By adopting certain templates, frameworks, environments, methodologies and methods of assessment I believe the integration of faith and learning can be enhanced and improved in the teaching of Bible in BC Christian schools. By looking at what I consider the role of the teacher to be in the teaching of Bible, I attempt to bring faith beliefs and methodologies together, so that, in my view, the teachers actually flesh out, incarnate and embody the very

truths they teach. This blending becomes 'spirited teaching': the bringing together of Spirit-led teachers, enthusiasm for the subject at hand, love for the students, and relevance of materials to create communities of shalom where learning and faith can flourish and grow.

At the end of this chapter, I bring the results of my discoveries together to give some recommendations and concluding thoughts.

### 3. Paradigmatic perspectives

As I have investigated the faith positions of each of the various denominational streams, I have attempted, as much as possible, to discuss their beliefs within the parameters of their confessions, textbooks and teacher comments as discussed in Chapters Two and Three. I have used primary sources for the originators of each faith group (e.g. works by Calvin, Luther, Menno Simmons and sermons from the Pentecostal preachers). For the comparison charts, I have used current website comments from a representative school of each denominational stream studied. When discussing the book of Jonah in Chapter Four, I used commentaries from each of the four streams: Calvin's commentary on Jonah, Luther's commentary on the book of Jonah, a Mennonite approved commentary as well as a commentary by two Pentecostal authors. In Appendix B, I have included a critical interaction with the biblical text of the book of Jonah. In Appendix A, I give suggestions on how to assess assignments given relating to the book of Jonah, again using that book as a representative sample of how I would study other biblical books with my students. I have evaluated what I see to be the role of the public schools in the light of the

perspectives of the mission statements of each of the four schools as well as in the light of their historical roots.

#### 4. Limitations and delimitations of this thesis

As I embarked on this study, I thought initially to look at the schools of the 'Reformed' denominations only, thinking that looking at their history, their immigration to British Columbia and their establishing Christian schools would be able to give me enough insight into the process of integrating faith beliefs with learning in the teaching of Bible in BC schools. However, I soon found that more comparison and investigation of data on this subject would be interesting, necessary and helpful in order to obtain information and insight on how this teaching occurs in other denominational schools. I first went to the Mennonite schools, then the Pentecostal and finally to the Lutheran schools. Obviously there are more Christian schools in British Columbia, but time and space constraints did not allow me to examine them. I was not able to visit them all, nor include them in this study.

This study also recognizes certain delimitations. The investigation of this thesis is limited to four denominational schools and even then, only a representative sampling of each denominational stream has been studied. Much more work could be done in this area. Authors from other paradigmatic perspectives may ferret out other details, different questions, and varying emphases related to the teaching of Bible in these schools which I was not able to see due to my paradigmatic position.

#### IV. Conclusion

This thesis was born of affliction; certain burning questions I had needed to be answered. Since, within my frame of reference, (the Calvinistic Kuyperian one), so much work had been done relating to the integration of faith and learning in all subject areas, I was constantly thinking about how this integration actually took place in the teaching of Bible as a subject in our schools. After having completed a Master's degree in theology and after having worked with teachers for ten years as executive director of the Christian Teachers' Association of BC, I felt that perhaps God was putting this task on my shoulders.

So I embarked upon this journey by faith, knowing that finding sufficient time to do this work would be very difficult. I can honestly say that I enjoyed the process, I met so many wonderful teachers and advisors along the way, and I do think that I have grown in my knowledge of God's Word and how it is disseminated.

## CHAPTER 2

### REFORMED CHRISTIAN DAY SCHOOLS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

#### I. Dutch Calvinists Start Christian Day Schools in BC

##### 1. The Immigrant Experience

There was once a family of six: a father, mother, three daughters and one son. This family set out on a long journey to another country, far from the motherland, from family and from a church body of believers. The year was 1951, the month was May and the country of destination was Canada.

The father and mother of this family had worked in the underground during the Second World War. The father worked hiding Jews, sinking ships in canals, distributing false identity cards to compatriots and Jews alike, and performing secret activities that would hinder the Nazis from ruling Holland, his home country. The mother—as a single young woman—had also worked in the underground distributing the “Oranje” (Orange) magazine that told faithful Hollanders news about the war from the Allied perspective, gave them news about their beloved Queen (exiled in Britain) and their dear queen designate (exiled in Canada), and kept up their morale, encouraging them to stand firm against the Nazi regime. Should she be caught at this activity, she could be put in jail. Should he be caught, he would be placed before a Nazi firing squad. Indeed, his entire family (parents and ten children) had already been forced into a concentration camp because he, the oldest son, was in the underground movement.

The young couple met in 1943, when the war in Holland was getting more untenable by the day. There was hunger in the big cities, bombings were a

constant threat, and extermination by the occupying SD (Sicherheits Dienst) forces of the Germans was a daily possibility. They remained faithful to one another throughout the war, and on July 17, 1945, they married. They walked from the church to their horse drawn carriage amidst an honour guard of underground soldiers.

The young man returned to his former job. The young couple was overjoyed to see the end of the war on May 5, 1945, yet they and many others found that what they were fighting for eluded them when 'freedom' was restored. Everyone was very busy to get their lives back on track, to make money and to pursue the good life once again.

During the war, the churches were full. Men and women were encouraged to stand up against the evil forces of occupation, to show compassion to the Jews, and to pray for a quiet and peaceable life once again. Many Christian families did just that, to their own peril. Anyone caught helping a Jew could be imprisoned or shot. After the war, many forgot God's deliverances and resumed their former lifestyle of consumerism. Those who wanted a better life set their sights across the oceans.

For the young couple, it was either South Africa (since they had relatives there) or Canada. Both were countries of promise, where children could grow up in freedom and gain better opportunities. In 1951, they set off for Red Deer, Alberta. After ten days on the Atlantic Ocean in the immigrant ship "De Volendam", they arrived in Quebec City, Canada. After a long afternoon wait, they were able to board a train to Alberta. It was a difficult journey, especially with four very young children: a four, three and two year old as well as a baby of eight

weeks. The train made frequent stops, when the father had to go out and buy food since no meals were served on the train. When they finally arrived in Red Deer, they found a blizzard blowing there despite the fact that it was May 31<sup>st</sup>. Though a 'fieldman' was waiting for this immigrant family, with the prospect of a job in the sugar beets, the father said: "Let's go on to the west coast."

They arrived in Vancouver to sunny skies, mild temperatures and the beautiful scenery of English Bay. Upon arrival, the children promptly came down with measles; the mother had no time for culture shock. Eventually work was found in Campbell River on northern Vancouver Island. That little fishing and logging village was little more than a few gravel roads, a gas station, a grocery store and a post office. The family found a converted chicken shed with a kitchen living area and one bedroom, which they divided with a thick, camel hair curtain: one side for the three children, the other for the parents and the baby. The first winter was extremely cold; water pipes froze often. There was no inside toilet, the sawdust stove often emitted puffs of smoke when the sawdust fell down the hopper, and one of their best pans was stolen by a dog. After one year, they moved to a 'new' house, one built by the father—just a shell. The finishing would come later, step by step. The camel hair curtain disintegrated when it was taken down in the old house—it was full of mould from the moisture of the night time breathing of the occupants of the 'double' room. The father had to dig a septic field outside the new home, so the children had to gather rocks to fill it, one wheelbarrow full each day for several weeks. While the father was digging the hole, he threw the dirt from his shovel up into the wheel barrow above. One day the wheelbarrow tipped into the hole, landed on his head and gave him a nasty

gash in his forehead. He jumped out of the pit, ran into the house, and furiously washed his head above the sink; before he knew it, the pail under the sink had overflowed into the kitchen. Such was the life of an immigrant family in Canada after the war. Soon, another baby was on the way; again, the mother had no time to feel sorry for herself. Through it all and in it all, God was their refuge, a very present help in time of trouble. They had travelled to a new land, knowing that God guided them there and that He would provide for them in every way.

When it came time for the oldest child to go to school, she went alone on the bus to the nearest public school. When did she learn English? She cannot remember. The children were taught how to read and write the mother tongue: every day at the supper table, the father would read the Bible in Dutch and each child was given a turn to read. After the Bible reading, the father would lead in prayer, presenting God with the needs of his family, asking for His help and blessing and praying for forgiveness of the many trespasses and sins. God's Word was the centre of their lives.

Yet the family did not have a church congregation available to them. They were "Christelijk Gereformeerd" in Holland (later translated as 'The Free Reformed Church'); no churches of the Reformed persuasion existed in Campbell River, so they met with a few likeminded Dutch families every Sunday and read sermons by pastors from the old country, sang the 150 'berijmde psalmen' (rhymed versions of the Psalms in Dutch), and generally helped and encouraged one another along the immigrant road of good health, large families, freedom and poverty.

After four years in Campbell River, in 1955, this young family moved to Abbotsford, BC. A group of Dutch Calvinist immigrants had started a Christian school there in 1953: a school 'met de Bijbel' (school with the Bible), as well as the Three Forms of Unity (more about this later) as their confessional creed. This was typical of about 130,000 Dutch immigrant families who came to Canada after World War II to start a new life. They sought freedom to live out their faith in their own reformed way; this included access to a Christian school. They firmly believed in the triangle of faith: the home, the church and the school needed to work together to train, teach and admonish their young in the ways of the Lord. This threefold cord could not be easily broken. Their children were their own responsibility; it was not up to the state to educate them.

Hence, as Kuyper's 'kleine luyden'<sup>17</sup> (simple, labouring folk) had saved for the Vrije Universiteit (Free University in Amsterdam), they saved up all their pennies (literally) to get a Christian school for their children. Each family had a 'spaar pot' (a piggy bank) in which they deposited excess change; when the pot was full, they gave it to the school treasurer, who would add up the amounts and use the money for the daily operations of the school. Parents were charged tuition in order to pay the teachers. Mostly, these schools started on the premises of the Christian Reformed church building. In some cities, like Victoria and New Westminster, the Christian School Society was started along with the church. The school was built first and used as a church on Sundays: accordion-like walls were

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<sup>17</sup> J.C. Rullmann. *Onze Voortrekkers*. (Delft, The Netherlands: W.D. Meinema, 1931) p.174.

asily pushed aside to make way for a long church building. These immigrants “had no money, but possessed a large dose of faith and foresight.”<sup>18</sup>

## 2. Roots of the Dutch Calvinist Christian School Movement of British Columbia

Dutch Calvinist immigrants coming to Canada after World War II were strongly influenced by the principles of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation, especially the doctrines of the sovereignty of God, the total depravity of man, the priesthood of all believers, unconditional election and the perseverance of the saints. They considered themselves Calvinists. Their roots in Holland went back to the Reformation during which time many French Calvinists or Huguenots fled to other European countries, because of persecution at home, especially after the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre in Paris in 1572. Les Pays Bas, or the Low Countries, notably what is now the Netherlands, absorbed many of these Calvinists. In fact, “Calvinism played a more influential role in the culture of The Netherlands than it has in almost any other country.”<sup>19</sup> French names such as Pierre Bruly, Guido de Brès and Pérégrin de la Grange belonged to men who brought Calvin’s doctrines and view of Scripture to cities of this country, which was, in the sixteenth century, little more than a conglomerate of bishoprics, dukedoms, and kingdoms. Guido de Brès (de Bray, 1522-1567) is known as the author of the NGB (Nederlands Geloofs Belijdenis: The Netherlands Confession of faith<sup>20</sup>); he was one of the pioneers of the young Calvinist churches in Zuid-

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<sup>18</sup> G. Ingwersen in *From Generation to Generation* (Book published in 2003 to celebrate fifty years of Christian education at the Abbotsford Christian School, Karla Luymes, ed.), p.1

<sup>19</sup> Donald Oppewal. *The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin College Monograph Series, 1963), p.11

<sup>20</sup> D. Nauta. *Het Calvinisme in Nederland*. (Franeker: T. Wever, 1949), p.22.

(South) Nederland. These congregations were known as “Kruisgemeenten” (congregations under the cross). When Guido presented his “Nederlands Geloofs Belijdenis” to Calvin, however, he did not receive Calvin’s approval. Rather, Guido was told to stick to the French Confession. De Brès persevered in spite of this rejection and in 1561 published his confession in French : “Confession de foy, faicte d’un commun accord par les fidèles que convèrsent en pays bas, lesquels désirent vivre selon la pureté de L’Evangile de nostre Seigneur Jésus Christ.”<sup>21</sup> (Confession of faith, made by common consent by the faithful who live in the low countries and want to live according to the purity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.)

Though de Brès’ work was not that well received at first, the text of the original confession had very little revision and was adopted at the Synod of Dordt as the official confession of the Hervormde Kerk (Reformed Church) of the Netherlands in 1618. The other major document of the Dutch reformation was “The Heidelberg Catechism” written by Zacharinus Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus in the city of Heidelberg; it was influenced by a series of previous catechisms, written by the reformers: Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin.<sup>22</sup> Ursinus is thought to have done the lion’s share of the work on this catechism, first publishing a “Catechesis Major”. Later, however, after several evaluations by reformed pastors, he published a “Catechismus Minor” in the spring of 1563. It found its way to Noord-Nederland by way of two Calvinist pastors: Petrus

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<sup>21</sup> S. VanderLinde. *Opgang en Voortgang der Reformatie* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Ton Bolland, 1976), pp.81,82 (translation mine).

<sup>22</sup> Edward J. Masselink. *The Heidelberg Story*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: 1964), p.58

Datheen and G. vanderHeyden.<sup>23</sup> Pockets of Calvinism sprung up here and there and in the 1600's field preachers spoke words of reformed doctrine to anyone who would listen.

Fierce persecution arose, especially after iconoclasts dared to ransack Roman Catholic cathedrals and the blame was assigned to Calvinists.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the 'Gereformeede Kerk' (Reformed Church), became the state church of the country; this branch of reformed Calvinism has strongly influenced the culture, religious life, politics, and education of The Netherlands ever since. (The name of this church was later changed to "De Hervormde Kerk' by King William in 1813)<sup>25</sup>.

The doctrines which the Huguenot Calvinists brought to Holland from France were nicely summed up in the Canons of Dordt, compiled during the Synod of Dordt in 1618. These three major documents became known as the "Three Forms of Unity": the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession of Faith (revised at the national synod of 1618) and the Canons of Dordt (ratified by the national synod of the "Hervormde Kerk" of the Netherlands held in Dordrecht in the years 1618 and 1619).<sup>26</sup> This simple statement, "De Drie Formulieren van Eenigheid" (The Three Forms of Unity), seems to imply that the canons of this synod were compiled without conflict; of course this was not the case. They were born of dissention and strife, as is often the case when major doctrines are

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<sup>23</sup> Edward J. Masselink. *The Heidelberg Story*, pp.104-107

<sup>24</sup> D. Nauta. *Het Calvinisme in Nederland*, pp.33-46.

<sup>25</sup> W.F.A. Winckel. *Leven en Arbeid van Dr. A. Kuyper*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans & Sevensma & Company, 1919), p.44.

<sup>26</sup> *The Psalter*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1927), pp.1-54.

discussed and refined. According to each side, there is heresy somewhere that must be addressed.

Two main streams emerged early, the 'Arminians' and the 'Reformed'. The former, led by Jacob Arminius, gave more power to man and his ability to choose God as saviour and king. The latter stayed true to the Calvinistic doctrines of unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints. Groups emerged out of each of these streams as well, the major movement becoming known as "De Nadere Reformatie" (Dutch Second Reformation) with men such as Amesius, Voetius, Taffin, W. Teelinck, Van Lodenstein, De Labadie, the Brakel brothers and Van der Groe.<sup>27</sup>

It is not the purpose of this thesis to look into the doctrinal differences of each of the followers of these leaders; however, I will focus on one group since its offspring also has churches in British Columbia which have schools of their own. These were the followers of Jean de Labadie (c. 1685), another Dutchman of French descent. They put special stress on how believers experienced their sin, or rather how pre-believers had to deal with the law. There was a turn inward: had the law ploughed deeply enough, was there conviction of sin, how could one be sure of salvation? Often people in these groups were called "bekommerden" (those whose sense of unworthiness bowed them down) or "claegende" (those complaining). A big work had to be done by God alone before one could be grafted into Christ. Even after a Pauline conversion these believers continued to have mountaintop and valley experiences: a Christian may

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<sup>27</sup> S. VanderLinde, *Opgang en Voortgang der Reformatie*, p.139.

have a thousand fears of going to hell against one thought of confidence of arriving safely on the heavenly shore.

This shifting of emotions and belief often allowed the believer little time for anything else. The earthly life was minimized; a certain spiritual pietism arose in this movement, an otherworldly view of this temporary life, a fleeing of the worldly. Hence there was no thought of claiming the world for God, of influencing the arts and humanities with the gospel: all worldliness was evil, only the spiritual realm had any value. Though they said they remained true to the “oude paden” (old paths) of the reformation (i.e. the three forms of unity), there was clearly a movement away from the gospel as good news; it was rather a climbing up in the Spirit to become closer to heavenly realms.<sup>28</sup> Followers of Van der Groe, (c.1740) for example, would first need to have their back ploughed by the law before they could know what Christ was for them.

This movement of a second reformation in The Netherlands focused on the pilgrim journey; it was characterized largely by an inward looking preaching, with members seeking for signs of conversion within themselves. Those who were truly elect were often put on pedestals. Many adherents left the state church and formed conventicles—groups of house churches where believers listened to their favourite leaders or preachers. De Labadie himself left very few works and was not a ‘dogmaticus’<sup>29</sup> so it is difficult to determine his views exactly. Life in the Spirit was clearly the most important; the elect, who possessed this Spirit, lived on a higher plane and anything earthly was not worth their thought. There was no

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<sup>28</sup> Theodorus VanderGroe. “Beschrijving Van het Oprecht en Zielzaligend Geloof” in *Wordt VanderGroe Nog Wel Verstaan?* by J. Alderliesten. (Nieuw Lekkerland, The Netherlands: Fa. VanderPerk, 1972), p.79.

<sup>29</sup> S. VanderLinde. *Opgang en Voortgang der Reformatie*, p.174

cosmological role for the Holy Spirit. Hence missions and evangelism did not happen among these followers of de Labadie.

One of the churches that eventually emerged from this stream is “De Gerformeerde Gemeenten” (The Reformed Congregations). Adherents also came to the United States and Canada to seek freedom of religion and establish their own schools (see pp. 111-124 of this thesis).

### 3. Historical Influences on the Dutch Calvinists that gave impetus to the Christian School Movement

#### i. ‘Het Reveil’ and ‘De Afscheiding’ (The Awakening and The Secession)

Two hundred years after the Synod of Dordt, many Dutch Calvinists felt that the fervour and doctrinal purity of the reformation no longer existed in Holland. Many pastors in the state church had not even read the Three Forms of Unity; they might not openly deny the doctrines of the Reformation, but neither did they preach them. King William I set himself up as king of the church; in 1816 he issued a “Regelement” (a regulation)<sup>30</sup> that asked all upcoming ministers of the word to sign that they would preach according to the three forms of unity in as much as these forms agreed with the Word of God. This left the door open to private interpretation of the Bible, giving freedom to pastors to interpret the forms according to their personal exegesis of the scriptures.<sup>31</sup> Eventually, the king and the government allowed ministers to preach their own gospels. Some even denied the deity of Christ. Others preached a good and moral life as necessary to enter the kingdom. Those interested in keeping the pure teachings of the

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<sup>30</sup> J. C. Rullmann. *De Doleatie*. (Zutphen, Holland: Uitgave Van Den Brink & Co., 1925), pp.7,8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

Reformation split away from the state church in a movement that was called 'De Afscheiding' (The Secession). Hendrik DeCock, born in Veendam in 1801, became the leader of this movement.<sup>32</sup>

DeCock had been converted by the examples of his god-fearing parishioners in Ulrum. This led him to read Calvin's Institutes and various books of Dutch reformed theologians. His sermons started to change and gradually other believers from surrounding areas joined his church in Ulrum. Parents came to ask if their children could be baptized by DeCock, since they felt they could not say 'yes' to the doctrines taught in their own churches. DeCock was suspended from his church by the authorities for baptizing children from surrounding churches and for writing a pamphlet about the "so-called reformed teachers".<sup>33</sup> Eventually, DeCock, along with his friend and pastor Hendrik Scholte, signed the *Act of Secession* on October 13, 1834, thus officially withdrawing themselves from the state church of The Netherlands: "Wij scheiden ons af van de Hervormde Kerk, die een valsche kerk is krachtens Art. 29 der Geloofsbelijdenis . . . wij keren terug tot de oude situatie, zooals die te Dordrecht is vastgesteld".<sup>34</sup> (We are separating ourselves from the Hervormde Kerk, which is a false church, according to Article 29 of the Netherlands Confession of Faith . . . we are returning to the old situation set forth in Dordrecht [1618]).

The 'seceders' of 1834 were mostly poor folk, who stressed doctrinal purity, orthodoxy of practise and freedom of conscience. They were severely

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<sup>32</sup> H. Van Brummelen. *Telling the Next Generation*. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), p.23

<sup>33</sup> A. Baars & P. VanderMeyden. "The Events and Effects of the Secession" in *Youth Messenger* (Published by the Free Reformed Church of North America, spring, 2004), p.12

<sup>34</sup> H. Algra. *Het Wonder van de 19de Eeuw* (Franeker: Uitgeverij T. Wever, B.V., 1966), p.116 (translation mine).

persecuted: when they met outside or in barns in groups larger than twenty, the authorities would come and break up their gatherings and fine the believers. If they could not pay the fines, their belongings would be sold in the market places on Sundays. Some were jailed and others were put out of their houses. They were subject to ridicule and scorn from the general public. Nevertheless, the movement spread throughout The Netherlands and by 1835 almost eighty churches had joined the Secession Movement.<sup>35</sup> In 1839, Rev. Scholte, along with his church at Utrecht, requested and gained official recognition from King William I. William left his country in October of 1840 and his successor, King William II (r. 1840-1849) withdrew the troops who persecuted the seceders.

During the 1840s, a rift became apparent between Scholte and the Afscheidenen over their view of the church. Scholte wanted a gathering of only true believers; he preferred to live by the simple rules of God's Word. He and some of his followers looked somewhat askance at the Synod of Dordt of more than two hundred years before. DeCock, on the other hand, included parents and their children as believers and had a more covenantal view of the church. Scholte and some of his followers eventually immigrated to Pella, Iowa where they established a church of their own. Others, who were against official government recognition, called themselves "De Kruisgemeenten" (congregations under the cross).

Several factions arose in the twenty or so years after "De Afscheiding" (The Secession). There were also self-proclaimed ministers of the word who set up their own congregations. One of these was Dominee Ledeboer, who started

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<sup>35</sup> A. Baars & P. VanderMeyden. "The Events & Effects of the Secession", p.14

out in the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk in Benthuizen in 1838. Even though he at first seemed to sympathize with the seceders, he set up his own congregations in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland. The government was not sympathetic to this practise and Ledeboer was fined and spent eighteen months in jail.

Nevertheless he ordained elders and “oefenaars” (preaching elders) in the congregations he instituted, while he himself was the sole official pastor. His followers held to strict Sabbath observance, read the “oude schrijvers”<sup>36</sup> (writers from the past), waited for a “tekst” from God to make decisions and did not observe the sacraments regularly. Conventicles from the days of Jean de Labadie (mentioned above), groups of congregations under the cross, and the “ledeboerianen” (followers of Rev. Ledeboer) were later united by Dr. Kersten into Gereformeerde Gemeenten (Reformed Congregations); this group also immigrated to British Columbia and formed their own parochial school (their methods of Bible teaching are discussed on pages 111-124 of this work).

The secession in 1834 impacted the state schools run under the auspices of ‘De Hervormde Kerk’ (the state church), as well. The government wanted to make the state schools more ‘neutral’—a watered down form of Christianity to accommodate more of the public—so the dissenters felt they could no longer support these unchristian state schools. The ‘Schoolwet van 1806’ (school law of 1806) stated that “[H]et Christendom in de school moest zoo neutral zijn, dat het zelfs den Jood niet ergerde”<sup>37</sup> (Christianity in the schools should be so neutral that even the Jew would not be able to take offence). The seceders tried to break away and set up their own ‘school met de Bijbel’ (school with the Bible).

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<sup>36</sup> H. Algra, *Het Wonder van de 19de Eeuw*, p.236

<sup>37</sup> J.C. Rullmann. *Onze Voortrekkers*, p.58 (translation mine)

Groen Van Prinsterer was one of the chief leaders of this 'schoolstrijd' (battle for a [Christian] school). In 1860 he started an organization known as 'Vereeniging voor Christelijk Nationaal Schoolonderwijs'<sup>38</sup> (National Society for Christian Education). He saw the fruits of the eighteenth century rationalism and deism in the thoughts and lives of the Dutch nation and fought against this glorification of man in the schools with all his might.<sup>39</sup> He "argued that a liberalism that replaced Christian revelation with Reason would eventually result in an atheistic and totalitarian society"<sup>40</sup> and he did not want the young to be educated with this philosophy. (Abraham Kuyper later joined this struggle. The dream of equalization of payments to both Christian and public schools was not realized until the year of his death, 1920, when public and Christian schools finally received equally subsidy from the crown.)<sup>41</sup> Groen was instrumental in obtaining authorization to start a non-public Christian school in Amsterdam.<sup>42</sup> Through 'his' "Vereeniging voor Christelijk Nationaal Schoolonderwijs" (Society for National Christian Education) Groen prayed, lectured, and encouraged Christian parents to ask for a Christian school of their own even though this school separation was met by strong resistance from the state government and church.<sup>43</sup>

Groen Van Prinsterer was member of another religious movement that took place in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1815-1860) in Holland known as 'Het Reveil' (The Awakening), also known as 'een reuk des Heiligen Geestes'<sup>44</sup> (an aroma of the Holy Spirit). This movement included a smaller group of

<sup>38</sup> J.C. Rullmann. *Onze Voortrekkers*, p.60.

<sup>39</sup> H. Algra. *Het Wonder Van de 19de Eeuw*, p.87

<sup>40</sup> Harro VanBrummelen. *Telling the Next Generation*, p.22

<sup>41</sup> J. C. Rullmann. *Onze Voortrekkers*, p.198.

<sup>42</sup> H. VanBrummelen. *Telling the Next Generation*, p.22

<sup>43</sup> J. C. Rullmann. *Onze Voortrekkers*, p.60.

<sup>44</sup> H. de Jong in *Gereformeerd Dagblad* June, 1955, p.173. (Publisher not known.) [ ].

Christians within the state church who stressed the need for personal conversion, a fervent faith and godly piety. Abraham Kuyper characterized this Reveil movement as follows:

It was truly the Messiah, the Sovereign seated at God's right hand, Who poured out a spirit of grace, of prayer, of faith upon the peoples through the purest revival that ever awakened them. That created again a separate sphere where another sovereign than an earthly power was worshiped. A circle which reckoned with the soul, which practiced mercy, which inspired the states 'not as citizens but as confessors of the Gospel.' Not by political manipulation but by moral power there was born from within the soul a hope for the nations. Not to rule but to serve there arose also in our fatherland a people who believed in the Messiah...<sup>45</sup>

Led by Groen van Prinsterer, Bilderdijk, De Clercq, Da Costa, Heldring, and Kohlbrugge, all members of this movement agreed "that the public system, as it existed, undermined Christian faith and praxis."<sup>46</sup> Those who were part of this movement let the aroma of their Christian faith permeate all walks of life, whether that was quietly fighting for schools free of government control, collecting money for orphanages, or setting up shelters for the poor. In short, they were serving God above all and their neighbour as themselves.

Many of the Christian Reformed Dutch immigrants to Canada had forebears who had been strongly influenced by the teachings of this 'Reveil' (Awakening) that took place in Holland under Groen van Prinsterer and later Abraham Kuyper. This movement stressed the sovereignty of God along with the relevance of the Christian faith for every day life. The kernel of this concept was later expanded by Dr. Kuyper (1837-1920), who joined "Groen" in wanting a Christian philosophy of education taught in Christian schools.

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<sup>45</sup> A. Kuyper. "Sphere Sovereignty", in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, J. Bratt, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), p.471

<sup>46</sup> H. VanBrummelen. *Telling the Next Generation*, p.23

Kuyper set himself to fight against the neutral humanistic system of schools and outlined a Christian world and life view. He strove “om tegenover het speculatief system van de groote Duitsche humanistische wijsgeeren de Christelijke wereldbeschouwing in even machtig architectonisch, alles omvattend systeem te plaatsen.”<sup>47</sup> (He strove to place an equal, all encompassing Christian world view over against the speculative, humanistic systems of the German humanistic philosophers.)

## ii. Abraham Kuyper

Abraham Kuyper was born in Maassluis in 1837, the son of a pastor. He showed signs of an immense intellect at an early age. His mother, a native of Switzerland, knew and taught him French; his father was fluent in and taught him English. He received his instruction from his parents until he reached the age of eleven, when he went to the “Leidsch Gymnasium” (a high school in Leiden). Later he was enrolled in the University of Leiden where he graduated cum laude in 1858.<sup>48</sup>

Kuyper went through a time of faithlessness, even denying the resurrection of Christ at one point. At the end of his studies, Kuyper was asked to do a comparison of A Lasco<sup>49</sup>, a Calvinist refugee minister in London, and Calvin as to their views of the church. He obtained the works of A Lasco in what he considered to be a miraculous way and the study of this reformed pastor, along

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<sup>47</sup> W.F.A. Winckel. *Leven en Arbeid Van Dr. A. Kuyper*, p.251. Translation mine.

<sup>48</sup> J.C. Rullmann. *Onze Voortridders*, p.178.

<sup>49</sup> D. Nauta. *Het Calvinisme in Nederland*, pp. 19, 26.

with the works of Calvin, changed his life. A book, “The Heir of Radcliffe” was recommended to him by his fiancé and this book revolutionized his thinking about the Christian life.

In 1862 he graduated with a doctorate in theology and took a pastorate in the village of Beesd. There he encountered a frail old lady, Pietje Balthus, who expounded to him the doctrines of grace. The book, his fiancé, and mevrouw Balthus all conspired to bring Kuyper to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. He met Groen at a Christian school rally in Utrecht, where Kuyper gave the keynote address. “Als de zalving van den jeugdigen David door den Godsmen Samuel tot koning, zoo bleef de indruk van deze persoonlijke kennismaking met Groen van Prinsterer in de ziel van Dr. Kuyper onuitwischbaar”.<sup>50</sup> (As the anointing of the young David by Samuel, the man of God, the impression of this personal encounter with Groen was indelibly written on Kuyper’s soul.)

Kuyper gave himself heart and soul for the cause of God and church. He eventually led the Oud Gereformeerde Kerken (The old ‘Reformed’ Churches) on December 16, 1886 in their break with the organized state church, since he felt the bondage of its rules and regulations of 1816 (given by William I) no longer allowed the church to function freely as church. For example, if young people wanted to become confessing members of any Gereformeerde Kerk, they had to be accepted as members even if they denied the resurrection of Christ. That is how the state church interpreted the Regulations of 1816.<sup>51</sup> This break away movement, led by Kuyper was known as “De Doleantie” (the Grieving).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> J. C. Rullmann. *Onze Voortrekkers*, p.192. Translation mine.

<sup>51</sup> H. Algra. *Het Wonder Van de 19de Eeuw*, p.317

<sup>52</sup> W. Winckel. *Leven en Arbeid van Dr. A. Kuyper*, p 292

In 1892, the Afscheiden churches of 1834 joined with those who called themselves “De Doleerenden” (those grieving) to form the De Gereformeerde Kerk. Again not all the Afscheiden churches joined in and some of the Christelijk Gereformeerden (Christian Reformed) stayed behind, but this joining of reformed believers is indeed called “Het Wonder Van de 19de Eeuw” (The miracle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Hendrik Algra calls it “een bekroning” (a crowning).<sup>53</sup> Considering the propensity of the Dutch to argue, fight and debate heatedly, this event was indeed a miracle. God brought two groups of outcasts together. Under God, Dr. Kuyper was a major instrument in bringing this union about.

Along with his leadership in the church struggle, Kuyper was instrumental in setting up the Free University of Amsterdam, according to his belief in the total lordship of Christ over His creation. As he stated in his address at the opening ceremony of the ‘Vrije Universiteit’ in Amsterdam: “In the total expanse of human life, there is not a single square inch of which Christ, who alone is sovereign, does not declare ‘That is mine.’”<sup>54</sup> In other words, whether we are doing the dishes, driving our cars, clinching a business deal or studying worms, Christ is Lord over all these aspects of our lives. Abraham Kuyper reiterated this perspective more fully in his “Stone Lectures” presented in 1898 at Princeton University in the United States. In these ‘Stone Lezingen’ he demonstrated the unity of the Calvinistic system showing how history, art, knowledge and learning, religion and government are all under the Lordship of Christ.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> H. Algra. *Het Wonder Van de 19de Eeuw*, p.351

<sup>54</sup> Abraham Kuyper. *Pro Rege of het Koningschap van Christus*, (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1911), Vol. 2, p.516.

<sup>55</sup> Abraham Kuyper. *Het Calvinisme: Zes Stone-Lezingen*. (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1959).

The honour of God demands that the human mind penetrate the entire system of creation to discover His greatness and wisdom there and to translate these into human thought through human words. Since the knowledge of the unbelieving world cannot help but obscure God's greatness and wisdom, it is the Christian thinkers' calling to buckle down to this enormous task which they alone can accomplish, even if it did not yield benefit for their own life...It is our duty to take hold of scholarship as an instrument for propagating our convictions.<sup>56</sup>

Abraham Kuyper, "more than anyone else in modern times, put his stamp on Dutch Calvinism including its North American branch."<sup>57</sup> James Bratt reiterates: "Abraham Kuyper is one of the most remarkable men in the history of Reformed Christianity; he was eminent in Dutch public life for half a century and left a deep imprint on Dutch immigrant communities in the United States, Canada, and South Africa."<sup>58</sup>

This view of examining all of life under God had big implications for a Christian world view and a Christian education in particular. Dutch Calvinist immigrants firmly believed that educating Christianly was more than using a set of textbooks with a Christian veneer. It was to be a thoroughly integrated education, with the Scriptures at its core. Every subject was to be taught from a Christian perspective. Each child was to be thoroughly versed in Scripture, so that s/he would be equipped with a Christian mind, able to discern and hopefully be a transforming influence in society. The threefold cord of a fervent faith, godly living and the belief that the lordship of Christ had an impact on all aspects of scholarship profoundly influenced these Dutch Calvinists who came to seek their fortune in Canada after World War II. A struggle of about one hundred years for

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<sup>56</sup> Abraham Kuyper: "Sphere Sovereignty", in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, p.474

<sup>57</sup> H. VanBrummelen. *Telling the Next Generation*, p.77

<sup>58</sup> Abraham Kuyper: *A Centennial Reader*. J.D. Bratt, ed., p.500

independent Christian schools in their home country only added to their determination to seek free Christian schooling (school met de Bijbel) for their children in their new homeland.

### iii. The priesthood of all believers

Another doctrine of the Reformation that had a profound influence upon Dutch Calvinists was the priesthood of all believers, as mentioned by the apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:4-9), set by the example of Christ as explained in the book of Hebrews (3:1; 4:14; 5:1,5; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1), and promulgated by the reformers Luther and Calvin. Each father, as head of the house, needed to work out his salvation before God, patterned after the example of Christ, and live as a prophet (proclaiming God's Word and sovereignty over all), a priest (lifting up his family in intercessory prayer), as well as a king (as the crown of God's creation, ruling his family under God). The father then was responsible for instructing his family in God's ways; the injunction of the Torah, as stated in Deuteronomy 6, was taken to be just as valid for Christians of the Reformation as it was for Israel of old. Every reformed father was to teach his children to observe all the commands and laws of God so that they, in turn, would teach the next generation (summed up in Psalm 78).

Parents were to talk about these commandments when they were sitting at home, when they walked along the road, when they lay down or when they were sitting at home: in short, all the time. God's Torah was to be tied as symbol on their hands, bound upon their foreheads and written on the door frames of their houses and gates (Deuteronomy 6:1-8). There was to be no dichotomy between

the sacred and the secular, as Abraham Kuyper had said. All of life was to be examined under God; all disciplines were worthy of study; the entire curriculum was to be sacred; the word of God was to be brought to bear upon every subject taught in their schools. Charles Taylor sums up the relationship between the priesthood of all believers and this holistic education very well when he says:

By the same movement through which the Protestant churches (of the reformation) rejected a special order of priesthood in favour of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, they also rejected the special vocation of the monastic life and affirmed the spiritual value of lay life. By denying any special form of life as a privileged locus of the sacred, they were denying the very distinction between sacred and profane and hence affirming their interpenetration.<sup>59</sup>

#### iv. The Paedo Baptist position relating to Dutch Christian schools

Since they believed the Abrahamic covenant to be a covenant of grace, instructing their children that baptism had taken the place of circumcision, these Dutch Calvinists saw themselves as God's chosen people in a strange land. Their mandate was similar to the one given by God through Moses to the children of Israel. Only the land God had shown them was Canada. Therefore the covenant children of these immigrants needed a Christian school so that the promise each couple made at baptism, namely to instruct their child(ren) in the fear of the Lord, could be fully realized. These strands—God's sovereignty over all of life, the priesthood of all believers and their paedo-baptist covenant position—gave a very strong impetus to their desire for Christian schools for their offspring. The Catechism, "or method of instruction in the Christian Religion (the same is taught

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<sup>59</sup> Charles Taylor. *Sources of the Self*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), p.217

in the Reformed churches and schools in Holland and America)<sup>60</sup> is still preached on Sunday evenings in many reformed churches in North America today.

The *Three Forms of Unity* were appended to all Psalter Hymnals or Psalters, the song books used by these branches of the Reformed churches. Included in these Psalter books were the following liturgical forms: *Form for the Administration of Baptism, Form for the Public Confession of Faith, Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, Form for the Excommunication/Re-admittance of Members, Form for Ordination of Pastors* (and various church leaders), *Form of Marriage, Form the Consolation of the Sick* and the *Church Order. The Compendium of the Christian Religion*, also found in the back of these Psalters, neatly sums up all the doctrinal points in a shorter form than the catechism, even though, from the early immigrant years of the 1950s, all children in these Reformed churches were still trained to memorize the catechism rather than the Compendium. This was usually done at the church on Monday nights.

In order to be fully aware of the covenant theology to which these Dutch Calvinists adhered, it will be necessary to have a look at the promises these parents made when they held up their infant child(ren) to be baptised:

First, parents must acknowledge that their children are sinners, but sanctified in Christ. Second, they must profess total agreement to the doctrines of the reformed church they attend (referring to The Three Forms of Unity). Third, they must promise and intend to see that their children are instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrines, or help or cause them to be instructed therein to the

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<sup>60</sup> The Psalter. *The Catechism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1927).

utmost of their powers.<sup>61</sup>

The form goes on to say: “And although our young children do not understand these things, we may not therefore exclude them from baptism, for as they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received into grace in Christ.”<sup>62</sup> After the baptism, the prayer gives thanks to God:

We thank and praise Thee, that Thou hast forgiven us and our children all our sins, through the blood of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, and received us through Thy Holy Spirit as members of Thine only begotten Son and adopted us to be Thy children and sealed and confirmed the same unto us by holy baptism...<sup>63</sup>

After this prayer of thanksgiving, all members of the congregation would sing Psalm 105:5: “ ‘t Verbond met Abraham Zijn vriend, Bevestigd Hij van kind to kind.”<sup>64</sup> (God upholds the covenant made with Abraham, His child, from generation to generation). Had not Calvin himself stated in his Institutes of the Christian Religion that infants were to be given the water of baptism as a symbol of their communion and fellowship with Christ? Had he not equated the covenant of grace realized by circumcision in the Old Testament with that of baptism in the New?<sup>65</sup>

How this sacrament of baptism was viewed by each of the different strands of the Dutch Reformed churches has had an impact on how they teach Bible in their Christian schools. As John Zinkland sums it up:

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<sup>61</sup> The Psalter. *The Form for the Administration of Infant Baptism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1927.) p.56

<sup>62</sup> The Psalter. *Form for the Administration of Baptism*, p.55.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.,, p. 56.

<sup>64</sup> De Psalmen. (Uit de berijming van het genootschap: Laus Deo, Salus Populo: Psalms made according to the rhyme scheme of Laus Deo, Salus Populo). (Leeuwarden, The Netherlands: Published by Jongbloed-no date given). Translation mine.

<sup>65</sup> John Calvin. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1972), IV,XVI.7 and IV.16.6.

Just as circumcision showed one to be under the bonds of the Mosaic covenant, so baptism indicates inclusion in the bonds of the new covenant. If we remember that being under the covenant is not equivalent to being one of the elect we will avoid the problem of considering either circumcision or baptism as signs (or worse, the guarantee) that the recipient is unquestionably one of the redeemed. Both baptism and circumcision carry the threat of destruction in the sign employed. Whether it is the dismemberment of the circumcision sign or the drowning (as with Pharaoh or the Flood generation) in the after-sign, both portray the curse threat for those who break the covenant.<sup>66</sup>

It seems each of the various 'gereformeerde kerken' (reformed churches) falls into a continuum of different degrees of viewing the efficacy of infant baptism. "The traditional ground, as has been suggested by some, [for starting up Christian Schools] is the doctrine of the covenant."<sup>67</sup>

The roots of the Dutch Calvinists, then, can be summed up in these major strands:

- a. The teachings of John Calvin as interpreted by the three forms of unity at Dordrecht in 1618.
- b. The priesthood of all believers which makes parents, not the state, responsible for the education of children. (Hence the 'school struggle' of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was continued in the new homeland.)
- c. The water of baptism signifies membership in the covenant of grace; hence parents are duty bound, because of their promise at baptism, to educate their children in Christian day schools.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> John Zinkland. *Covenants: God's Claims*. (Sioux Centre, IO: Dordt College Press, 1984) p.108

<sup>67</sup> H. Evan Runner. *The Relation of the Bible to Learning*. (Toronto, ON: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1970), p.115

<sup>68</sup> See also the revised *Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church*, Article 35. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957).

- d. This education, as Kuyper stressed, must entail a holistic integration of Scripture into all subjects taught in the Christian day school.

In the early 1950s, when a flood of Dutch immigrants came to British Columbia's south coast, they started their own churches first; in many cases, churches and schools were established simultaneously. Most schools were started by Christian Reformed parents, who believed their children were to be considered God's children unless they proved otherwise. This doctrine has been described as 'presumptive regeneration' and was a tenet of the Calvinistic faith that Abraham Kuyper adhered to as well (see p.83 of this thesis).

The Canadian Reformed Churches, who view this doctrine of presumptive regeneration even more strongly, have their own schools, too. They hold that the covenant of grace is established with the elect, which includes the entire congregation: parents and their children are God's elect, so that even if a teenager does not walk with God at the time of his/her death, s/he is still God's child by virtue of baptism. The Netherlands Reformed Congregations take a different position on baptism: only part, maybe only a small part of the congregation is elect and only those are members of the covenant of grace. "The Netherlands Reformed Congregation will say: Where election is, that is also where the covenant of grace is. The Christian Reformed Churches, on the other hand say: Where the covenant is, that is where election is."<sup>69</sup> Free Reformed Churches take yet another position: Yes, the child is baptised, God has made His covenant of grace available to that child, but it is only realized when the child by faith accepts the promises of baptism. Again, how each of these churches view

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<sup>69</sup> Gerald R. Procee. *Holy Baptism*. (Hamilton, Ont: Free Reformed Press, 1998) p.223

the covenant of baptism has had an impact on how they teach Bible in their schools, how they implement curriculum, and how they view their students. All churches have the same form for the administration of baptism. More about the origin and teachings of these denominations in the section entitled: “Other Reformed Day Schools”, pp. 99-120 of this thesis.

## **II. Christian (Reformed) Day Schools in British Columbia: 1950-1960**

### 1. The Structure of the Early Dutch Calvinist Christian Day Schools in BC

In the spirit of Abraham Kuyper, who spoke so passionately about beginning a Christian university on October 20, 1880, these Dutch Calvinist Kuyperian immigrants **had** to build Christian schools: “As surely as we love Him with all our souls, we must build (again) in His name . . . When we look upon our meagre power, the strength of the opposition, the preposterousness of such an undertaking, the fire still kept burning in our bones. There was One mightier than we who urged us and spurred us on.”<sup>70</sup> The mission statement of the local public schools read: “The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.”<sup>71</sup> They could not send their covenant children there!

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<sup>70</sup> Abraham Kuyper. “Speech at the opening of the Vrije Universiteit on Oct. 20, 1880” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, J. Bratt, ed., p.488.

<sup>71</sup> BC Public School Act (Victoria, BC: Ministry of Education, 1995), p.C-9.

Just as in Holland in the 19th century, when Groen Van Prinsterer and his friends saw the neutral education of the public system as unfit for covenant youth, these immigrants knew they had to start schools of their own to inculcate the Christian faith in the hearts of their children. To them, their children were to acknowledge that the 'fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'; from the Lord came knowledge and understanding and this knowledge was not first and foremost to develop their individual potential, but to serve God and neighbour. Yes, they were to develop their gifts and talents, but for the glory of God. Yes, they would honour their government (they appreciated the freedom of their democracy and they valued the respect they received in their pluralistic society), but a prosperous and sustainable economy was not the end or purpose of a Christian's education. They wanted to serve their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; whether they ate, or drank or studied, all was to be done to God's glory according to 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Their first object in building their own schools was to set up school societies or boards of parents to run their schools. Since they believed that the locus of authority for the education of their children lay with the parents, it was the parents who should control the schools. Hence, the first Christian day schools established by parents of children in the Christian Reformed Church were not parochial but parent- controlled. Adrian Peetoom gives a succinct and almost humorous picture of the beginning of a Christian day school anywhere in Canada:

...before they knew it, a meeting had been held and maybe a speech had been given by a minister known to be especially interested in Christian education and now specialized in speeches that encouraged building Christian school societies. And then it came time to elect a board, appoint a committee, write a

constitution, establish a weekly or monthly contribution schedule, and organize visits to persuade others in the community to participate. Perhaps a building committee was already looking at some pieces of land, finding out what it would cost to put up a modest school building; an education committee was keeping its eye on ads in Calvinist Contact to see how many other school societies were looking for principals and teachers. Soon a drive was held to get the cost of a building lot and/or building together, plans were made to organize free labour under the supervision of an (often sympathetic) contractor, and lo, some Tuesday after Labour Day [in September] a brand new school was opened, called John Calvin or John Knox, and the show was on the road.<sup>72</sup>

The Calvin Christian School of Vancouver was the first to be established in British Columbia in 1949. Mr. Case Pel, one of the early board members of this Christian school, said bluntly: “My children are mine.”<sup>73</sup> These parents knew that public schools could never educate their children in accordance with their reformed views, with a thorough knowledge of God’s Word, a Calvinist world-view and a perspective that their children were to go out to transform society to proclaim Christ’s lordship over all. The natural choice for Case Pel, then, was to send his children to the Calvin Christian School, situated on Killarney Street in Vancouver. This school was later renamed Vancouver Christian School (now located on Mons Drive).

Teachers were required to agree to the following statement when hired: “I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and that this divine Word of God has been

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<sup>72</sup> A Peetoom. *From Mythology to Mythology: Dutch Canadian Orthodox-Calvinist Immigrants and their Schools*. (Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the University of Toronto, 1983), pp.114,115.

<sup>73</sup> Case Pel in *Justice Achieved*, by Victoria Cunningham. This book details the political struggle of independent schools in British Columbia. (Vancouver, BC: Published by the Independent School Federation of BC, 2002) p.55

most clearly and consistently interpreted in the Reformed Creeds.”<sup>74</sup> The first principal of this John Calvin School in Vancouver was a Miss B. Thomas. Later, pioneer teacher Mr. Jan Stadt, came to British Columbia and can be named as the pioneer principal of three fledgling schools: John Calvin Christian School in Vancouver; John Knox Christian School in New Westminster; and later, in 1960, he became principal of the John Calvin School in Victoria as well. He and his wife had both been trained in Holland, and had served in Dutch Christian Schools in Indonesia during the war. Mr. Stadt trained his pupils in Bible doctrine, ‘the three R’s’ (Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic) and some basic Social Studies and Science. Music was mostly confined to singing hymns and Psalms from the Psalter Hymnal. Pupils had to memorize a Psalm selection every week and recite it in front of the class on Monday mornings.

In the 1950s, most teachers came from Holland or were trained at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where earlier Dutch Calvinist settlers had come with Van Raalte in the late 1840’s in a movement known as “De Landverhuizing”. They, too, had established Christian schools for their own children, although some of them had seen the public schools and found them to be sufficiently Christian for their offspring.<sup>75</sup> The schools established by these early Dutch settlers in the state of Michigan later formed into the National Union of Christian Schools in 1920, also known as NUCS. The Canadian Christian schools, started in the 1950s with the post-war wave of Dutch Calvinist immigrants, at first affiliated themselves with this Union. The first group of these

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<sup>74</sup> See Annual Contract of the Abbotsford Christian School, Article 4, signed by two board members in 1974. (Langley, B.C.: SCSBC Archives: ‘Contracts’).

<sup>75</sup> Harro W. Van Brummelen. *Telling the Next Generation*, p.33

Christian day schools in British Columbia was known as NUCS District 12, while those in Ontario were known as District 10. Districts of Christian schools were organized throughout the United States and Canada. This organization eventually became known as Christian Schools International (CSI). NUCS supplied Calvin Christian School in Vancouver with Bible text books, a Christian (intermediate) reader series known as 'The Pilot Series', and two song books for children entitled 'Let Youth Praise Him' and 'Hymns for Youth'. The remainder of the curriculum was adopted from the British Columbia Ministry of Education.

With the formation of a school society, each group of parents wishing to start a school elected board members to a three year term to serve as chairperson, vice-chair/vicar, secretary or treasurer. They had total oversight of the operation of the school. One of the first standing committees established was the Education Committee. This committee also consisted of parents, along with the principal and perhaps one teacher who provided professional and educational input; they hired teachers and saw to it that the school was truly Christian in atmosphere and learning. Members of this committee made periodic visits to the classroom, mostly to see if the teachers could 'keep order' and to see if the Bible curriculum was duly implemented. If a parent exerted too much influence in school affairs, he (there were no women on the school board in the 1950s) would be remanded and reminded that the school society was to run the school. Parental concerns were to be brought to the principal and he in turn would deal with the teachers. In future years, all these processes were refined and fine-tuned. By the end of the 1950s, Christian day schools had been established in Vancouver (1949), Abbotsford (1953), Ladner (now Delta, 1954), Langley (1954),

New Westminster (John Knox, Burnaby, 1955), and Haney Pitt-Meadows Christian School (now Maple Ridge Christian School, 1956).<sup>76</sup> All were run by parent-elected school boards, had the Reformed Creeds as their basis, and were started by parents who were members of the Christian Reformed Church. In the case of the Vancouver Christian School, Christian Reformed founders of the early days were joined by some members of a Presbyterian church to start their school. (This interdenominational aspect was to be indicative of later years, when many parents of the 1990s were from Chinese ethnic background; Vancouver Christian is now multi-denominational and multi-racial in character.) The 1960s saw further growth of these Christian day schools in British Columbia: Duncan and Victoria started in 1960 on Vancouver Island; Smithers, in northern BC, began in 1961; Houston, a mere hour's drive east of Smithers, was begun a year later. The Christian Reformed Church of Agassiz in the eastern Fraser Valley began a school in 1964, and the first Christian high school, Fraser Valley Christian High, was begun in Surrey in the same year.<sup>77</sup> Parents sent their children to Fraser Valley Christian High from John Knox Christian School in Burnaby and Vancouver Christian School. It was a long drive, including crossing a bridge over the Fraser River, but to them, Christian education was worth the sacrifice of time and money.

On February 4, 2004, I talked with Ms. W,<sup>78</sup> a retired teacher who taught at Abbotsford Christian School and Vancouver Christian School during the 1950s and 1960s. She was usually the primary teacher or the grade one teacher, with

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<sup>76</sup> John A VanderArk. *Christian Schools International, 1943-65: 22 Landmark Years*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1963) pp.180, 181.

<sup>77</sup> John A. Vander Ark. *Christian Schools International: 1943-1965*, pp.182,183

<sup>78</sup> Interviews with retired teachers were conducted on an informal basis.

whom all students had their start in learning to read, write, compute and study the Bible. Bible story books, such as those written by Marion Schoolland and Catherine Vos,<sup>79</sup> were used for Bible stories. The Old Testament stories were emphasized: each grade or sets of grades were given specific sections of Scripture to study during the year: grades one and two had to cover Genesis to Ruth; grade four through six studied the Kings, the exile and some of the prophetic books such as Jonah, Daniel and the book of Esther. The higher grades might do an overview of the Old Testament and include the New Testament gospels and the book of Acts.

During the 1960s, the Bible curriculum was mainly defined in this way; towards the middle of this decade, Bible memory verses were stipulated for each grade to avoid duplication. Ms W often chose Bible memory verses from the Book of Hebrews, chapter 11, to complement the study of such Bible 'greats' as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. She would read and tell the story one day, print a summary of the story on the board the next day for the students to copy in their Bible notebooks and then ask them to illustrate that story when they were done. Other teachers told the Bible story with vivid colourful images and actions, similar to the way they were taught in Holland, where story telling was strongly emphasized for every elementary teacher. Teachers educated at secular universities in the US and Canada did not learn this skill as part of their pre-service work; teachers who were trained at Calvin College in Michigan were preferred. However, during the 1970s this preference reversed: BC trained

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<sup>79</sup> See *NUCS Course of Study for Christian Schools*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: NUCS Publishing, 1947), p.48.

teachers were hired over those coming from Calvin, since the former were much more familiar with the BC government program of studies.

All teachers were required to interpret the Bible according to the Reformed creeds, since that was part of their contract. Almost all teachers were members of a reformed church; the vast majority were members of the Christian Reformed Church. There may have been a Presbyterian teacher; there were one or two Free Reformed teachers in those early years. Ms W was definitely the exception, being a member of the Nazarene Church. It was difficult for her to accept sin in students who professed to be Christians, since they were supposed to be 'dead to the law', as the apostle John wrote: "No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him" (1 John 3:6). This view, coming from the 'holiness movement' of Ms W's background, sometimes caused problems in discipline.

Another pioneer primary teacher I interviewed (February 2004) saw her students as members of the kingdom of God who had to learn the truths of the Bible. As a teacher, she saw her task to tell the next generation the wondrous deeds of the Lord as Psalm 78 states. She had been trained in Holland; her Bible lesson was always story telling of the major events and characters of Scripture. She would then apply the lessons from each story to her children's lives. She set her own curriculum for Bible, decided on her own memory work and made her own lists of songs from the Hymnal for her students to learn, as there "was no formal Bible curriculum until about the 1970s."

Mr. K, retired principal and teacher at the Abbotsford Christian school from 1954 to 1989, stated that he used the NUCS course of study for Christian

schools. As early as 1961, the principals of these early schools got together to discuss a list of memory verses for the primary grades. One principal reported that the NUCS course of study was so complete that there was no need to reinvent the wheel in this regard.<sup>80</sup> In that one book, the entire course of study for each subject, including Bible, was outlined. A statement of philosophy was clearly described in the first thirty pages of the book, while a detailed preamble for each subject included a philosophy statement, general objectives and practical suggestions. A supplement showed a flow chart of “[T]he organization of the Local Parent-Society Christian School Plant”<sup>81</sup> delineating how a Christian school was to be run and organized.

This material made it much easier for Dutch Reformed parents in British Columbia to realize their dream of Christian education that would make their sons and daughters “the best possible Canadians”, as one of the speakers said when the Victoria John Calvin School was opened in 1960.<sup>82</sup> They believed their children would become the best possible Canadian citizens because they would permeate Canadian society with Biblical principles in their various offices and workplaces living as godly citizens and examples to their Canadian counterparts, influencing them for good.

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<sup>80</sup> See minutes of the Christian Teachers' Association of BC of April 29, 1961. (Langley, BC: CTABC archives).

<sup>81</sup> NUCS. *Course of Study for Christian Schools*. Schultze et al, editors. (Grand Rapids, MI: National Union for Christian Schools, Publisher, 1947), p.368.

<sup>82</sup> See *The Christian School Herald*, a Dutch-Canadian Christian monthly of the 1960's and 1970's, Nov/Dec. issue, 1960, p.8. (Publisher: Mr. Jan Bevaart of Hamilton, Ontario.)

## 2. The Philosophy Behind Teaching Bible in the 1950s and 1960s

As schools primarily set up by parents of the Christian Reformed denomination, it is important to examine how they delineated the instruction of the church, the Sunday school and the Christian school. The church, “through medium of catechism, seeks to prepare for active membership in the church.”<sup>83</sup> Here students were trained, one evening per week, to memorize the Heidelberg catechism. Eventually they went to confession of faith classes; at the age of maturity (usually 15-18) they did confession of faith. The three questions they answered then were as follows:

1. Do you acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith and taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation?
2. Have you resolved, by the grace of God, to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new, godly life?
3. Will you submit to church government, and in case you should become delinquent (which may God graciously forbid) to church discipline?<sup>84</sup>

It is interesting to note here that nowhere does the catechumen state that s/he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, that s/he intends to live a life for Him, and that s/he eagerly waits His return from heaven. The doctrines, the veracity of the Bible, the Reformed Creeds, the church and its government, and the godly life are the crucial issues.

As to Sunday religious education: “The early leaders of the Christian Reformed Church were not very much in favour of Sunday schools. They felt that Christian schools, catechism classes, church services and home training were

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<sup>83</sup> *NUCS Course of Study for Christian Schools*, p.38

<sup>84</sup> *The Psalter*, p.59

enough for the children.”<sup>85</sup> Later, as Sunday schools did become a part of this denomination, they were used especially to teach children not in the church or those on the mission fields who did not have access to Christian day schools.

The main object of Bible classes in the early Christian Calvinistic day schools of the 1950s and 1960s in British Columbia was to teach the historical truths of Scripture so that students could learn to become what they were: members of the kingdom of God. There was not much thought of transforming culture in those early days, as Groen Van Prinsterer said: “In ons isolement ligt onze kracht”<sup>86</sup> (In our isolation lies our strength.) Christian day schools, set up by parents who were members of the Christian Reformed Church, were to keep covenant children pure, teach them how to be good Christians and protect them from the evil influences of the ungodly world.

The NUCS Course of Study for Christian Schools of 1947 states clearly what the early Christian teachers in BC saw as their main function: “The task of the Christian school in Bible Study is primarily of developing an intimate acquaintance with God through knowledge of the Scriptures.”<sup>87</sup> The manual goes on to state that when a student is illumined by the Spirit of God, that child will develop an intimate relationship with God through His Word. In studying that Word, the themes of creation, fall and redemption were paramount. Though:

. . . the primary function of the Christian school in the field of Bible study is to develop a knowledge of Scripture; this does not eliminate all interpretation and application. The teacher and the pupils will interpret as they progress together in the study of God’s Word. But

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<sup>85</sup> Richard DeRidder and Thea VanHalsema. *My Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Committee on Education of the Christian Reformed Church, 1967) p.190.

<sup>86</sup> J.C. Rullmann. *Onze Voortrekkers*, p.193.

<sup>87</sup> *NUCS Course of Study for Christian Schools*, p.38.

at all times, the primary function of the school remains that of building a broad knowledge of the Bible.<sup>88</sup>

After these three themes of creation, fall and redemption had been studied, the final aim would be an 'increase in God-likeness.' Again, there is no mention of the word 'restoration' other than to note that in redemption, as a child in Christ, the student is to walk in all things pleasing unto the Lord. The historical redemptive theme is stressed throughout.

The basic qualification of the teacher of Bible included the following:

- a. A genuine love of God and a sincere desire to lead others to a knowledge of God
- b. A thorough acquaintance with the whole of God's Word
- c. An exact knowledge of the specific lessons to be presented.
- d. A genuine love of children
- e. A knowledge of the God-ordained laws of child development.<sup>89</sup>

It was acknowledged that any teacher who did not know God cannot lead others to knowledge of Him. A love for God and a love for students were listed as the best atmosphere in which a child could get to love God well. Finally, in this course of study, 'all learning is the result of self-activity.'<sup>90</sup> In other words, the teacher must keep the students active at all times during the Bible lessons so that learning may take place. Activity meant listening, doing map work, reproducing the story, maybe some discussion, exercises of fill in the blank, or art work. (One wonders if the influence of John Dewey had been felt by the authors of these textbooks.) A special section for teachers on how to effectively tell a Bible story was included in this manual as well. Teachers were admonished to study the Bible prayerfully and prepare thoroughly.

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<sup>88</sup> *NUCS Course of Study for Christian Schools*, p.39

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* p.39.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

In the intermediate and higher grades, students were encouraged to read the Bible for themselves to bring them into the habit of always going to the Word for their source of spiritual knowledge and understanding: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom since fools despise wisdom and knowledge. (Proverbs 1:7) A careful study of the Bible program shows that from grades 1-6, the Old Testament is studied twice as much as the New, the latter being looked at in depth from Matthew to the end of the book of Acts. Grade 7 begins with the Old Testament again, while Grade 8 reviews the New Testament including the early church and the Pauline missionary journeys, as well as some doctrines of the Christian Church. Grades 9 and 10 were to study Church history.

Many teachers in those grades chose *The Church in History* by B.K. Kuiper as their textbook.<sup>91</sup> This book covered the early church, the church in the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the post-reformation churches, and the church in the new world—meaning chiefly those of Canada and the United States. B.K. Kuyper's book was written to instil a desire in students to love not only the history of the church, but to love the church itself as the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its perspective is mainly based on the doctrines of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation.

To summarize: from grades 1-10, during the 1950s and 1960s, the students in the Dutch Calvinist Christian schools studied the Bible—mostly the Old Testament, since that formed the basis of their covenant theology—in order to learn more about their great God. They did not study any Pauline or Johanine

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<sup>91</sup> R.B. Kuiper. *The Church in History*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951).

epistles nor the books of Jude and Revelation; some memory verses were taken from the books of Hebrews, Romans and a small number of the epistles. The books of the Old and New Testaments were memorized; 1 Corinthians 13, the Lord's Prayer, as well as Romans 12:1-8 were required memory work as well. The wisdom books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs) were never studied, except perhaps for a few choice memory passages such as Psalm 23. Prophetic books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel or the Minor Prophets were not discussed at all, with the exception of Jonah, Esther and Daniel. In the course outline, the work of the Holy Spirit was mentioned twice in the NUCS course of study: first in relation to the inspiration of Scriptures in a quote from 2 Timothy 3:16, and second stating the fact that the child, 'illuminated by the Holy Spirit' will develop an intimate acquaintance with God. Teachers were urged to pray for God's help in presenting the lessons. All teachers who signed the Reformed creedal statements accepted the Bible as God's infallible, inerrant revelation; all knew that when they studied the Bible, it was always the Word of the Lord, and thus authoritative. Even after telling a Bible story, teachers would often go back to the Word with their students for confirmation: this is God's Word and thus it is our infallible rule for faith and practise. It was important to affirm that what they learned was the truth and they must live by it. A thorough knowledge of the Word was constantly emphasized; methodology was 'chiefly repetition, since this is one of the first laws of learning', even though the activity method was also stressed.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *NUCS Course of Study for Christian Schools*, p.40.

By the time a student reached the age of fifteen (grade 10), s/he would either go on to the public school or quit school and get a job. During these early decades of immigration, the latter often occurred. Immigrant teenagers were needed to help on the farm or help the family financially. For the most part, they did leave the Christian school with a thorough knowledge of Scripture from a Christian Reformed perspective. The triangle of home, school and church was a very effective way of teaching covenant children the doctrines of the church and the historical-redemptive facts of Scripture. In the mid 1960s some of the children of these early immigrants became teachers in the Christian schools; Holland-trained teachers were no longer necessary.

### 3. The Christian Teachers' Association (CTABC)

In 1960, principals of these early British Columbia Christian schools met to form a professional organization for themselves and their teachers. Mr. Stadt, mentioned above, opened the first meeting with a word of welcome, prayer and a Bible reading. One of the first concerns of these men was to set up a standardized Bible curriculum and a required memory work list, as the minutes of the April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1961 board meeting indicate.<sup>93</sup>

Conventions were eventually organized for teachers so they could grow professionally, encourage one another and be inspired to continue teaching God's children. The morning section of these convention Saturdays was often devoted to business while the afternoon offered an inspirational address by one of the local Christian Reformed pastors. These pastors spoke on such issues as

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<sup>93</sup> Minutes of the Christian Teachers' Association of BC, April 29, 1961. (Langley, BC: CTABC Archives).

the authority of the teacher, education of covenant children, and the privilege of discovering God's creation. For example, Rev. Henry Van Andel, a great advocate of the Christian school movement of these early decades, spoke on "The Christian Character of our Schools" stressing three points:

1. *The Object of our Instruction*, viz. God's children: The teachers' role was to educate covenant children to think God's thoughts after Him, to dedicate the universe to Him and to be wise regents of the Lord of all creation.
2. *The Content of our Instruction*, viz. God's creation. The contents of the universe must be seen in light of God's Word, His special revelation.
3. *The Goal of our Instruction: God's Kingdom*. "The aim of life is to serve God; the coming and completion of His kingdom must absorb our whole being and for that we must work. This is the challenge in our education which must be clearly presented to our children."<sup>94</sup>

Clearly there was an emphasis here on opening up the glories of God's creation for covenant children who were part of the kingdom of Christ. They were His, saints, yet sinners.

During the summer of 1967 a summer school session for Christian teachers was organized, with Dr. Hendrik Hart from the Association of the Advancement of Christian Studies (now Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto) as first lecturer. He spoke to the teachers on the educational theories of John Dewey and included a discussion of curriculum for Christian schools as well. Speakers from this Institute stressed the Dooyeweerdian approach of the fourteen modalities of reality. Creation was filled with God's laws in every aspect and it was up to the Christian scholar to discover them. Later speakers included Dr. Evan Runner, Dr. Johannes Vollenhoven from Amsterdam Free University, and Dr. Calvin Seerveld. All stressed the integration of faith and learning. It is no

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<sup>94</sup> CTABC Minutes of November 5, 1961.

wonder that, in 1968, these pioneer teachers started to discuss how to teach all subjects from a Christian perspective. Subject committees were set up to that end.<sup>95</sup> Even though these Christian day schools were parent controlled rather than church schools, the early decades were very much dominated by the Christian Reformed church to which the majority (perhaps 90%) of the parents and students belonged. It is only natural then, that the covenant view of baptism of this denomination would come to the fore.

Not only did this professional association come together for fellowship, growth and encouragement, they also began organizing sports days and music festivals. These educators saw the necessity of educating the whole person, since they saw each child as Imago Dei. Sports days were annual events held at the different Christian schools of the Lower Mainland (Fraser Valley). The Calvin Christian School of Victoria was always invited; the Lower Mainland teachers would help defray the cost of ferry travel for the Island teachers (they were all very poor; membership in the teachers' organization was \$1.00 per year). The two northern schools (Houston and Smithers) were always prayed for and kept up to date on happenings in the south but were unable to participate in these two events until much later. The music festival included choir competitions, public speaking, art work adjudication and recitation as well as writing of poetry.

#### 4. The Birth of District 12 of the National Union of Christian Schools

Concurrently with the establishment of a Christian Teachers' Association, the school boards of each of the newly established Christian schools in British

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<sup>95</sup> CTABC Minutes of March 10, 1968.

Columbia set up an organization of mutual support and encouragement. The first dated minutes are those of October 1956; subsequent meetings were held in various Lower Mainland schools with one person elected to be the recording secretary (no formal board had been established as yet). Each host school was to provide 'goodies' for the evening.

In the May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1957 minutes of a meeting in Abbotsford, the "always active Abbotsford School board didn't put up a very good show, being host to our meeting, by none showing up but their president."<sup>96</sup> The school building was locked so the meeting was conducted in the church basement and delegates were given only a cup of cold water and a promise that the Abbotsford board would do better next time. Early issues being discussed included: corporate purchase of school supplies at wholesale prices; student access to public school buses (parents were paying education taxes); and asking District #7 of the NUCS (Washington state Christian schools of NUCS, just south of the border from Abbotsford) to help in evaluating the BC schools. The purpose was always "true Christian education which would serve to build up the kingdom of God in British Columbia to the glory of His Name."<sup>97</sup>

In 1963, they received permission to incorporate under the National Union of Christian Schools (head quarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan). A formal executive was elected and they were on their way. The board members represented each Christian school in the province; they immediately decided to subsidize those who had to travel from a distance (delegates from Vancouver

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<sup>96</sup> Minutes of the school board meetings of Christian Schools in South West BC of May 3, 1957. (Langley, BC: SCSBC archives).

<sup>97</sup> School Board Minutes of May 29, 1958. (Langley, BC: SCSBC archives).

Island and the North). The first president of the newly formed body was Mr. Gerry Ensing, who later became the executive director of the Federation of Independent Schools. Other board executives came from the Ladner, New Westminster, Surrey, Richmond and Abbotsford Christian Schools. Each society was permitted to send three delegates with voting rights to these meetings. Close contact was kept with District 7 of NUCS (Washington State). (The Christian teachers of CSI—Christian Schools International, formerly NUCS—still meet annually for joint conventions; two years state side and two years on the Canadian side of the border.)

Meetings were usually conducted on Saturday, with business items covered in the mornings and an inspirational address prepared for after lunch. The women's society of the school where the meeting was held always prepared delicious lunches for the delegates. To their credit, the minutes in 1956 were written in English—no small feat for these immigrant fathers of the early 1950s.

One item of immediate concern was the paying of public education taxes when their children attended independent Christian schools. With a hundred year battle for recognition of Christian schools by the official government of The Netherlands behind them, these Dutch Calvinists immediately set to work to see if they could rectify the situation. (The Federation of Independent Schools was established to accomplish just that.<sup>98</sup> More about this struggle for 'equal dollars for equal education' later.)

Mr. S. Wolters, a barber from Victoria who was also a delegate to the NUCS annual meetings, spoke to board members about the advantages of

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<sup>98</sup> See *Justice Achieved* by V. Cunningham for the story of the Federation of Independent Schools of BC.

belonging to this Christian (Reformed) organization which had already produced a manual of instruction in Christian schools and was working towards publishing and printing Christian textbooks. Rev. Albert Greene, “who came all the way from Bellevue, Washington”<sup>99</sup> was the inspirational speaker at the December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1964 meeting. He stressed the impact Christian teachers could have on the lives of students if all teaching were dependent upon the power of the living God. “Christians were not ‘to plough with the heifers of the Philistines’ (secular philosophy)”<sup>100</sup> but were to be totally transformed in their thinking and learning to change the lives of children entrusted to their care. At a later meeting, a philosophy graduate from the University of British Columbia (the son of a Christian Reformed minister), Henk Van Andel, and a high school science teacher, Chris Hamming, spoke to the delegates of the danger of relying on the scientific method to establish truth. They highlighted aspects of the government textbooks showing that their secular perspective was totally humanistic and pragmatic. In contrast, Christian teachers were to rely on the wisdom of God’s Word to see science as an activity to discover God’s laws placed in creation, to describe these laws and to stand in awe and wonder at the beauty of this creation.<sup>101</sup> “All the more reason to write our own textbooks” became the slogan; this became a large part of the work of these district members. The mandate of both teacher and board member was how to present a Christian approach to the teaching of all subjects and how to see them as aspects of God’s creation thus honouring the Creator for all his wonderful works.

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<sup>99</sup> Minutes of Christian Schools in Southwest BC: December 5, 1964.

<sup>100</sup> Minutes of Christian Schools in Southwest BC: December, 5, 1964.

<sup>101</sup> Minutes of the NUCS District 12 meeting November 13, 1965. (Langley, BC: SCSBC archives).

Committees of teachers and experts met regularly to write units from a Christian perspective. Later, in 1977, Mr. Harro Van Brummelen (the first director, who later became Dr. Van Brummelen), was hired and the NUCS district 12 was renamed the “Society of Christian Schools in BC.” This society has published many handbooks for Christian teachers and boards to help them in establishing and operating a truly Christian school.

#### 5. Teaching Bible, 1970: Revelation-Response Bible Series

In 1966—in response to criticism that the old NUCS course of study for Bible was too focussed on memorization, recitation and regurgitation—a team, under leadership of Arnold Snoeyink, was organized to write a new course of study. The result of the work of this team was a new Bible program for Christian schools entitled “Revelation-Response”. The team set up a program of studies from Kindergarten to high school that involved primary teachers, theologians and classroom teachers to provide a “Christ centered curriculum that will glorify God.”<sup>102</sup> The title suggests that God reveals Himself to us in His word and we, His children are to respond to him. The prayer of the authors was “that each student may apply Christ’s teaching to all of life both in school and out of it.” This program, written and produced in Grand Rapids, was implemented in the British Columbia Christian schools during the 1970s.<sup>103</sup>

This Bible curriculum was an improvement over the old course of studies in several ways. Each facet of the program was very structured; students were to

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<sup>102</sup> Arnold Snoeyink. *Revelation-Response: Test Items for Kingdom Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Schools International, 1972) p.7

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5

move through the intellectual dimension, the decisional dimension and the creative dimension as they studied each Bible lesson. Intellectual aspects focussed on knowledge of Scripture that emphasized such cognitive abilities as analysis, synthesis, application and interpretation. The decisional aspect stressed making right choices based on right doctrines and Christian teaching, while the creative aspect included the students' response to God in light of revelation: proper verbal, social, intellectual and emotional responses to God and His Word. Response answers would include skill in applying Biblical passages to one's life, to ethical issues in the world and to the Church. Responses were not to be reactive or based solely on feelings, but "conscious, wilful, considered replies to God in the form of words and deeds."<sup>104</sup> Teachers were to provide a non-judgmental atmosphere so students would be able to provide honest, personal answers without feeling pressured to do so; to do otherwise would be to promote hypocrisy.

Due to this emphasis on honesty and acceptance of the student who was to be in the classroom without fear of being judged, Revelation-Response earned a reputation for being a "creative pedagogical method" of Bible study. The program had very clear-cut, measurable goals. Test items included with the program were very closely related to learning objectives. Charts were included with samples of how to measure students' intellectual, decisional and creative dimensions. For example, under intellectual abilities, five categories were specified: memory, conceptualization, differentiation, application and high order transfer ability. Verbs were paired with each of these concepts: recall, identify,

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<sup>104</sup> A. Snoeyink. *Revelation Response: Test Items*, p.10

discriminate, apply, and generalize. Samples of student responses were clearly spelled out with external evidence and conditions of testing. A grade four student, when asked to provide a response to a disappointing situation in life would be required to write both a positive response and a negative one to the situation, thus illustrating that s/he was able to apply the Biblical concepts learned in class. A decisional activity might include what song the class would sing after studying the song of Miriam which she sung after God's miraculous delivery at the Red Sea, implying that students, too, should praise God after they had experienced an answer to prayer.

The Bible was considered to be the "primary and essential source of information about God's saving activity and consequently, the basic rule for life and faith."<sup>105</sup> The curriculum was factually laid out with very clear learning objectives, methods of testing, and highly organized activities with a view to getting the desired responses from students. In a grade 8 unit on decision making, students are asked to follow seven steps when making decisions:

1. Be sure that Christ is your Lord and is leading you as you decide.
2. Clearly state the problem.
3. Consider all options.
4. Find out what the Bible says about it.
5. Pray about the options.
6. Get advice from other Christians.
7. Decide.<sup>106</sup>

After some discussion under each of the headings, students are asked to write eight biblical guidelines for decision making, including the references for each one.

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<sup>105</sup> Arnold Snoeyink. *Test Items*, p. 8

<sup>106</sup> Arnold Snoeyink. *Revelation-Response: Kingdom Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI Christian Schools International, 1972) pp.15,16

After going through this exercise, students are asked to write about a fictional situation for which Biblical guidelines for decision making are not clear. Students are encouraged to go through the nine steps each time they are faced with decisions. Even though these steps were given, a lesson in the business education class next door might include only four steps: clearly state the problem; consider all options; find out what the experts say about a similar problem; and then make a decision based on the best possible options. (This activity in the business class was observed by the author.)

Was there a carry-over into other subject areas of the curriculum? Were the responses Biblical in other subjects and disciplines? Did developing positive decision making skills automatically translate into other areas of life? These were the all important questions.

Often the word 'habit' was used in the Revelation Response curriculum materials: "Make a habit of asking yourself whether God is leading you"; ". . . get into the habit of making action consistent with thought"; ". . . develop habits and commitments that honour the King". (pp. 10, 11) When Arnold Snoeyink was asked why he spent so much time evoking responses from the students, he replied: "The first essential is that when God speaks to us, He seeks response. We are convinced that we must sensitize children to develop habits of responding to God".<sup>107</sup>

The authors also emphatically state that really more time is spent on "the more academic matters of learning about God's revelation."<sup>108</sup> When asked why

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<sup>107</sup> Arnold Snoeyink, Donald Oppewal, Clarence Vredevoogd. "Principles to Practise" in *Essentials for Bible Curriculum* (National Union of Christian Schools, 1973), p.24

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p.24

they did not present the Biblical material chronologically, the authors stated that they had taken into account the developmental levels of the children so the chronology of the Bible was not presented until grades 7 and 8. Additionally, the authors contended, the unity of Scripture and even the flow of its history suggest that it is unwise to spend a whole semester on only one of the two Testaments. They wished to stay away from merely reaching the intellect of their students; thus they included decisional and creative response opportunities. They wanted teachers to teach to the whole student: body, mind and spirit. Man is not just a rational being, they contended.

This is some of the rationale behind the Revelation-Response series. The authors' emphasis was on a creative and decisional response to God's call rather than a strictly intellectual and moral Bible teaching. The authors were open to correction, suggestions and improvements, especially during the early pilot series (when the curriculum was refined, corrected and improved). The authors felt that they had "taken advantage of the best cultural products and educational technology of (the) times, while remaining faithful to their own unique philosophy, especially in detailing dimensional goals for holistic growth."(p.21)

From the vantage point of "the educational technology of the times", this curriculum certainly was well constructed with clear aims, methods and outcomes. It is almost as if the scientific method was used in acquiring the desired responses: give this information and out will come the following possibilities. On this basis, the Revelation-Response series was definitely superior to the rote memorization process of earlier years; an attempt to include creative decisions and responses was a reaction to the regurgitation/banking

method of the fifties. However, the Holy Spirit was excluded and the letter of legalism and habit had taken the place of the work of God in individual hearts.

Many teachers found the program too mechanistic; others saw joy and spontaneity squelched as creativity was too structured. The program had the feel of a stimulus-response curriculum with no room for the Holy Spirit. In fact, no mention was made of the third person of the Trinity. The ultimate question became: how can we produce the desired response, intellectually, socially and morally in our students so that they decide to live for God?" According to the authors, "answers would follow as naturally as night follows day."<sup>109</sup> Spontaneous, open-ended responses were not desired.

In practice, this program of Biblical studies differed little from the rote learning, memorization and regurgitation lessons of earlier days. At least the traditional approach of the early decades had students progress through the Bible in a chronological manner; God's power was stressed over correct student responses and foolish cartoons did not grace the pages of "the old books",<sup>110</sup> as some of the teachers and principals pointed out in evaluations. However, most principals in the Christian schools of BC adopted the Revelation-Response curriculum materials; some individual teachers still taught Bible in their own way; this was permitted as long as the required Bible books were covered.

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<sup>109</sup> Arnold Snoeyink. *Revelation Response: Test Items for Kingdom Beginnings*, p.5

<sup>110</sup> See Harro Van Brummelen's comments on this curriculum in his book: *Telling the Next Generation*, p.220.

## 6. Teaching Bible in the 1980s

After some ten years of teaching the Revelation-Response curriculum, staff at the Christian Schools International office (formerly NUCS) started working on a new Bible program. Comments, evaluations and criticisms from member schools and their teachers convinced the leaders that they could do better. Using money collected from Canadian and American Christian school supporters, (students, teachers and parents), CSI recruited teachers from various Christian schools to write a new Bible program under the direction of Gordon L. Bordewyk (CSI Director of publications and supervisor of the entire project). Dr. John Bolt wrote a statement of philosophy for the series. Draft material was sent to schools so that teachers could test the program. Finally, in 1989, the final copies of a Kindergarten through grade 8 Bible program was sent to American and Canadian Christian schools: *The Story of God and His People*.

Grades K-5 materials included a well-written teachers' guide, as well as workbooks for students with varied activities, questions, puzzles, acrostics, cut-outs, drawings and flannel graph figures. Grades 6 -8 were bone fide textbooks with questions and exercises accompanying each lesson. The lessons for primary grades were well-planned, easy to access and read. Each lesson was accompanied by the relevant Bible references, suitable memory work, related songs, materials needed and clear objectives and goals. The lesson steps were clearly articulated with suggested activities to follow. Teachers were strongly urged to tell the Bible story to their students. Each teacher's guide book contained a scope and sequence chart listing the Bible books and topics covered in each grade (K-8); suitable resources were also mentioned for each unit. Over

the nine school years, almost all Bible books were covered with the exception of some Pauline letters such as Thessalonians and Titus; Peter's, James' and Jude's letters were also left out, and the book of Revelation was studied in grades 5 and 8. A detailed memory work list was also included.

From a letter to Dr. Gordon Bordewyk, written by John Vanderhoek<sup>111</sup> of the Society of Christian Schools in BC, we read that teachers were encouraged to examine the preliminary copies in detail first before purchasing the entire program for their schools. The schools in BC were a bit wary of buying materials from CSI after their experience with Revelation-Response. However, since the lesson plans were so well developed with little need for teachers to go elsewhere and because lessons required only a minimum amount of preparation on the part of the teachers, the new Bible program was quickly highly acclaimed and ordered for all SCSBC schools.

This Bible series' aims were stated:

1. To present the Bible as the story of God's acts and words, written so that his people might know God and themselves, accept his gift of salvation and live lives of joyful service and obedience.
2. To teach the Bible not as a history book, a theological treatise, or a rule book, but as the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God, each part of which has a particular purpose and fits into the overall purpose of the Bible.
3. To help students make an *informed* commitment to Christ as Saviour and Lord and to live out that commitment through love, obedience, and service in ways that are appropriate for their spiritual maturity.
4. To immerse students in the stories and other writings in the Bible so that they may grow in knowledge wisdom, sensitivity, and creativity.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Letter by John Vanderhoek, education coordinator of SCSBC, to Dr. Gordon Bordewyk, publications director of CSI, June 5, 1989. (Langley, BC: SCSBC Bible Curriculum archives).

<sup>112</sup> Marilyn DeYoung, Anne VanderWoude, Marlene Padding. *The Story of God and His People: God's Wonders* (Grand Rapids, MI: CSI Publications, 1989.) p.23.

Goals 1, 2 and 4 are probably well met in this series. Goal number 3 is difficult to measure, but must come out in deeper ways than simply “Love God” or “Honour your parents”. It seems also, that even though the desire is to show God’s Word as divinely inspired and infallible, the workbook exercises sometimes draw the students away from the Word, especially if the teacher does not always bring the students back to it (even if they have listened to the Bible story or done an exercise related to it). The series, especially up to grade 4 and 5, does not draw the students into the Word to dig deeper and search out God’s truths for themselves. The workbook exercises do not encourage students to do research in the Bible, since the type of questions are usually factual or one word answers; even the ‘why’ questions do not drive the students to higher order thinking skills. For example, a unit test in the grade 5 book has mostly factual answers, names to be chosen from a word list, while any ‘why’ questions still demand only short phrase answers.<sup>113</sup>

A look at the grade 6 book<sup>114</sup> does verify the fact that students are now digging into the Bible as each set of questions is now related to direct Scripture passages. Students are asked to read the Scriptures and find the answers. Again the ‘what’ questions far outweigh the ‘why’ questions (see for example pp. 73, 74, 147, 197—the list could go on). Each chapter does have at least one challenge question where students are asked to go beyond straight answers from

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<sup>113</sup> Ben Boerkoel, Norm Sneller. *The Story of God and His People: Witnesses to the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: CSI Publications, 1989 ) p.147, 48.

<sup>114</sup> Dick J. Ritzema, Wailand Groenendyk. *The Story of God and His People: The House of Israel*. (Grand Rapids, MI: CSI Publications, 1989).

the Bible passage. Many sections, too, are brought right into the present day for the students, asking them to identify their own feelings, sins, responses, etc. (pp. 106, 107, 157, 173, 212, 222, 227).

Many relevant passages are also brought into their New Testament interpretations and contexts. (pp. 106, 108, 113, 116). Students are shown how the particular passage being studied is related to the historical context of the nations surrounding Israel, as evidenced by the story of the Babylonian creation and flood stories (pp. 35, 41), the stories behind the Egyptian gods (pp. 88, 94, 95), the covenants and how the heathens made them (pp. 104, 105), how other nations made their temples (p. 272) and a chapter about archaeological digs and their relationship to Biblical times. God's sovereign plan for His people is stressed throughout and students are encouraged to consider themselves as part of that plan. (pp. 7, 119, 173, 190, 229). Students are drawn into the books with catchy titles to which they can relate such as: "Chip off the old Block", "The Wheel Spins", "Burn Balak", "Baffled Balaam", and a "Balky Burro".

It is refreshing to see students drawn into the Word as they get into grade 6. God's honour, power and glory, mercy and love, patience and long suffering are clearly stressed (e.g. pp. 101, 112, 226, 234, 247- Book 6). Students are certainly left with a thorough knowledge of Biblical facts (Genesis to Kings David and Solomon – Grade 6; kings and prophets to Malachi – Grade 7; New Testament – Grade 8), a sense of Bible chronology as well as some research skills for further Bible study. However, it is more than facts that are important. As John Vanderhoek wrote to Gordon Bordewyk in his June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1989 letter: "Rather

than Biblical facts, we are after students who integrate this Biblical knowledge into their lives . . . it's a commitment to what one knows that leads to wisdom.”<sup>115</sup> John Vanderhoek was after the Biblical wisdom that is grounded in the fear of the Lord; he did not see enough of that in this Bible series.

Further study of this series reveals additional deficiencies: there is no collaborative group work required and mention of the role of the Holy Spirit is minimal. Students are asked to work together to produce a poster, a newspaper article, a drawing, a list of events or the like, but they are never encouraged to discuss together to come to any conclusions about the chapter or a certain periscope. I noticed in one teacher's guide that a teacher had circled “discussion” on p. 104 in the Grade 5 book (or “discuss reasons for” on p. 91, or “brainstorm” p. 41 in the same book). Discussion would then involve the entire class and this would be teacher-led. However, the students were not discussing among themselves to discover certain truths from Scripture.

As for the role of the Holy Spirit, it was discussed in obvious Scripture passages: the baptism of Jesus (p. 138, Grade 5); Anna and Simeon moved by the Spirit (p. 131); or Pentecost (p. 217). Even in these examples, the discussion is factual. In the discussion of the events at Pentecost, only one statement requires teachers to stress “that the Spirit empowered the believers”; there is no emphasis on how this Spirit works in the hearts and brings to mind the things of Christ as Jesus mentioned to his disciples in John 14:15-30). Goal 3 (above) could definitely be improved upon.

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<sup>115</sup> See letter written by John Vanderhoek, to Gordon L. Bordewyk, June 5, 1989. (Langley, BC.: SCSBC Bible Curriculum archives)

The grade 6 book, *The House of Israel* has been revised by authors Jesslyn De Boer, Beth Lantinga and Rachelle Wiersma (published by CSI in 1998). This second edition, bringing students into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is an even greater improvement. There are no questions and answers in the textbook itself. The pericope being studied is indicated at the beginning of the lesson and students are required to dig into the Scriptures for themselves. The book presents an overall picture of God's story from the garden in Genesis to the garden in Revelation chapter 21:1-4. The introductory unit summarizes the story of God's redemption in sixteen pages, concluding with a reminder that God wants each student to be a part of His plan through a new life in Christ: "Only those who have this new life will be able to live on the new earth." Since many people don't know about this new life in Christ, God wants each student to spread the good news of His salvation; students are encouraged to study God's book, the Bible. The unit ends with a responsive reading of Psalm 136 to help students realize God's faithfulness and stubborn covenant love.

This edition is filled with helpful comments on the life of Bible times: maps showing where the actual stories take place, boxed 'stories' about Canaanite gods, covenantal customs, vows, various creation and flood stories of the gentile nations, harvesting customs and so on. This is done with a view to bring the students into the context of the life of God's chosen people. The book does not cover all the chapters of the Bible, but it brings the students along and focuses on the main stories. God's power, glory and faithfulness are stressed throughout. There is an expectation that the students, guided by the teacher will be searching the Scriptures to find their own answers. Events such as the sacrifice of Isaac (p.

53), the scapegoat being sent into the wilderness (p. 102), the Passover feast (pp. 81, 82) and “Mephibosheth and Us” (p. 209) are all shown to point to Christ and students are left with no doubt that the entire Old Testament is fulfilled in the New.

There is a quiet excitement in the book that gives God the honour due His Name, that brings out God’s sovereignty and that encourages the students to become part of God’s plan. When the covenant of circumcision with Abraham is described (p. 49), women are shown to be part of the covenant since they were considered property of their fathers or husband; similarly, the authors state, “Today in some churches, both girl and boy babies are baptized as a physical sign that they belong to the family of God.” This statement about “some churches” would never have been included in the early Bible textbooks of the CSI Christian schools.

Books 7 and 8 in this series follow the same format. Book 7 (for grade 7 students) is entitled “*The Day of the Lord*” and covers the divided kingdom to the early ministry of Christ. It begins with putting the student’s story into God’s story by the question: in what way is the Bible story our story (p. 5)? After a brief review, chapter two begins with the rebellion of Rehoboam and the kingdom being divided. The lessons alternate with description and retelling of the Bible stories, each with a set of questions, again mostly of the ‘what,’ ‘how,’ ‘when’ and ‘why’ variety. ‘Why’ questions mostly require simple, factual answers (e.g. 1 Kings 11:27-40: Why didn’t Jeroboam receive all of the pieces of the garment? P. 20). Almost every chapter has a ‘challenge question’ where students are required to search a little deeper or do a project related to the story, such as the

writing of a newspaper article about a battle or a Biblical event. Prophecies about Christ are related to New Testament events: Isaiah 7:14 is explained by referring to Matthew 1:22, 23.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned when and if it is brought up in the prophets. The sign Immanuel in Isaiah 14 is brought to bear on the present day by the statement, "God is still with us today through the presence of the Holy Spirit" (p. 86). When the prophet Joel is studied, the pericope of Joel 2:28-32 is related to Acts 2:1-21, but again how the Spirit was manifested is not discussed. The title of chapter 7, section 4 is "Not by might but by my Spirit" (p. 165), but how this work of the Spirit actually happens is never explained. The fact that many prophets received a vision of God in His glory to prepare them for their work is never mentioned (e.g. Isaiah, Amos, Habakkuk, Ezekiel).

From an intellectual perspective this series is loaded with questions that need to be answered. However, the power and glory of the God who works in history is not found. Without a teacher who is passionate about the Word of God, students could find Bible study very boring; they might think that the only way to study the Bible is by question and answer. I know of one student who became quite depressed in grade 7 because all he studied was the dreadful day of the Lord—all the judgments, distresses, impending disasters for sin, with very little hope. God's power and glory on behalf of His people was not emphasized and this student was left quite depressed with fear in his heart about the coming dreadful day of the Lord.

The grade 8 book does require some higher level skills in that the use of a Bible dictionary, a concordance and some mapping skills are required. Challenge

sections are also a part of every chapter. This book, entitled “*A Light to the Gentiles*” is written by five authors: Hazel Timmer, Nancy Groom, Steven Baxendale, Olga Vasques and Ellen Weber. It also begins by putting the student into God’s story. After a brief review of Old Testament times, followed by a brief description of the inter-testamentary period, the student begins to read about the birth of Christ. Mark’s gospel is studied in detail up to chapter ten. The gospels are put into their historical settings, and the same types of questions follow story descriptions of gospel events. The authors do try to bring the stories into the students’ lives by asking more personal questions such as “How can you become a member of God’s family?” (p. 29); “What does the parable of the sower have to say to us?” (p. 31); and “Do you believe that there really is an evil being whom the Bible calls ‘Satan’?” (p. 34).

After the questions, the material continues matter-of-factly. There is a section called “Thinking it Over” where questions are asked which try to bring the Bible into the present day life of the students (e. g. pp. 63, 141, 166). John’s gospel is introduced as “John’s Witness to Jesus” but the first chapter is hardly discussed. Students are not brought to behold the glory of the Son of God. Everything is very factual. Even the passion of our Lord is not emotional; the accounts are examined in each gospel and compared for similarities and differences, but nowhere are students asked what Christ’s suffering actually means for them. After studying Jesus’ resurrection, students go into the book of Acts; in the early church the role of the Holy Spirit is stressed, but again, it is never made personal for the students. When we read that the Holy Spirit indwells all believers, not just the Jews (p. 125), there is only discussion *about* the Holy

Spirit, not a study of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity, what the Spirit does and how He works in the hearts of believers. For example, in the study of the council of Jerusalem, a conclusion is made that “Christians can solve their arguments through honest discussion” (p. 163); in fact, Acts 15 states: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”, indicating throughout the chapter that it was God who worked this final answer out for the council members. The grade 8 book does bring God’s Word into the lives of the students more by relating it to their personal situations, however, overall, this series is still too much of a factual exercise: students will be left feeling that Bible study is a matter of questions and answers and may not be filled with the power and glory of God and have a passionate desire to live for Him as a result of encountering Him in His Word.

The grade 7 and 8 books have now been revised as well: “*The Day of the Lord*” for grade seven (Book 2) and “*God’s Unfolding Plan*” (Book 3)<sup>116</sup> for grade eight are much more colourful. There are no question and answer exercises in the grade 7 text, while the grade 8 text has three questions after each section. These books include maps in many chapters so students can get a ‘feel’ of the land issues: where Abraham travelled, what nations were to be conquered, where the divided kingdoms lay, what Palestine was like in Jesus’ day and so on. There are little archaeological/cultural inserts such as notes about olive oil (Book 2, p. 149), Jewish marriage customs (Book 2 p. 243), pictures of lamps from ancient pottery dumps (Book 2, p. 72), a biblical harp (Book 1, p.182) or photographs of

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<sup>116</sup> Jesslyn De Boer, Beth Lantinga, Rachele Wiersma. *The House of Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Schools International, 1998).  
Beth Lantinga. *The Day of the Lord*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Schools International, 1998).  
Rachele Wiersma. *God’s Unfolding Plan* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Schools International, 1998).

artefacts such as the menorah and shofar (Book 1, p. 129). All three books contain beautiful photographs of famous works of Art throughout the ages: *Moses* by Michaelangelo, (Book 3, p.49), *Pharaoh's Hosts engulfed by the Red Sea* (Book 1, p. 86) or *Elijah's Ascent in a Chariot of Fire* by Gustave Dore (Book 2, p. 42). There are also excellent photos of features of the Holy Land. The texts re-tell the stories to bridge the gap between certain kings of Israel to provide background information about new eras to be studied. Reader's theatre helps to contemporize the stories for the students: "Jeremiah Buys a Field and Wonders Why" (Book 2, pp. 122-125), where Jeremiah's purchase of a field from Hanamel, his cousin, is described in the form of a play.

Book 1 (grade 6) takes the students from creation to the reigns of David and Solomon; Book 2 (grade 7) describes the struggles of the divided kingdom and brings the history of the Jews to the birth of Christ. The inter-testamentary period is very well described, as is the geography of the holy land. Photographs, maps of the five longitudinal zones of Palestine, archaeological discoveries, a description of the Jewish feasts as well as a discussion of the Essenes, the Zealots and the Sanhedrin bring the students right into the time of Christ. In Book 3 the grade 8 students cover the entire Old Testament once again, this time using more varied exegetical tools: searching for the "original interpretation or meaning of the passage" (p. 5) by studying the culture, authors and circumstances of the OT books (p.6) and by using hermeneutical tools to find out "how the Bible remains relevant for us today" (Book 2 p. 7).

Overall, these three books are much more attractive than the books of the first edition. Only book three has three questions at the end of each chapter

(mostly factual/comparison oriented). God is honoured in His sovereignty, mercy, and righteousness; students are brought into the 'story' of God's unfolding plan and truths are presented objectively. Once in a while, questions are personalized, such as in Book 2, page 5: "You will hear the voice of God, the main character. He reveals His heart and mind . . . ". Another example of this occurs in the story of Elijah and the widow in 1 Kings 17, where students are reminded that "just as certainly as God sent Elijah to encourage the widow, so God will certainly walk with you . . . " (p. 27).

On page 13 of Book 1 we read the object of the entire series: "God wants you to be part of his story. God wants you to experience real happiness and find new life in Christ. Only those who have the new life will be able to walk on the new earth." Students are told that as they "read some of those rules for holy living (God's laws in the Pentateuch)", they should "think about ways that they can help [you] make room for God in [your] hearts." (Book 2, p. 105). Yet even though the tenor of these three books focuses on God and His power in working out His purposes for Israel and the nations, the Holy Spirit is never mentioned as the One who works in hearts and lives. When chapter 37 of Ezekiel is studied in Book 2 (pp. 140-143), the "breath of God" is not explained as God's Spirit, as the sovereign Lord speaks to Ezekiel: "I will put my Spirit in you and you will live." The story is presented as a reader's theatre, perhaps intended to give the teacher opportunity to explain this part of the story more specifically later. The book of Joel is discussed very briefly in Book 3 page 189, and the work of the Holy Spirit is only referred to obliquely: "What future prophecy is embedded within Joel's current concern for the people?" In Book 2 the prophets are connected to

the reigns of the kings, while in Book 3 the prophets are discussed relating to themes such as “addressing injustice” (Isaiah and Amos, p. 169), “The Prophetic Call” (Isaiah, Jonah and Haggai, p. 167), or the theme of “justice” (Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah, p.173). Other than stressing God’s power, hatred of sin, and calls to repentance in the prophets, the word “Holy Spirit” cannot be found in Book 3. In describing the seventy elders who helped Moses judge the people, the authors state that “God’s Spirit was upon them” (p. 110, Book 2). There is often reference to how symbols and prophecies relate to Christ (pp. 99, 102, 204, 216, 221 of Book 2).

The new editions for grades 6 to 8 of the series “The Story of God and His People” are much more attractively laid out, well defined in terms of history and God’s sovereign plan of redemption, and carefully designed in terms of exegesis and hermeneutics. The stress is far less on answering factual questions; God’s glory and purpose are kept in view, the need for students to become part of God’s plan is stressed, and the eschatological plan of God is brought before the students. Again, the stress is certainly on the Old Testament in these years. Christ’s birth and life until age twelve are not covered until Book 2. The role of the Holy Spirit and how He works faith in hearts and lives is not mentioned.

Rachelle Wiersma has written a grade 9 text in this series entitled “*Hope of the World*”.<sup>117</sup> This book contains one chapter on the inter-testamentary period and then continues on to discuss the four Gospels, the book of Acts, the Pauline letters and the Apocalypse in the form of excerpts from the books of Ezekiel and Daniel and the book of Revelation. This book is very well laid out, following the

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<sup>117</sup> Rachelle Wiersma. *The Story of God and His People: Hope of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Schools International, 2002)

same format as the books for grade 7 and 8. The major themes of the gospels are emphasized: the kingdom of heaven, the redemptive work of Christ, as well as the eschaton. The gospels are compared; the individual books are explained in terms of their audience, major discourses, the writers and their possible sources, and cultural context. Questions at the end of each chapter often compare and contrast the Old and New Testaments, bring out various writing styles of the authors and prod the students to discover the relevance of the New Testament books for their own lives.

This is especially true of the study of the book of Ephesians, in which questions are asked such as “What does it mean to you that you are a child of God through Jesus Christ?” (p. 132); “What does it mean to you that the Church of Christ is to be cooperative and not competitive?” (p. 137); and “How can you serve God and others in your various roles?” (p. 139). Chapter 3 of Unit 5 discusses issues of hermeneutics: “Words for the first Century and Today” (pp. 126, 127). Students are referred to Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart’s book, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*<sup>118</sup>, in order to discover how passages in the Pauline Epistles are applicable to today. The role of the Holy Spirit is stressed much more often than in the previous books, perhaps due to the fact that the grade 9 book covers much of the New Testament. Even though the Spirit is not mentioned in the retelling of John chapter three when Jesus talks to Nicodemus, the Spirit’s role in the early church is stressed and mentioned objectively each time a relevant passage is studied (for example on page 137 the question is

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<sup>118</sup> Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003)

asked: “How are baptism and the Holy Spirit tied together in the book of Ephesians?”)

There are many beautiful inserts of photographs of famous artists who depict Biblical scenes; geographical features are shown in photographs (e.g. the island of Crete, p. 104; the island of Patmos, p. 143; and the caves of Qumran, p. 27); there are pictures of temple ruins (p. 71), heathen gods (p. 129), and time lines (p. 105). This book too, includes inserts on special traditions (p.74, the phylacteries), the meaning of Roman citizenry (p. 116), the philosophies of Stoics and Epicurians (p. 110) and the Roman practise of crucifixion (p. 99). These last three books evidence a refining and improvement over the previous editions. There is a healthy teacher/student involvement; a digging into the Biblical text by teacher and student alike; and the recommended use of up to date commentaries such as Lawrence O. Richards *Teachers' Commentary* (1987) and scholarly works such as Walter C. Kaiser's *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (1994).

In summary, the revised versions of the later CSI texts for grades 6 to 9 are an even greater improvement to the early editions: students are digging into the Scriptures for themselves and are not bogged down with lengthy seatwork answers that do not allow for higher level thinking skills. Students are also encouraged to check out other sources to verify historical events; they are asked to do some study on geography and archaeology to determine the relationship of places and events to the Biblical text. They get a picture of the ancient cities by the photographs shown. Students and teacher dig into the Word; there is communal interaction. The possibilities of the Holy Spirit and the biblical text

interacting with students and teachers' lives are wide open; the power and presence of God is not 'restricted' by lengthy, boring questions and answers.

## 7. The Interview Process: Implementing the Text

I have interviewed three teachers from SCSBC Christian schools who use the Bible series, *The Story of God and His People* (the entire series from grades 1-9) to see how teachers actually implement these texts and what their views are concerning the teaching of Bible. For each school 'system', I tried to interview a primary, intermediate, and high school teacher to get a broad perspective of the teaching of Bible.

The following questions are included in each interview:

1. What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?
2. What is your view of the Bible?
3. Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?
4. How do you view your students?
5. Is your classroom a community of learners?
6. Other comments?

After each interview, the teacher was asked to sign a release giving me permission to use their comments in my writings. I have changed the names of the teachers using initials only to ensure privacy (see Academic Preview).

On August 18, 2004, I interviewed Ms. H,<sup>119</sup> a primary teacher in one of the SCSBC Christian schools. Ms. H. is required to follow the CSI curriculum

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<sup>119</sup> D:1, p.351.

described above for the primary grades. She has taught Bible for many years in grades K-2. Ms. H. is not from the Reformed persuasion, though she teaches in a school that was started by Christian Reformed parents fifty years ago. When I asked her about the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Bible, she replied, "How can we possibly be led to teach what is important if we don't have the Holy Spirit?" Her comments regarding the curriculum and her teaching practice were very interesting:

My day is to be directed by the Holy Spirit; I have specific Bible lessons, but I take teachable moments throughout the day. I find spontaneity is lost for the sake of the curriculum; there is too much material to cover in the CSI curriculum. I impart the Word to my students: maybe God will give me a harvest. I may have the privilege of leading one of my students to Christ.

Ms. H. views the Bible as a "letter from my Lord": "It is His Word to His people to show His love and faithfulness; it's infallible." Her view is that many Bible stories in the curriculum for primary children are not age appropriate: "There seems to be a conspiracy to keep Jesus out of the curriculum. There is too much focus on the Old Testament." Ms. H. follows the church calendar; when it is Christmas, her class spends several weeks on the Christmas story. The same is done with Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost. Ms. H. does not feel she can cover all the Old Testament stories in the primary curriculum.

Her approach to teaching Bible is more interactive than expository:

One of the main ways I teach Bible is by story telling; then the students dramatize the story with costumes and props. I do not read the Bible stories. I do have communal discussions in my Bible lessons, along with prayer time. I make the Bible come alive throughout the day, especially with music, song and drama. My students know so much Scripture by singing it. I make the Bible come alive for them by asking students if they can see patterns, let's say in the lives of the Israelites, and then we discuss whether

or not we see those same patterns in our lives. I ask them if God speaks to us today. How did the people in this story feel about the events, etc. That way my students respond from their hearts and tell me their feelings, fears and attitudes.

Ms. H views her students as conceived and born in sin; she tells them they are sinners who need a Saviour: “I think in a Christian school, it is the teachers’ role to bring the students to Christ. Yes, teachers plant seeds and water them, but sometimes God gives an opportunity to harvest as well, and I do not want to miss that.”

Ms. B has taught Humanities 8 at Abbotsford Christian Secondary School for many years.<sup>120</sup> She views her students at ACS as made in God’s image, entrusted to the teachers by their parents, and valued as individuals with God-given gifts and abilities. She stated succinctly that the Holy Spirit works through her and in each individual student to “make their learning in Bible not only head knowledge but also heart knowledge.” She has cooperative learning exercises in her Bible classes where students learn sequence of events together by way of puzzles or games; she encourages brainstorming activities where students come up with possible answers or solutions, she has them reflect on Biblical truths, and asks open ended questions such as, “How would you feel if . . .”. She discusses concepts such as ‘truth’ and ‘faith’ in today’s terms. She reads Bible stories to them, tells them Bible stories, has students re-enact the stories and sometimes shows videos of Biblical stories when appropriate (e.g. The Ten Commandments, The Exodus). She has communal discussions about Bible passages. She also has made a heroic attempt to integrate Bible into Humanities 8 with lessons such as comparing the history of ancient China with the times of King David. After the

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<sup>120</sup> D:2, p.352.

interview, she expressed her thanks to be able to reflect on her Bible teaching herself before she begins another school year.

On June 1, 2004, I visited with Ms. MP, senior Bible teacher at Abbotsford Christian High School (ACSS).<sup>121</sup> She has taught Bible and Social Studies in the highest grades for eleven years now, and she knows the school and students well. She has compiled, along with other Bible teacher consultants (notably Mr. KV, also a Bible teacher at ACSS), a Bible curriculum for her students that stresses being a witness to our culture. The following is a one page outline/rationale for her course.<sup>122</sup>

i. Bible 12: Knowing our Story, a course outline

Most of us have had the privilege of growing up in a Christian home and having Christian education. We are familiar with the stories contained in the Bible, accept the majority of doctrines taught to us by our parents and church, and seek to live out the Truth in daily life. However, familiarity often leads to the erroneous idea that “We’ve got it figured out,” and we stop listening, learning and stretching our faith. As we mature we should be asking deeper questions, gleaning deeper insights and becoming more discerning. In this course we will discover anew the richness of our faith and what it means for our cosmos and our responsibility to be a neighbour. Discovery always involves questions, and the following questions are meant to get us thinking. The hope is that this course will prepare our students for the types of interactions they will face with all types of neighbours as they enter the job market or continue with the education.

1. Our Story
  - a. What is our STORY?
  - b. Who are our heroes of the faith?
  - c. Why is justice emphasized throughout the Bible and how have Christians understood this call throughout the ages?  
How do we understand God’s love for the cosmos?

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<sup>121</sup> D:3, pp. 353,354.

<sup>122</sup> Reprinted with permission from M. Patrick

This section will include a brief biblical overview, with particular attention paid to the character of God. Isaiah 58 and the book of Amos guide our discussion about justice and its relevance in today's context. Some Christians have demonstrated a wonderful ability to apply justice to unique situations and are still considered heroes today, while other attempts have driven people away from the Christian faith. We need to examine both in order to glean insights and be able to respond to those who are cynical about faith or have probing questions.

## 2. Competing Stories

- a. What are these stories? (cultural 'isms')
- b. How did we get here?
- c. How have Christians interacted with these stories?

Here we examine the popular secular beliefs of our culture. As we trace the historical development of these ideas from classical antiquity onwards, we find both truth and falsehood. We need to understand this history because it is our history. The church has always engaged its culture, shaping it and at times being shaped by it. A study of Ecclesiastes and the ideas of Aristotle have much to teach us.

## 3. Living at the Crossroads

- a. How then shall we live?
- b. What does it mean to be salt and light?
- c. How do we make ethical decisions in the land of relativism?
- d. What is a neighbour?

Peter, James and Jude are our guides for this section. We are called to live our lives with distinction, meaning that we live in the tension of being distinct from the secular culture yet being a neighbour to all, or living in the here but not yet, and being in but not of the world. C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton and Leslie Newbigin are wonderful teachers as we begin grappling with how we shall live.

In my discussion with Ms. MP, I learned that she was weary of teaching Bible and would like to teach only Social Studies: many of her students suffer from 'religious overkill'; they have heard the same story over and over again and have become immune to the beauty and wonder of God's Word. Additionally, as all students must take Bible 12, Ms. MP has a wide gamut of learning abilities

(disabilities) in the same classroom. She has assigned some volunteer service work to those students who find any work that requires reasoning or essay writing too difficult.

Students have the attitude that Bible must be fun, or it is not worth their while. The most difficult subjects to teach in a Christian high school are Bible and French, since students must take those subjects in order to graduate. They feel it is being shoved down their throats.

Ms. MP described students at various stages of commitment in their faith walk, but most often she feels she has to drag them along. ACSS started in 1953 with almost all students (and parents) belonging to the Christian Reformed Church. Now, however, there are more than sixty different churches represented in the school; Bible teachers must also be sensitive to various interpretations on different aspects of Biblical doctrine and theology. Ms.MP considered this an asset, since many topics are brought up for discussion and students learn to be sensitive to one another's emphases and leanings.

Ms. MP also wants to bring her students beyond that point so they use their mind and not their feelings to make decisions, as today's culture stresses feeling so much—never mind if it's right, it's what feels right that counts. She added also that students now live in a totally different world: adults need to earn their respect; instructors don't have respect by virtue of being *in loci parentis* or by being teachers placed there by God. Students now look to their peers for leadership, rather than their elders or parents.

One additional challenge is a lack of parental knowledge: parents do not know their Bibles well, making teaching Bible that much more difficult. According

to Ms. MP, both students and parents are totally convinced that they make autonomous choices:

Even though they may know a Bible truth to be true, that still will not stop them from pursuing their own pleasures. They are not aware of how much like their culture they are and how their cultural assumptions shape their lives. They rebel, but still in their heart of hearts they know what God expects of them; however, since their peers drive their choices, they often flounder and do not choose to follow God.

On the question regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in teaching Bible, Ms. MP commented: "The Holy Spirit has to convict their hearts, that's the bottom line. I still address them as Christians since this is a Christian school. The word covenant does not come up very often, since not all, maybe not even half, of the students have been baptized as infants."

Ms. MP makes her Bible come alive for her students using the books of Ecclesiastes, Judges, Isaiah and Amos to illustrate God's justice and man's response. She studies the epistles of Peter to bring to life how students are to live in this present evil age. By the time students have finished grade 10, they no longer go through the Bible chronologically, but topically. She loves God's Word and she has a passion for her students to serve God well. She uses many open-ended assignments and discussions to bring out the truths of God's Word. She allows much student to student interaction with the Bible as well as teacher-student discussions, thus creating an atmosphere of community and reciprocity in the classroom.

Each teacher interviewed saw the role of the Holy Spirit as critical to the teaching of Bible, viewed the Bible as God's inerrant Word, saw their students as image bearers of God in need of coming to Christ, and fostered communal

learning in the classroom. Storytelling was used extensively in the primary grades, although Ms. B said she also used some story telling while Ms. MP used it when appropriate. Textbooks were not used slavishly: Ms. H. inserted her own units of stories about Jesus, Ms. B. compared the life of King David to the history she was studying about China and Ms. MP made up her own curriculum with another Bible teacher in her school. Judging by especially Ms. H's and Ms. MP's comments, the Christian Reformed covenant position is not as strongly emphasized any longer, since so many different denominations are represented in the school.

#### 8. Teaching Bible, 1990-present

Specialist teachers have been meeting throughout the 1970s and 1980s to write curriculum units from a Christian perspective; Bible curriculum writers for the high school grades of nine through twelve were no exception. Some units were also adopted from the Ontario Alliance of Christian schools (OACS) or from the Prairie Association of Christian Schools (PACS).

In 1994, SCSBC curriculum coordinators John Vanderhoek and Robert Koole published a curriculum handbook entitled *Christian Pathways for Schooling: SCSBC Core Statements*. These statements were later revised in 2003 under a new title: *Educating with Heart and Mind* (edited by Robert Koole; published by the new director of publications and communications, RuthAnn Raycroft). In this handbook, the biblical foundations of creation, fall, redemption and restoration are clearly spelled out on the first pages. Learning in community is stressed at the outset: what does God require of us in our schooling? That we

love mercy, do justice and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). Walking with God in our classrooms involves obedience to the cultural mandate that we, as God's image bearers, are fruitful and subdue the earth (Genesis 1:27, 28); that we live according to His great Commandment (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5); that we follow Christ's command to go into the world and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20); and that we live in a body of believers, sharing our gifts as we use them for God's glory (1 Corinthians 12-14). This involves creating a community of shalom in our classrooms as we encourage students to love God above all, do His will in our classrooms and outside of them, and live as He wants us to in relationship to our classmates and neighbours. This will certainly affect how we teach Bible in our classrooms: we will use God's Word as a basis for all subjects, we will read it as a devotional book, and we will study it as God's inspired Word so that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is in Christ that all things hold together and have meaning (Colossians 1:17).

As teachers and students alike, created 'Imago Dei', we will focus on our students, love and respect them for Christ's sake (even though they sin), and attempt to nurture, guide, enable and nudge them to a life of responsible discipleship. "A priority in the SCSBC mandate is the development of curriculum resources that will help schools in building Christ-centered curricula and to help teachers examine and implement such matters."<sup>123</sup> To be sure, not all members of each classroom in Christian schools are Christians; some may never be converted to Christ. However, the aim of these schools is to examine all of life

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<sup>123</sup> Robert Koole, Henry Contant, RuthAnn Raycroft. *Educating with Heart and Mind* (Langley, BC: SCSBC Publications, 2003) p.10.

under God so that students learn for understanding, appreciation and responsible action, as Stuart Fowler neatly summed it up:<sup>124</sup>:

The Bible clearly indicates that taking care of God's world, establishing and maintaining justice, enjoying the creation God has made, living lives that are balanced, exercising financial stewardship, caring for those who suffer oppression and those who are poor of means and heart, living harmoniously with each other, and using means of communication to build each other up in the faith are all part of being Christian disciples."

This handbook then goes on to spell out what Christian spirituality looks like: being holy for God is holy, daily seeking God's face in prayer, waiting on God, keeping in step with the Spirit of God, practising the disciplines, and seeking first the kingdom.<sup>125</sup> This involves living in loving relationship with one's fellow student/teacher, serving God in serving each other and disciplining with godly wisdom and love so that student and teacher alike attain to the full measure of the stature of Christ. In Biblical studies, then, this will involve seeing the Bible as God's inspired Word and thus our guide for faith and all of life. Students will come "to know and experience the Bible as the story of God's acts and words, written so that people may come to know God, themselves and creation, accept his gift of salvation and live joyfully in service to God and other people."<sup>126</sup> Being filled with the knowledge of this Word, they will understand their place in this world and be able to find guidance for their lives in their present situations.

This handbook is to be the core for all curriculum planning, mapping and teaching, since it shows how God and His word underlie all studies and

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<sup>124</sup> Stuart Fowler. "Schooling for the Purpose of Love" in *Christian Schooling: Education for Freedom*, S. Fowler, H. Van Brummelen and J. Van Dyk, editors. (Potchefstroom, Institute for Reformational Studies, 1990) p.75

<sup>125</sup> R. Koole et al. *Educating with Heart and Mind*, p.11

<sup>126</sup> R. Koole et al. *Educating with Heart and Mind*, p.49

disciplines. Not only is the foundation set out for teaching Biblical Studies, but all aspects of the curriculum are covered: Drama, Family life, French, Kindergarten, Language Arts/English, Mathematics, Media education, Physical education, Science, Social Studies, Visual Arts and Learning Assistance for students with special needs. The idea is that teachers become so familiar with the themes of God's word so that their curriculum plans will reflect those assumptions. N. T. Wright suggests that students become so familiar with God's works and ways that they will be able to think God's thoughts after Him, much the same way as high school students study Shakespeare.<sup>127</sup> They will know Shakespeare's devices, plans and methods so well that if they were to be presented with four acts of a, to them as yet unknown, Shakespearean play, they would be able to write and act out Act five with no problem. This 'play-writing' under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit will be developed in the latter part of my thesis.

In this way, these descendants of the Kuyperian Calvinists in Holland are writing their own act five now. To Kuyper, as previously mentioned, there was to be no distinction between the sacred and the secular: every square inch of creation belongs to Christ and must be acknowledged as such. These Kuyperians now call themselves "creation based neo-calvinists"<sup>128</sup>; they continue to teach that all of life must be examined under God, that creation is God's good handiwork and that God's creational design must be kept in view at all times. In the words of Dr. Albert Wolters:

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<sup>127</sup> N.T. Wright in *The Bible and the Task of Teaching*. David Smith & John Shortt (Stapleford, UK: The Stapleford Centre, 2002), p.63.

<sup>128</sup> Dr. Hans Boersma, in an interview for *The Regent World*, Spring 2005, Vol. 16, #2 (www.regent-college.edu)

Humankind, which has botched its original mandate and the whole creation along with it, is given another chance in Christ; we are reinstated as God's managers on earth. The original good creation is to be restored. The practical implications of that intention are legion . . . Politics should not be declared off-limits, but reformed. Art ought not to be pronounced worldly, but claimed for Christ. Business must no longer be relegated to the secular world, but must be made to conform again to God-honouring standards. Every sector of human life yields such examples.<sup>129</sup>

This group of 'Reformed' Christian schools started in the spirit of Abraham Kuyper (contending that all of life is sacred and all must be lived to the glory of God). During the 1970s, they tended to leave out the role of the Holy Spirit and tried to teach God's truth more mechanically and in a habit-forming manner (as evidenced in the Revelation-Response series). This may have been due to their view of the students as being covenant children who only needed to be trained in the right paths. In the 1990s, however, there has been a definite return to "creation based" learning, examining all of life under God, studying the Word and practising the disciplines of holiness through the power of the Holy Spirit. There is still acknowledgement of "a covenant community"<sup>130</sup> when referring to the Christian school, but there is also a definite understanding that "we cannot assume that all children are Christians. We help children understand a Christian worldview, but not all will personally accept such a worldview"<sup>131</sup> There has been a definite shift from the teaching of Bible in the 1950s to the 1990s with respect to covenant, since many children now in the SCSBC Christian schools come from non-reformed churches.

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<sup>129</sup> Albert M. Wolters. *Creation Regained*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1985), p.58.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Koole et al. *Educating with Heart and Mind*, p.48.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

### III. Other 'Reformed' Day Schools

#### 1. The Canadian Reformed Church Schools, 1950-present

##### i. History

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004, I visited with Mr. JS, principal of the William of Orange School in Cloverdale.<sup>132</sup> This school started in the 1950s under leadership of Walter VanderKamp (now deceased). He immigrated from The Netherlands with his family of nine children and was of “Vrijgemaakt” (literally translated; Made Free) persuasion. This group, also known as “Artiekel 31”, split from the Gereformeerde Kerk in the The Netherlands in 1944, during the severest year of the WW II. The cause of the split related to the Synodical decisions of 1939-1943. One of the chief reasons for dissention was the equation of divine election with infant baptism: whether or not baptised infants should be considered believers in Christ, held for members of the body of Christ, and considered children of God.<sup>133</sup> A phrase taken from the form for infant baptism—“Het houden voor”, or “considered to be”—was too weak an expression, according to some of the “Vrijgemaakten”. For the dissenting brethren, baptised infants were not assumed to be ‘in Christ’, they **were** sanctified in Him.

According to Dr. Kuyper, who promulgated the teaching of ‘veronderstelde wedergeboorte’ (presumptive regeneration), infants received the kernel of regeneration in their mother’s womb or shortly after birth: “De doop is het zegel

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<sup>132</sup> D:4, p.355.

<sup>133</sup> Dr. E. Smilde. *Een Eeuw Van Strijd Over Verbond en Doop* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1946), p. 340.

der wedergeboorte” (Baptism is the seal of regeneration).<sup>134</sup> Prof. Schilder, one of the leaders of the split of 1944, took this doctrine one step further: “We houden de kinderen niet voor in Christus geheiligd, maar ze **zijn** het. Dit is een vaststaand feit.”<sup>135</sup> (We don’t assume the children are holy in Christ, they are. This is an indubitable fact.) The ‘bezwaarden’ (the concerned ones), those led by Prof. Schilder, had little sympathy with pietistic self examination.<sup>136</sup> Dr. Smilde affirmed that this group is too objective in its interpretation of the form for infant baptism; they ignore the inward working of the Holy Spirit and run dangerously close to equating baptism with election, thus leaving out the spiritual workings of a relationship with God.<sup>137</sup>

This view of baptism, coupled with article 31 of the Dordt Church Order (the article that spelled out the authority of Synodical decisions), led to a breaking away of thousands of Gereformeerden who formed “De Vrijgemaakte Kerken”. (These churches considered themselves free from the decisions of Synod of 1943-1945). The Vrijgemaakte Kerken were transplanted to Canada where they became known as the Canadian Reformed Churches (affectionately called the “CanReffers”) or in the United States, the American Reformed Churches. These churches too, require their members to subscribe to The Three Forms of Unity: The Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dordt and the Belgic Confession. Their Synod meets once every three years and allows more sovereignty in the local churches, as compared to the Christian Reformed denomination (whose

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<sup>134</sup> A Kuyper. *Dictaten Dogmatiek: Locus Salute, Ecclesia, Sacramentis*. (Kampen: J.H. Kok, no date given), p.119.

<sup>135</sup> Dr. E. Smilde. *Een Eeuw Van Strijd Over Verbond en Doop*, p. 340. Translation mine.

<sup>136</sup> E. Smilde. *Een Eeuw Van Strijd Over Verbond en Doop*, p.341.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p.340.

synodical decisions are binding upon the entire denomination, though this view is gradually changing now). There is also a strong emphasis on the triangle of home, church and school, similar to that of the Christian Reformed Church. Professor Holwerda, one of the leaders of the split of 1944, stressed that “the promise is unto you and your children . . . ” (Acts 2:39), hence there must be unity between home, church and school.

Mr. VanderKamp started a school (also in the early 1950s) for this denomination just a few blocks from the John Knox Christian School (begun in 1955 in New Westminster). Students from the John Knox School were known as “Oxes” to William of Orange students; likewise students from William of Orange School were called “Orange Peels” by students from John Knox. Mr. VanderKamp was schooled in the classics and taught his children and his students Latin as well as much classical history, along with the three “R’ s”.<sup>138</sup>

William of Orange School was later sold and moved to its current situation in Cloverdale. After Mr. VanderKamp retired, his colleague, Sander VanderPloeg, became principal followed by Apko Nap. Mr. Nap, along with Mr. Pieter Torenvliet and Christine Farenhorst, wrote several books on Church History for K-7 students and taught Bible along with the history of the church. It is only natural that members of the Canadian Reformed Churches would teach their children Biblical history along with church history; it was important to instil in students the ‘raison d’être’ for their denomination (the difference in their view of baptism and synodical authority, compared to that of the Christian Reformed Church). According to Mr. JS, until the 1990s most teachers in Canadian Reformed

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<sup>138</sup> This description was given to me by one of Mr. VanderKamp’s children

schools taught their own Bible lessons and made up their own worksheets to go along with the lessons.

ii. Teaching Bible at Canadian Reformed schools, 1990-present

Mr. JS, current present principal of William of Orange School, has a love for God and His Word. He received his teacher training at the University of British Columbia, studied for his Masters degree at Regent College (Vancouver) and at ACTS (the seminary of Trinity Western University). He has a broader view of denominations than most of his Canadian Reformed counterparts, who speak of their church as “The Church” and consider themselves the true church of God. The schools of this denomination are run by boards, but under direction of the elder board of the church: they are parochial schools. Mr. JS allows his teachers the freedom to teach their own Bible lessons; most tell the Bible story and then give related questions and exercises. Some of his teachers, who have been schooled at secular universities, are not comfortable with teaching Bible; another teacher would trade a subject with them, leaving each to teach subjects with which they are most familiar.

Mr. JS found this method of allowing each teacher to “do his/her own thing in Bible” was too ‘loose’. He composed a statement of purpose for the teaching of ‘Bible History’ at William of Orange School. The words ‘Bible History’ are used synonymously with ‘Biblical Studies’ in this rationale statement:

Biblical Studies at William of Orange Christian School are done for two distinct and interrelated reasons. First, they are taught so that the student can better know his God and, second, so that the student can better know his neighbour. In other words, the student is trained to reflect his Maker and is equipped for every good work.

These studies are designed to enable the student to explore the Biblical motifs of creation, fall, exodus, redemption and consummation.<sup>139</sup>

When asked why he included the word 'exodus' in the motif list, he explained that he felt that the giving of the law should be part of the entire plan of God—it was not included in the word 'redemption'. After this statement of purpose, he included seven reasons for teaching Biblical Studies:

1. to present the Bible as the story of God's acts and words, written so that His people might know Him and themselves, accept His gift of salvation, and live in joyful service and obedience;
2. to begin to recognize the creative and redemptive activity of God in the history of His chosen people, in the story of the coming of Christ, and in the history of the early Christian community;
3. to become acquainted with the will of God for all mankind;
4. to relate Biblical concepts and truths to insights and thinking on a variety of topics and situations;
5. to apply Biblical guidelines for proper decision-making;
6. to develop an understanding of the literary, linguistic, historical, cultural and geographical dimensions of the Bible;
7. to commit Scripture passages and Psalms to memory.<sup>140</sup>

He urges his teachers to teach Bible from the perspective of redemptive history; students are required to memorize one 'Psalm vers' (one Psalm stanza) a week, from the rhymed Genevan Psalter version sung in church on Sundays. Stress is placed on the chronological sequence of Biblical history (Heilsgeschichte), the various genres of Bible literature, the language of redemption, how Old Testament is fulfilled in the New, and how Scriptures apply today in the lives of the students and those around them.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> John Siebenga. "Bible History at William of Orange Christian School". (a rationale for teaching Bible prepared for his teachers in 2004.)

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p.2

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p.3.

Mr. JS gave an example of how he studied the book of Lamentations with his grade 7 students. They immersed themselves in the book, talked about how it applied to the students' present day situation, and then linked it with the commemoration of Good Friday and Easter since they were studying that book in March. He sent the students home for the Easter break, asking them to meditate on this book and then come back after the break to report on how the book spoke to them individually.

Mr. JS has ordered "*The Story of God and His People*" series from Christian Schools International in Grand Rapids. He wants a more structured approach to teaching Bible in his school so he chose the CSI series, written and produced by Christian Reformed teachers. Teachers have been asked to peruse the books for their respective grades and be prepared to discuss their suitability to their particular grade. Clearly, Mr. JS is a trusted leader and has been given considerable freedom by his school board.

On May 26, 2004, I had an interview with Mr. PT, principal of the John Calvin School (Canadian Reformed) in Yarrow, BC.<sup>142</sup> Housed in a building bought from the Mennonites in the 1960s, the Canadian Reformed congregation has built three additions to their school. Many young families from this denomination are moving further east from Cloverdale, since land is cheaper in the Yarrow and Chilliwack area. Mr. PT could predict exactly how many kindergarten students he would have in 2004 and 2005, since almost all students in his school are from his own denomination. (There are some Free Reformed families as well.) When asked how his teachers view their students, he replied

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<sup>142</sup> D:6, p.357.

that their denomination recognized the validity of infant baptism as practised in other denominations, even that of the Roman Catholic Church. He strongly supports Calvin's view of baptism, stressing the faithfulness of God:

God has set His mark upon their foreheads; I would not presume regeneration before birth, but trust in God's faithfulness. He has promised at baptism that He will be their God. He will do it. There are those that reject this sign and seal, hence we have the doctrine of reprobation in the Canons of Dordt.

He mentioned that children of today want to see the authentic Christian life exemplified in the daily walk of their parents and teachers. In his school, teachers teach Bible in their own grades; they are encouraged to develop "legacy binders", containing all worksheets, maps, seat work and notes developed by each classroom teacher. If another teacher comes along to take their place, they will know what has been covered. The school has developed certain stipulations that allow for covering the Old and New Testaments a number of times during the elementary years. There is a set memory work list for each grade as well as certain Genevan Psalms that must be memorized weekly. Mr. PT stressed that there is an emphasis on cognitive recall in the teaching of Bible: "You can't build a wall without bricks; the Christian has to know his/her Bible."

The story telling method of teaching Bible is highly emphasized, especially in the primary grades. In grade 4, church history is added to the program of studies and each grade uses the series, *The Flame of the Word* (church history books written in story form according to the understanding of the children). There are well-written stories of church history in this series. The series begins with the church at Pentecost and continues on throughout the Reformation (the final books are still to be written). The authors, (Pieter Torenvliet, Apco Nap and

Christine Farenhorst) write very well; the series is also well-illustrated to capture the interest of the students. Story telling is the main vehicle of communication: the story of Martin Luther's burning of the papal ban on December 10, 1520 is entitled, "*The True Light of the Gospel*." As is customary in this series, the actual story is told (I think by Christine Farenhorst, although it is not clear), and written in italics and afterwards its significance is explained and set in historical context. "*The True Light of the Gospel*", part two, is the story of John Calvin. God's work in history clearly comes to light. The Holy Spirit is honoured as the Godhead who works in the lives of men and women, and the significance of the history of the church is woven throughout world events: "World history is a piece of church history."<sup>143</sup>

I would like to teach and study from this series. The methodology is pointalism—studying flash points of history, indicating highlights and relating them to the life of the students. This way, the students can "join the dots from Pentecost to the present", according to Mr. PT. However, it is unfortunate that only the work of the Canadian Reformed Church is mentioned, even when it comes to missionary work. The first book begins with an actual drawing of the Canadian Reformed Church in Abbotsford and it describes a typical church service in that sanctuary from a child's perspective. The first story is about a girl from a northern British Columbian Indian tribe known as the Yak'isda Bik'ah from the Nootka First Nations tribe. It describes her life in a residential school run by the BC government. She has a kind, Christian teacher, Miss Cameron. However, she is asked to change all her ways according to the white man's standards. It

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<sup>143</sup> Apko Nap, Pieter Torenvliet. *The Flame of the Word* (Surrey, BC: Vanderheide Publishing Company, 1999), p 7

discusses the struggle she encounters, the wise counsel of her teacher and how the flame of the gospel was spread among these tribes by the Canadian Reformed Church missionaries living around Smithers, BC. The mission work of the Christian Reformed church is also mentioned, as is the work of some Free Reformed missionaries in Africa.<sup>144</sup> However, the focus of this well-written, well-presented series is quite narrow.

Starting in grade four, the students may spend three weeks studying a chapter of church history and a month on Bible history. The role of the Holy Spirit in Bible teaching is expressed by Mr. PT: "The moment the Word of God is opened, the Spirit begins to work, according to Isaiah 55:11, for blessing or for curse. The Holy Spirit does not work apart from the Word." Mr. PT adds: "Even though we may have a non-committed teacher, the Spirit can still work in the hearts of the students." He also mentioned that the Heidelberg catechism has only one question and answer on the subject of the Holy Spirit. That was the reason it was not stressed in the school. There is the belief that He is working, but His work is not emphasized. These church schools put great emphasis on the Three Forms of Unity: the catechism is still preached every Sunday and memorized at catechism classes, and the Scriptures are interpreted according to the creeds.

In examining the teaching of Bible in primary classes in Canadian Reformed Schools, I interviewed Ms. MM, grade one teacher at Credo Christian Elementary School (located in close proximity to the Credo Christian High School

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<sup>144</sup> A. Nap et al. *The Flame of the Word*, p. 24

in Langley, BC).<sup>145</sup> At the elementary school, the children are watched over very carefully and lovingly by the teachers; in fact, the school gives the impression of one big family. This, according to Principal JR, is due to their covenant view: “Covenant is a way of life. Our children are born into the covenant because of their parents. They are God’s children. We need to educate them through the triangle of home, school and church.” Ms.MM stressed this point as well: “My students are all from Christian homes. They love the Lord Jesus and have a child-like faith. They need to be guided to make God-honoring choices.” When asked if she would ever lead a student to Christ, she replied that this is the parents’ job. The mission statement of on the wall of this school reads: “The purpose of our parental Christian school is to educate our children to develop their individual potential and acquire the knowledge, skill and attitudes needed for a life of responsible stewardship in God’s kingdom.”

Both Ms. MM and her principal, Mr. JR stressed the importance of the Holy Spirit’s role in educating their students, as teacher MM states: “In my preparation, I pray for the Holy Spirit and during the Bible lessons or during any lesson, I pray quiet prayers to Him.” The Bible is viewed as God’s inerrant, infallible and inspired Word, according to the Canons of Dordt, Articles III, IV, V and VII. When teachers sign their contract at this school, they must underscore that they will interpret the Bible lessons according to the Three Forms of Unity.

At Credo Christian Elementary, the Bible curriculum from CSI is used throughout grades K-7. Both Ms. MM and Mr. JR emphasized that they fully agree with this series and think highly of its methodology: “There are a host of

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<sup>145</sup> D:7, p.358.

activities . . . the teachers can pick and choose.” Along with the memory work schedule in the CSI series, all teachers require their students to memorize a psalm from the Book of Praise, the book of psalms sung in the Canadian Reformed Church. Ms. MM emphasizes communal work and prayer during her Bible lessons: “I divide them up into four groups, give them a Bible question and each group comes up with an answer. I have lots of sharing that way. I feel the CSI series does a good job of personalizing the Bible questions. The students are very open in my class.”

Ms. MM showed me some of the seat work exercises she does with her students as well. Of course, since it is only the beginning of grade one, students are limited in how much they can do, as Ms MM states: “They draw pictures of the story, I give them words which they can paste into a sentence, using the blackboard model as their guide. We sing, we have chapel every Monday morning as a school. I also use an age appropriate devotional book once in a while.” Ms. MM loves teaching and telling the Bible stories and enjoys sharing with her students.

In summary, the Canadian Reformed Church schools are parochial, totally set up by Canadian Reformed parents and run by a school board elected by the parents. Teachers and parents view their baptized students/children as children of God because of God’s faithfulness. There is an objective view of Scripture and the promises of God, with not much emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. The reason for teaching Bible is so that students can know their God, learn to love their neighbour (Mr. JS) and know His Word (Mr. PT). Students are taught the

Reformed Creeds, the Psalms (very few, if any, hymns are taught since these are written/composed by men).

The Bible is highly revered, the creeds are almost on an equal footing with the Bible, the students are viewed as God's elect and the work of the Holy Spirit is often taken for granted, or not emphasized much since the third person of the Godhead is only discussed in one question and answer of the Heidelberg Catechism (principal PT). The teachers and principals themselves, however, emphasized that they needed the Holy Spirit in their daily teaching. Each teacher interviewed said s/he prayed for the Spirit's presence in their classrooms, saw the Bible's authority as interpreted by the denominational creeds, viewed their students as covenant children in need of teaching about God's Word and some had been busy making their own curriculum. Some teachers mentioned communal/interactive discussions and group work.

## 2. Netherlands Reformed Congregation Christian Day School: Timothy Christian School, Rosedale, BC (TCS)

Timothy Christian School was started in the 1970s by the Netherlands Reformed Congregation (NRC – Gereformeerde Gemeenten). The doctrines of this church and their origins have been described in a previous section of this thesis (see pp. 29,30). Reverend G.H. Kersten was instrumental in uniting various groups (followers of Jean de Labadie and Rev. Ledeboer), conventicles and congregations "under the cross" to form the "Gereformeerde Gemeenten"

churches in 1907.<sup>146</sup> A second school, Mt. Cheam Christian School, was formed by a break-away group from the NRC (see p. 101). Both schools are situated on lush pasture land in the Fraser Valley, surrounded by the Coastal mountains and hills. On May 31, 2004, I interviewed the high school Bible teacher, Mr. DM, a grade five/six Bible teacher (Mr. PL), and a primary teacher (Ms. EP) at Timothy Christian. I have also had extensive talks with the principal.<sup>147</sup>

The high school Bible history and Bible doctrine programs are based on a three part series of textbooks written by Jim Beeke and Joel Beeke (Jim was principal of Timothy Christian for many years and was, until September 2005, the BC Inspector of Independent Schools; his brother, Joel, is a pastor in the Heritage Reformed Congregations, another break away group of the NRC). Currently, a church split is occurring in the NRC and a Heritage Reformed Congregation is being established in Chilliwack. This has ramifications in the school as well, since the school board is run by the elders and pastor of the NRC church. Teachers who have joined the Heritage church may no longer teach Bible doctrine to their own classes at TCS.

Timothy Christian is a K-12 school; the students go through the entire Bible four times in their thirteen years of schooling. The primary teachers focus largely on story telling and related exercises; the intermediate teachers stress Bible history, using the "Bible Guide" (originally published by the National Union of Christian Schools in Grand Rapids in 1962). There is a Bible Guide for grades 4-7, covering both the Old and New Testaments. For example, grade 6 uses

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<sup>146</sup> J. W. Beeke. *Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults, Book II*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), p. 324.

<sup>147</sup> D:8, D:9, D:10, pp.359-361.

*Bible Guide B*, which discusses the life of King David through to the book of Malachi; *Bible Guide A* covers Genesis to Samuel.

Mr. PL, who is not a member of the NRC, is permitted to teach Bible because he is a capable, knowledgeable and trusted teacher. He has written exercises of his own to go along with the Grade six *Bible Guide B*. These exercises are largely fill in the blank, a few maps, and very few “why” and open-ended questions. I found only one personal question, asking students themselves to interpret a Proverb from Scriptures. For the most part, questions focus on Bible facts, historical and geographical details and the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham throughout the Old Testament and in Christ. Mr. PL does discuss with his students; he loves to show them God’s glory in nature and reads the Word with them. However, much time is spent on exercises that are marked for neatness, grammar/spelling accuracy and factual correctness. The work of the Holy Spirit is not discussed, at least in the exercises, because that topic does not come up in the *Bible Guide*.

Mr. DM was a former policeman who was converted and has become a high school Bible teacher at Timothy Christian. He is very enthusiastic about his work. The grade 8 students at TCS still use *The Ministry of Christ*, a series also developed by Christian Schools International (formerly NUCS). Both series are still used at TCS because all Scripture cited is from the authorized King James Version of the Bible. The same is true of the Bible Doctrine Books written by the Beeke brothers. Bible memory throughout the school covers Scripture verses, the catechism and songs from the Psalter, the song book used in the NRC. Mr. DM has developed a unit on the harmony of the gospels for grade 10, a study of

Genesis 1-11, as well as units on cults for students in grade 11; grade 12 focuses mainly on the last Bible doctrine book. The Bible doctrine texts are used throughout grades 9-12. Mr. DM also uses a form of journaling to ask students to explain certain Biblical doctrines or typologies. He then makes comments in their journals, pointing them to seek God in a deeper way and make applications in their own lives.

Students are taught that there are four different kinds of faith: historical, temporary, miraculous and true saving faith. Historical faith believes the historical truth of the Scriptures; temporary faith not only believes the truth of God's Word, but accompanies this belief with emotions of the heart (like the seed that fell on stony places where it starts to grow and is received with joy, but when trouble or persecution comes, the good seed is squelched – Matthew 13:5, 6; 20, 21). Those who believed in Jesus only for his miracles had a miraculous faith. It is possible for a person to have all these three faiths simultaneously or at different times in his/her life, but still lack the true saving faith.

Only true, saving faith is planted by the saving work of the Holy Spirit, rooted in the heart of the person, and brings forth the fruit of wholehearted love to God and others.<sup>148</sup> This faith includes three elements: knowledge, assent and confidence, involving the mind, emotions and the will. Jim Beeke sums up this description of true faith with a quote from Rev. Kersten, the founder of the NRC church.<sup>149</sup> Finally, Beeke goes on to explain that saving faith itself can be distinguished in its essence (gift or grace of faith), its exercise (action or practice

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<sup>148</sup> J. Beeke. *Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults Book II* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), p.218.

<sup>149</sup>J. W. Beeke. *Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults, Book II*, p.220.

of faith), and assurance (the degree of faith). Assurance of faith is again broken down into three parts: refuge-seeking faith (misery, fleeing, knocking in hope and missing Christ/God), refuge-finding faith (deliverance-finding, opening in faith and finding Christ/God) and refuge-assuring faith (thankful serving, communing in love, and rejoicing in Christ/God).<sup>150</sup> Thus there are many steps to learn and follow before a student can call him/herself a true child of God. In talking with Mr. DM, I discovered that the majority of students are not considered Christians. In fact, it may be very difficult to call oneself a child of God; all the evidences must be there and are almost impossible to attain.

There is a set of Thompson Chain Reference study Bibles (KJV) in Mr. DM's classroom. Students learn Bible study skills; a cross-referenced handbook for the Three Forms of Unity is also being developed so that students can discover how each doctrine was developed according to Scripture. There is a unit on 'Self', developed by Jim Beeke, in the grade 12 program. This unit discusses self-esteem from a Biblical perspective: "Not self-esteem, but rather Christ-esteem", I remember hearing from Mr. Beeke.

Teacher DM feels the Bible teachers at TCS have a fair amount of freedom. There are charts in the classrooms about the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism; there was also a bulletin board describing the works of the flesh as opposed to the fruits of the Spirit. The NRC's view of baptism definitely does not include thought of presumptive regeneration; rather the opposite. Due to their baptism, students at TCS have a special relationship to God's providence; they therefore have special obligations, including continuing to

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<sup>150</sup>J. W. Beeke. *Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults Book II*, p.232

examine themselves to see whether they have faith. They are individually responsible before God. They are required to keep all His commandments; the benefits they receive from baptism are that they are placed under God's Word as a means of salvation, and they receive the prayers, teachings and government of God's church. These are outward benefits only: the spiritual or inward baptism will take place only if they are one of God's elect.<sup>151</sup> They do need to have a Pauline conversion before they can call themselves one of God's chosen ones.

The role of the Holy Spirit is acknowledged to some degree in the Bible program at TCS, as Mr. DM states: "We have to pray a lot for our students that the Spirit would work in their lives. We teach a unit about the Holy Spirit from the Bible doctrine books." He mentioned, too, that because there is only one 'Sunday' in the Heidelberg Catechism devoted to the topic of the Holy Spirit, there is very little discussion about how the Spirit works in hearts and lives and how God opens His Word through means of His Spirit.

TCS teachers view the Bible as God's inspired and infallible word that must be honoured and revered; the King James Version is the only correct translation of the English Bible. The Bible is made relevant to the lives of the students through journaling, teaching and singing (the Psalter has now been published with guitar chords so that students can accompany their singing in a more contemporary manner). A devotional book has been developed so that students can read short paragraphs from the Puritans and other Christian writers and be edified through their works as well. The stress in Bible lessons is definitely

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<sup>151</sup> J. Beeke. *Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults*, Book III, p.420.

on correct doctrine and Scripture knowledge rather than a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

Also interviewed was Ms EP who teaches grade one at TCS. She sees the work of the Holy Spirit of utmost importance: "I bring it to their ears; the Holy Spirit applies it to the hearts. I cannot teach my Bible lessons without prayer for the Spirit. I teach by example as well." She sees the Bible as God's Word from beginning to end. She is very enthusiastic when she tells her Bible stories, using pictures and other visual aids, Bible puzzles, drawings by the students and various other suitable forms of seatwork for her students. Primary teachers develop their own Bible programs, using story telling as the main vehicle to convey Bible truth.

Ms. EP views her students as:

. . . children who have been brought up in Christian homes; they are privileged, but they need a new heart. They are not born again yet. I make the Bible come alive in all my subjects: in Science we view the glories of God's creation; in reading I relate stories to Biblical concepts; in discipline, I refer to the Bible's teaching. I ask the students: "Is this pleasing to the Lord?"

She has her students bring prayer requests and she teaches them how to pray.

She also shows them that they can quench the Holy Spirit. With regard to the teaching of Bible at TCS, her comments were pointed:

We are only allowed to use the words "Thee" and "Thou" when referring to God, we may not show pictures of Jesus or angels, and Bible reading is a very solemn affair. When the teachers have devotions, ninety-eight percent of the leadership is by the male teachers; very few, if any female teachers lead in devotions at staff meetings. Also, I have heard it said that the students in high school are sometimes fatalistic, since they must have faith but it is so difficult to get.

The grade 6 teacher, Mr. PL, gave me his notes as well. He has developed extensive seatwork exercises to go along with *Bible Guide B*. He wanted me to look over his hand book to give my thoughts on whether the seatwork was too difficult. The Bible Guide book starts each lesson with a short overview of the passage to be studied, for example 2 Kings 9-10: there is a word study list of difficult vocabulary, a list of spelling words and then questions to answer about the chapters. Most questions are of the 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'how' variety. In fact, there are very few 'why' questions. Then there are filling in the blank exercises, true or false questions, 'yes' or 'no' questions, map work, or Bible quotes to fill in. Sometimes there is a cross word or a matching question. There are three extra activities on pages 13, 129 and 141; there is one "Questions for Discussion" exercise on page 83.<sup>152</sup> Every chapter has a Bible text for memorization. In the lessons about Kings David and Solomon, students are reminded of the promises of God concerning a Messiah. Mr. PL is very knowledgeable in the word of God and has developed supplementary exercises to go along with the *Bible Guide*. He has included pictures, Scripture verses to illustrate, and similar exercises to the *Bible Guide*, along with more 'why' questions: he wants his students to think deeper than merely the historical facts of Scripture. Each unit ends with a test which is marked with a letter grade.

Since students are not viewed as children of God, students do not pray out loud; Bible history and doctrine is stressed and factual recall is very important. In the business of teaching all the historical and chronological facts of Scripture and

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<sup>152</sup> Jessie Mae and Martha Bruinooge. *Bible Guide B* (Grand Rapids, MI: NUCS Publishing CSI, 1962)

all the doctrinal points of the Three Forms of Unity, the work of the Holy Spirit is often forgotten (though this can be true of any Christian school). In the higher grades especially, Bible is just another subject along with all the rest.

To summarize, very few students are considered Christians in this church-run, Calvinistic day school: they are all in need of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Bible is taught mostly for historical truth and factual knowledge (*Bible History* and *Bible Doctrine* are the terms used to designate Bible lessons). The doctrines as interpreted by the Reformed Creeds are also taught in the higher grades. There is strong emphasis on divine election and a Pauline conversion. Students are all baptized as infants, but their baptism is only a seal of God's covenant: it entitles them to the privileges of church membership, but they are still in need of conversion before they can be called children of God. There is some integration of Bible with the rest of the curriculum; most of this is related to how the students must live and conduct themselves. The King James Bible is highly revered and plainly visible in all classrooms. The Three Forms of Unity are considered the only way to interpret the Bible; each teacher interviewed testified to this. The primary teachers make up their own curriculum as they tell the Bible stories. All view the Holy Spirit's work as necessary in the conversion of their students. In intermediate grades and higher grades, there is very little or no group work or communal discussion regarding the Bible, since all the answers are interpreted by the creeds and doctrinal statements. Storytelling is certainly used in the primary grades; teacher PL tells Bible stories, but high school students mainly learn doctrine.

### 3. The Netherlands Reformed Church of North America: Mount Cheam Christian School, Chilliwack, BC

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004, I visited Mount Cheam Christian School, set up by a group of Dutch Calvinists who broke away from the Netherlands Reformed congregation.<sup>153</sup> This group goes back to when a certain Rev. Steenblok separated himself—along with a group of like minded people—in The Netherlands in 1953.<sup>154</sup> Their basis dates back as far as Jean de Labadie and later VanderGroe, as described on pages 29 and 30 of this thesis.

Upon entering the school, it is immediately apparent that the walls are bare: there was a map of Canada, indicating resources in each of the provinces, as well as a plaque with Proverbs 22:4 inscribed on it. The principal, Mr. AS, welcomed me and showed me around the school. In this K-12 school, the students wear uniforms; there is still an atmosphere of the traditional way of teaching with students sitting in rows and lining up in rows; the classroom teacher does most of the talking and lecture style is quite prominent, especially in upper grades. The school is equipped with modern computer and science labs. The school conducts monthly assemblies rather than chapels, and each is devoted to a theme: October would focus on the Reformation (Oct. 31), December would feature a Christmas theme, while April would concentrate on Good Friday and Easter. The principal presides over the assemblies while classes sometimes do musical presentations from the Psalter, the Scottish Psalter or, once in a while,

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<sup>153</sup> D:11, p.362.

<sup>154</sup> J. W. Beeke. *Bible Doctrine for Teens and Young Adults Book II*, p. 324.

the Dutch Psalms. Stories are told from books such as *Pilgrim's Progress* to emphasize the conversion process.

When asked about the role of the Holy Spirit, Mr. AS distinguished two types of work of the Holy Spirit: the general role and the saving role of the Spirit. The saving work of the Spirit is only evident in the elect. The teachers simply sow the seed of the Word. Some students are very serious, but that does not mean they are saved:

I can't say that I see a lot of that happening in the school. Students need to be brought to the question: 'What should I do to be saved?' Then they need to see their sin, be delivered from their sin (as John Bunyan's pilgrim was when his burden rolled from his shoulders at the cross) and then live a life of thankfulness. Those are the three parts the Heidelberg Catechism teaches us.

At Mount Cheam, the Bible is seen as God's inerrant, infallible and inspired word; the King James Version and the Dutch Statenvertaaling ( the official 'state' translation) are the only translations used in the school. Only the Bible is used in teaching Bible; there is no set curriculum. Teachers tell the stories from the Bible without using notes; by the time the students reach grade 8, they will have been through the entire Bible three times. In the higher grades, only Mr. AS teaches Bible. He uses some books such as John Bunyan's, *Pilgrim's Progress* or *The Holy War*, John Warburton's *The Mercies of a Covenant God* and William Huntington's classic *The Kingdom of Heaven Taken by Prayer*. He also uses excerpts from some of the articles of the Confession of Faith, the Catechism as well as Charles Colson's *How Now Shall we Live?* (used in his unit on electronic media). In the lower grades, there is very little seatwork in Bible classes; in the upper classes, students may have tests on Bible history or

write essays about issues such as abortion, euthanasia, television or the use of electronic media. Students and teachers at this school do not have television in their homes.

Students and teachers alike need to be converted but few, if any, actually say they are children of God: a mighty work of God is needed to verify this. When asked about how teachers make the Bible come alive, Mr. AS stressed that “the Bible is alive; we just try not to kill it.” At Mount Cheam, teachers “steer away from workbooks” and “focus on God’s Word.”

It is interesting to note that while the people in this school all consider God’s Word to be alive, and they all know that the Holy Spirit must work in a life before conversion can take place, they see “very little of that work happening” (to quote Principal AS). They are very careful in their use of God’s Word, revering it highly, yet they do not seem to experience the power of the Word. Each classroom has a Bible on a stand in full view, yet the living, active power of the Scriptures is not experienced or expected. Students are viewed as fallen creatures in need of conversion; only extraordinary conversions are accepted as valid (deathbed conversions are surely possible). In daily living, students and teachers are required to adhere to many legalisms: strict Sabbath observance; women and men are dressed mostly in black; women and girls have a black head covering during the service; no one is allowed to have a television; women and girls must wear long skirts. Other churches, even their Netherlands Reformed Congregation neighbours, are considered ‘liberal’ according to Mr. AS:

All teachers in this school must belong to our church. At present there is a teacher who now belongs to the new breakaway group, the Heritage Reformed Congregation. That teacher will be leaving

at the end of this school year and is not allowed to teach Bible in our school.

In this way, the church, home and school are kept on the right path. I left Mount Cheam Christian School rather saddened. It was truly evident that the joy of the Lord was not present. Students do not revel in the beauties and glories of God's creation because they, along with their teachers, are not considered to belong to God—this is very strange in a Christian school where the Word and Spirit are held in such high regard. The Reformed Creeds are considered to be the only way to interpret the Bible. Students are all baptized as infants, however very few, if any, are considered 'saved'. Teachers encourage their pupils to wait for a Pauline conversion or for a total life change as described in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* or in the other two classics by Huntingdon or Warburton, mentioned earlier. An appropriate conversion is described in the illustration below (Biography and Conversion of Anna Katharina Merks):

On Monday morning the physician Dr. Goedhart visited Anna at home, and upon his question to her of how she was doing, he received the following answer: 'Very well.'

'What do you mean, very well?' asked the physician.

She replied: 'I will tell you what I mean.'

'After your friend and fellow physician left yesterday, I fell on my knees before God. (Those looking after Anna testified that she had been on her knees almost three quarters of an hour.) I prayed God if He would show me the extent of my sinfulness. God brought to my mind's eye my sinfulness at birth, the sins of my entire life, the places where I had committed those sins, in what manner and the people with whom I had committed them. It was as if these sins were written before my eyes and hanging before my mind's eye. I felt my sins were so heavy; they grieved my soul so much, that I could not bear them. I prayed to God while I experienced His wrath ready to burn me: "Here lies an awful sinner, one who has many sins and a huge burden of guilt. If Thou, O God, should punish me

for these sins, I know that in the eternal hell there is no punishment great enough to burn all my sins." After this prayer I felt great darkness. It was as if I was blinded, so that I feared I would perish in the darkness.

I called out to God: "Have mercy! Have mercy!" Thereupon I heard a voice in my heart: "The Redeemer lives!"

"O God" I replied, "is there a living Redeemer for me? Who is that Redeemer?" Then I heard a voice speaking in my heart: "The Redeemer is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour who shed his blood on the cross for your sins! I asked: "O God, will you then save me from my sins?" He gave me these words in my heart: "I am yours and you are Mine."

It was as if the Redeemer of Righteousness had taken my place and that my sins and guilt had been placed in a balance: one bowl filled with my sins the other with Christ's righteousness. The righteousness of Christ was the heaviest and outweighed the load of my guilt and sin. Then I came out of the darkness; the light broke through my mind's eye and the Redeemer took all my sins away, as one blows away the mist and clouds. I sank down in pure love and my heart melted away entirely in the grip of the Redeemer."<sup>155</sup>

Other stories of such conversions, where the "law has ploughed deeply" (see p. 29) are held up as the standard for conversion. This state is hardly achievable, as principal AS noted. Students are not taught to revel in God's creation because they cannot do that if they are not converted. The Bible is used for proof-texting, especially when it concerns describing the evils of this present sinful world (e.g. electronic media). The walls and halls cannot glorify God because only the elect see God's glory.

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<sup>155</sup> "Biography of Anna Katharina Merks" in *Wordt VanderGroe Nog Wel Verstaan?* J. Alderliesten. (Nieuw-Lekkerland: The Netherlands, Publisher VanderPerk, 1972) p.27. Translation mine.

#### **IV. Summary**

The Dutch Reformed family that came to Canada in 1951 had many options with regard to education when the grandchildren started attending schools: two out of the eight families home school their children, from Kindergarten to grade 12. Five of the children of this original family of eight send their children to various Christian schools; one daughter did not marry a Christian, so her children have all attended public school. This is a typical picture of many of the Dutch Calvinist immigrant families who came to Canada in the 1950's. Most children of immigrant families still attend church; those attending Reformed denominations that support parochial schools have stuck quite closely to the *Three Forms of Unity* in their interpretation of the Bible in their Christian Schools. Most, if not all schools of Christian Reformed origin have become very interdenominational and inter racial. The teaching of Bible now follows the guide lines as described in *Educating with Heart and Mind* published by the Society of Christian Schools, along with *The Story of God and His People* (CSI Publication) for grades Kindergarten through grade nine. The earlier position of the Christian Reformed Church on infant baptism is not often mentioned. There is stress on teaching all subjects in community, the Christian spiritual disciplines are emphasized and there is an acknowledgement of the role of the Holy Spirit, although not in every teachers' guide and student textbook. "Creation-based neo Calvinism" as Hans Boersma calls it (p. 98) is evidenced in each classroom where God is honoured, praised and revered for His mighty acts in creating the universe. The themes of creation, fall, redemption and restoration are emphasized not just in the study of Bible, but in other subjects as well.

## CHAPTER 3

### OTHER CHRISTIAN DAY SCHOOLS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

#### **I. The Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI).**

##### 1. History of the Mennonite People in BC

In the *Abbotsford and Mission News* of Saturday, September 18, 2004, I noticed a picture and article about the new MEI Middle School. The official opening of this campus was held on Sunday afternoon, September 26, at 2:00 pm on their Downes Road site. Municipal dignitaries, representatives of the larger independent school communities, construction supervisors, school board members, teachers and some representatives from the department of education offices in Victoria came to bring their good wishes and congratulations. The Mennonite Education Institute, situated in Abbotsford (with a satellite campus in Chilliwack), is now the largest independent school in British Columbia.

Mennonites are, for the most part, descendants of the followers of Menno Simons, a former priest in the Catholic Church, born in 1496 in the village of Witmarsum, in the province of Friesland (what is now northern Holland). His parents urged him to become a priest, sending him to the St. Francis School in the monastery nearest his home.<sup>156</sup> Simons spent twelve years as a Catholic priest in the villages of Pingjum (1524-31) and Witmarsum (1531-36);<sup>157</sup> his first doubts about the faith of the Catholic church arose in regards to the Catholic Mass. He knew the doctrine of transubstantiation could not be true, so started studying the Bible. This study led him to discover many more doctrines in the

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<sup>156</sup> C.J. Dyck. *Twelve Becoming* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1967), p.13.

<sup>157</sup> *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, J. Wenger, ed. with a biography by Harold S. Bender, (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1956), p.5.

Roman Catholic Church, which he believed to be unbiblical. When he heard of the martyrdom of Sikke Freriks who was beheaded because of his rebaptism, Simons had serious doubts about the Roman Catholic doctrines concerning this sacrament as well. Sikke was known as an Anabaptist, meaning someone who had already been baptized as a baby in the Roman Catholic Church and was rebaptized as a believer later in life. These Anabaptists, or 'Wiedertaufer' as they were derisively called, were found in four principal areas of Europe: Switzerland, Moravia, South Germany and the Netherlands.<sup>158</sup>

Through his study of the Scriptures and his contact with other Anabaptists, Menno Simons concluded that believer's baptism was the most true to God's Word. Since "to rebaptize is to do an extremely radical thing"<sup>159</sup> in his day, Simons needed to be doubly sure about what he was teaching and believing. In a public statement on January 30, 1536, Menno expressed his new beliefs concerning baptism, the errors of the church of Rome and his disassociation from the fanatical group of Muenster Anabaptists, who had taken to the sword to defend themselves. (Under Melchior Hoffman, this group tried to set up a New Jerusalem in Strassburg and later, under Jan Matthijs, in Muenster. They practised polygamy, took to the sword to defend themselves and looked for the Lord's second coming in 1533).<sup>160</sup> After a year of withdrawal for meditation, Scripture study and communion with God, Simons was approached by a group of

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<sup>158</sup> J. A. Toews. *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*. (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1975), p.4.

<sup>159</sup> Leonard Verduin. *The Reformers and their Stepchildren*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p.189.

<sup>160</sup> J.A. Toews. *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, p.7.

brethren who asked him to become their pastor. He spent his entire life preaching the gospel, discipling believers, defending the faith and organizing churches.

By 1544, there were Mennonite congregations in Northern Germany, the delta of the Vistula River, the vicinity of Hamburg, the Danzig area and Luebeck. Simons himself had to flee to Wismar on the Baltic Sea because of persecution. Later, in the village of Wuestenfelde, he built a print shop and was active writing about the faith until his death in 1561.<sup>161</sup>

According to Leonard Verduin, “rebaptism is as old as Constantinianism . . . in fact, the first Anabaptist martyrs of Reformation times were put to death under the Codes of Theodocius.”<sup>162</sup> In the sacral system of the Roman Catholic Church during reformation times, baptism was a means to control society, a way to make all people “Christian”. If parents refused to baptise their infants, they could be put to death. The Roman Catholic Church even practised ‘in utero’ baptism, should the life of the baby be in danger during the birth process. Baptism ensured that the child would become a member of the mother church; the child was considered a ‘Christian’ by virtue of his/her baptism. Anabaptists, on the other hand, stated that infants could not confess their faith in God, so according to Scripture, only believers should be baptised.

Menno Simons came to this conclusion, as did others like him who studied the Bible. Thus, Anabaptism sprang up independently in several pockets throughout south-central and northern Europe. In Switzerland, under leadership of Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz (originally students of Ulrich Zwingli), a group of believers set up a church of brethren true to Scripture and the leading of the Holy

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<sup>161</sup> *Complete Works of Menno Simons*. J. Wenger, ed., p.26.

<sup>162</sup> L. Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, p.190.

Spirit in their hearts.<sup>163</sup> George Blaurock was the first baptismal candidate on January 21, 1525; he later became the author of the Schleitheim Confession of Faith (1527), a statement of seven articles of faith which articulated the basic doctrines of the Anabaptist position.<sup>164</sup> Zwinglians first spoke of the ‘rebaptizers’ as “Wiedertauffer”; the Mennonites themselves called one another ‘Brethren’, believing that their first baptism as infants had not been valid; once rebaptized upon confessing their faith, they were brothers in Christ.<sup>165</sup> Since there are so many branches of Anabaptists, in this study I will concentrate mainly on the followers of Menno Simons who took the path from Holland to Prussia, to Ukraine, and then North America.

There were several of Menno Simons’ doctrines that differentiated him from the main leaders of the Reformation. Simons believed that the following signs were characteristics of the true Church of Christ:

1. “An unadulterated, pure doctrine. This pure doctrine, [according to Simons], includes the clear presentation of the grace of God for man’s salvation (Gal. 1), and the responsibility to share this good news with other as demanded by the Great Commission (Mt. 28, Mk. 16).
2. “A Scriptural use of the sacramental signs...Simons insisted that only those are to be baptized who ‘by faith are born of God who sincerely repent, who bury their sins in Christ’s death, and arise with Him in newness of life.’<sup>166</sup> The Lord’s Supper is to be received by those who have experienced forgiveness through the blood of Christ, and who ‘walk with their brethren in love, peace, and unity...and who prove by their fruits that they are the church and people of Christ.’<sup>167</sup>
3. “Obedience to the Word. Simons stressed a life of holiness and conformity to the life of Christ.

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<sup>163</sup> C. Henry Smith. *The Story of the Mennonites* (Newton, KA.: Mennonite Publication Office, 1957), pp.7-10.

<sup>164</sup> C.J. Dyck. *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (Scotsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1967), p.43

<sup>165</sup> C. Henry Smith. *The Story of the Mennonites*, p.11.

<sup>166</sup> *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, J. Wenger, ed. pp.739, 740.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p.740

4. "Unfeigned, brotherly love...
5. "A bold confession of God and Christ...
6. "Oppression and tribulation for the sake of the Lord's Word..."<sup>168</sup>

Suffering for Christ was considered a natural result of walking with Him, "sharing in His sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). Needless to say, severe persecution followed the members of the Dutch Anabaptists; many of them fled to the Vistula River basin in Poland (later under Prussian domination)<sup>169</sup> where, in this new environment, the Dutch language was retained in worship for over 200 years. It was not until 1750 that congregations gradually shifted to the German language.<sup>170</sup>

When they first arrived in the Vistula, their faith was fervent. These Mennonites "agreed with the Reformers on all the cardinal doctrines of salvation"<sup>171</sup>, but they felt the reformers did not go far enough in establishing a New Testament Church. This was especially evident in their view of infant baptism; they were looking to establish believer churches, with men and women full of the Holy Spirit. According to them, Luther, Calvin and Zwingli did not offer this; the Anabaptists became the most radical (different) arm of the reformation movement.<sup>172</sup>

Due to further persecution by Frederick the Great (non-resistant Mennonites did not want to serve in the army; they also refused to pay taxes to support the state church), many of these Dutch Anabaptists moved to the Ukraine area of Russia by special charter granted to them by Catherine the Great and

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<sup>168</sup> *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*. J. Wenger, ed., p.740

<sup>169</sup> R. P. Friesen. *Building on the Past* (Winnipeg, Man.: Raduga Publications, 2004), p. 21

<sup>170</sup> J. A. Toews. *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, p.14.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14

Tsar Paul I. This charter allowed complete religious freedom as well as exemption from military service. The Mennonites were excellent farmers and skilled land managers; their expertise was an asset to Ukraine, which in later years became known as the bread basket of the U.S.S.R. (former Soviet Union). Two Mennonite colonies were established near the Dniepre River: The Chortitza Colony, founded in 1789, and the Molotschna Colony, founded in 1804. Both colonies were named after small rivers on the steppes of the Ukraine.<sup>173</sup>

As a result of small pockets of revival movements among the Mennonites—most notably the ‘Kleine Gemeinde’ (small congregation), the Ohrloff Mennonite Church and the fellowship centre at Gnadenfeldenfeld of the Molotschna Colony—the Mennonite Brethren Church was born in the home of Isaak Koop on January 6, 1860.<sup>174</sup> Twenty-seven heads of families objected to the worldliness, laxity, and the use of force used to punish evildoers in the surrounding Mennonite communities. In 1860 they seceded from the ‘decadent churches’ in the Molotchna colony and formed their own. They once again wanted to see baptism as a seal of faith, not a ritual to be observed to join the church; they wanted to serve communion to strengthen the faith of true believers, they wanted pure and holy living (not drunkenness and openly godless lives), and declared themselves anew to be true to the teachings of Menno Simons. As Brother Heinrich Balzer of the ‘Kleine Gemeinde’ summed it up in his testimony, they wanted a Spirit-filled life:

When in a reborn heart the Holy Spirit exclaims, ‘Abba, Father!’  
divine gifts effuse into the believer and enter his understanding.  
They fill him with a new wisdom and a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>173</sup> J.A. Toews. *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, p.15

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33

The more and the freer the heart of man is opened to the Spirit, the more knowledge will he gain, the greater riches of divine gifts will he receive, and the more will his heart be prepared as an abode of the Triune God.<sup>175</sup>

When this Mennonite Brethren Church was established in this southern Russia area, the 1853 edition of the West Prussian Mennonite Church Confession (first published in Holland in 1660) was officially adopted. This confession has carried into Canada and the United State; it was adopted by the Brethren in 1975 in Winnipeg and revised again in subsequent years.<sup>176</sup>

The preface of this confession states emphatically that the Bible is the authority in all matter of faith and practise. Creeds may be used but they are never to be given equal status with Scripture. Hence, only the Bible is used for preaching; creeds are never used as a standard for sermons (such as, for example, the preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism in many of the Reformed Churches). Most doctrines of this confession (i.e. the doctrine of God; God's revelation in creation and His Word; the teaching of salvation by grace alone; the mission of the church; the gifting of believers; the doctrines regarding the Lord's Supper, marriage, and the Lord's Day) coincide with the teachings of the Reformation. One major difference between the Mennonites and the Reformed Churches lies in Christian baptism: “. . . to qualify for baptism, one must repent of sin and trust Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord. We practice water baptism of the believer by immersion.”<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> H. Balzer. "Faith and Reason" MQR, XXII (1948), in J.A. Toews: *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, p.27.

<sup>176</sup> *Leadership Handbook of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America*. (Winnipeg, Man.: Kindred Press, 1984), p. 41

<sup>177</sup> *Confession of Faith of the Mennonite Brethren Churches*, revised in 1975. (Winnipeg, Man.: Kindred Press), p.49.

In this way, the Brethren have tried to secure a believer's church. Their view of their children can be inferred from Pilgram Marpeck, one of the early founders of the Mennonite movement, in his "Confessions" of 1532:

...the infants shall be named before a congregation and God shall duly be praised for them; thanks and blessing shall be given to his fatherly goodness that, through Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour, he has also had mercy on the innocent creatures and that, without discrimination, he has taken them in his hands and assured them of the kingdom of God...We admonish parents to cleanse their conscience as much as lies in them, with respect to the child, to do whatever is needed to raise the child up to the praise and glory of God, and to commit the child to God until it is clearly seen that God is working in him for faith or unfaith.<sup>178</sup>

Elsewhere, Marpeck states: "Because grace is prior to sin, it is also granted to infants before they come of age."<sup>179</sup> Therefore, children of believers were considered God's children until they came to the years of discretion, when they would hopefully be baptized as believers. This explains, in part, why Mennonites did not view the need for Christian schools as strongly as their Reformed counterparts in the Fraser Valley. There was a different emphasis in the Mennonites camps: to establish Bible schools so children who had come to years of discretion, could immerse themselves in Scripture.

Historically, Bible schools were set up first, then high schools, and then elementary schools. This is evident in British Columbia, where MEI was originally a Bible school of the South Abbotsford church and was transformed into a high school in 1944. It was later (1993) expanded to include an elementary school (see p. 138).

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<sup>178</sup> *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources*. Walter Klaassen, ed. (Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1981), p.124.

<sup>179</sup> R. Friedmann. *The Theology of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1973b), p. 92.

Concerning the doctrine of original sin, their confession states:

We believe that man was created in the image of God, sinless, and in fellowship with God, with a free will to make moral choices. But man sinned, and wilfully disobeyed God, breaking fellowship with Him...Consequently all are sinful by nature, guilty before God and in need of forgiveness through Christ.<sup>180</sup>

Another difference from the major reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is the Mennonite view of the doctrine of man's free will. The Brethren do not talk about divine election, but stress the free choice of man to come to God. They also do not swear an oath, since Christ said: "Swear not at all . . . simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No', 'No'." (Matt. 5:33-37) Finally, the Brethren do not believe in war, since the Christian seeks to practice Christ's love in all relationships. Hence, Brethren do not take up military arms but, "where possible, they perform alternate service to reduce strife, alleviate suffering and bear witness to the love of Christ."<sup>181</sup> The Mennonite Brethren have certainly adhered to this directive in Canada. The Mennonite Central Committee is active across this land to collect donations and is often the first to send aid to areas of conflict, areas of natural disasters and places around the globe where people are in great distress.

Mennonites coming to Canada, specifically to British Columbia, did not come in large numbers during the 1950s, like the Dutch, after the WWII. Instead, their greatest numbers arrived in Canada during the 1920s, during and after the Bolshevik Revolution when life in southern Russia came unbearable. The revolutionaries chased them off their vast estates, shot them in their gardens, ransacked their houses and robbed them of the freedom they had enjoyed for so

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<sup>180</sup> *Confession of faith of the Mennonite Brethren Churches*, p.12.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* p.21.

many years. The following excerpt from the “Odessaer Zeitung” (Odessa Times Newspaper) tells one of these gruesome stories:

Massacre at Privol’noye: Eleven people were piteously slain by bandits at the Abram Jacob Sudermann estate of Privol’noye on November 11, 1917: The dead are: Abram Sudermann (57), Aganetha Thiessen Sudermann (55) [the estate owners], Peter Vogt (38), Marie Schroeder Vogt (37), Margareta Vogt (18), Gerhard Vogt (3), Johann Vogt (7), Peter Vogt (5), Daniel Vogt (3) Mary Wiebe (42), Martha Wiebe (43) [servants on the estate]. Altester Wiebe (no relation to the Wiebe sisters) brought news of the massacre to Nikolaifeld church members on November 13. Kornelius Isaac Heinrichs of Arbusovka happened upon the murders late in the day of November 11. All who were slain were found outside on the yard, with the exception of the young Gerhard Vogt, who was found slain on a field near a haystack, where it is believed the bandits caught up with him as he attempted to escape . . . Kornelius Heinrichs heard a noise coming from inside the house and looked through a window where he saw a baby crawling around on the floor amid broken glass, its nightclothes bloodied. There are three other survivors who managed to hide, and escaped with their lives.<sup>182</sup>

Katya Vogt, who was one of the children who escaped the roving bandits, wrote a novel about her experiences. She is still living in Winnipeg, Manitoba now.<sup>183</sup>

Many other Mennonites escaped only with the clothes on their back. There are still old Mennonites in care homes for the elderly in Abbotsford who dream of the Russians being after them. Many lost children, husbands or wives and fled to America and Canada over the mountains, through India or by other round about ways. Many settled on the prairies of Canada first and then moved on to British Columbia, where the pastures were literally much greener. In fact most prairie Mennonites settled in Yarrow and Greendale in BC (small farming communities in

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<sup>182</sup> Odessaer Zeitung, November 15, 1917, in *The Russlander* by Sandra Birdsell, aka Katya Vogt (Toronto, Ontario: McClelland & Stewart Ltd 2001), p.1

<sup>183</sup> K Vogt, aka Sarah Birdsell. *The Russlander* (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart Ltd. , 2001).

the beautiful Fraser Valley, a land that no doubt reminded them of the Ukraine, the bread basket of the former Soviet Union).

When they first came to Canada, the Mennonites were too poor to establish their own schools. For many years, Christian education for them meant Sunday school and youth work, daily vacation Bible school, music and choirs, and later camp and club ministries for young people.<sup>184</sup> Later, their priority was setting up their own Bible schools so that young people could be trained to serve in church and missions and live a life of obedience to God. In 1913, the first Bible school, situated on the open prairie, was opened in Herbert, Saskatchewan.<sup>185</sup>

Most of the Mennonites now living in British Columbia had forbears who came from the Dniepre River, immigrated to Canada just before and during the Bolshevik Revolution, and settled on the Red River in Manitoba. Some of these immigrants shifted to settlements on the Saskatchewan River and then moved on to the Fraser River Valley in BC.

An obituary in the Abbotsford News of September 28, 2004 sums up the life of these Russian Mennonites very well:

Jacob (Jake) Dyck was born on May 27, 1912 in the Zacharias Village of Ekaterinoslav (translated: in praise of tsarina Katherine the Great; this city is now known as Dnepropetrovsk) Russia, to Gerhard and Agatha Dyck. His father was a bookkeeper at the village flour mill. During the Russian Revolution bandits killed Jake's father and grandfather. In 1923 his mother and her three sons left Russia by train with many other refugees, arriving first in Germany and eventually continuing on to Canada. Jake worked as a farm hand in Saskatchewan and Manitoba for years. When he landed a job in a garage, the increased salary enabled him to marry Esther Plett on May 19, 1940. In 1948 they moved to BC, where they

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<sup>184</sup> *Handbook of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of North America.* (Winnipeg, Man.: Kindred Press, 1984), p.18

<sup>185</sup> A.J. Klassen. *The Bible School Story: Fifty Years of Mennonite Brethren Bible Schools in Canada.* (Clearbrook, BC: Published by the Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute, 1963).

farmed on Sinclair Road and also on King Road, raising laying hens and growing raspberries . . . Jake was living at Epiphany House in Abbotsford at the time of his death on September 24, 2004, aged 92 . . . A service will be held at Clearbrook Mennonite Church . . . donations in Jake's remembrance may be made to the Mennonite Central Committee.<sup>186</sup>

## 2. Establishment of MEI

Between 1941 and 1961, the number of Mennonites in BC quadrupled to 20,000.<sup>187</sup> At first the Mennonites who settled in Yarrow were reasonably satisfied to send their children to the local public schools; they could absent their children for religious holidays and harvesting duties. However, when more and more young people reached high school age, they began to see the need for their own high schools if they were to maintain their own religious distinctives (and not have their children assimilated as Canadians who did not know German and the Mennonite culture and religion). In 1945, Sharon Mennonite Collegiate was established in Yarrow for grades 9 to 11. In Abbotsford, the Mennonite Brethren churches established the Mennonite Educational Institute for high school students in 1944<sup>188</sup> (referred to above, now the largest independent school in British Columbia).

In 1944, Franz C. Thiessen became MEI's first principal. In those early years, the Institute consisted only of grades 9 and 10 and included a small Bible school adjacent to South Abbotsford church. In December of 1946, a full fledged

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<sup>186</sup> *The Abbotsford News*, September 28, 2004, p.8A (82<sup>nd</sup> year).

<sup>187</sup> Jean Barman. *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1996 ), p.306 .

<sup>188</sup> V. Cunningham. *Justice Achieved: The Political Struggle of Independent Schools in BC* (Vancouver, BC: Published by the Federation of Independent School Associations in BC, 2002), p.52.

high school opened its doors in a new building on Clearbrook Road.<sup>189</sup> Thiessen wrote of those early years: “Wir durchleben eine herrliche Zeit. Der Herr arbeitet in machtiger Weise in unserer Schule, und viele haben den Frieden gefunden.”<sup>190</sup> (We are experiencing a wonderful time. God is working mightily in our school and many have found their peace with God). The curriculum followed was largely that of the public school. Thiessen was active in preparing Bible curriculum materials and song books for his school as well as other Mennonite Bible schools.<sup>191</sup> Graduates of MEI started going to the University of British Columbia teacher education faculty and became teachers in the local public elementary schools. Thus, Mennonites did not see the need for a Christian elementary school for many years. It was not until 1993 that the doors of a primary school at MEI opened; a new building was erected in 1997 on the high school campus, complete with grades K-7.<sup>192</sup> All three campuses (elementary, middle and high school) are now on the Downes Road site.

### 3. Teaching Bible at MEI Elementary

Considering the above confession of faith, it will not surprise anyone that the emphasis on teaching Bible at MEI is quite different from that of the schools started by their Reformed Dutch counterparts. There is now some unspoken rivalry between the Abbotsford Christian School (which also opened a brand new middle school in the fall of 2004) and MEI. For a time, Abbotsford Christian

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<sup>189</sup> K. Klassen. *My Father, Franz C. Thiessen* (taken from the M.B. Archives in Winnipeg, a biography written in 1979a.), p.18.

<sup>190</sup> Letter written by Franz Thiessen to his children, 1946. Taken from *Franz C. Thiessen, Lehrer und Prediger*, p.8 of *Mennonitische Rundschau* of September, 1979b (M.B. Herald), article submitted by Kaethe Klassen, Franz's oldest daughter. Translation mine.

<sup>191</sup> K. Klassen. *My Father, Franz C. Thiessen*, p.19.

<sup>192</sup> [www.meisoc.com](http://www.meisoc.com)

School was the largest independent school in BC; now MEI has usurped that position.

Upon examining some of the textbooks used to teach Bible at MEI, I was not surprised to find in the Teacher's Guide a comment about how to lead a student to Christ. There are probably at least two reasons for this: the Mennonite position on baptism and the fact that students from non-Christian families are allowed to enrol at the school (at present only 51 percent of students come from Mennonite church homes).<sup>193</sup> All students are viewed as still needing to make a decision for Christ; many are baptised as young teenagers when they openly state at their public baptism that they have decided to follow Christ. At this time they become full-fledged members of their own Mennonite Church. Evangelism and leading students to Christ are two of the most important reasons for teaching Bible.<sup>194</sup>

The grade two Bible book is entitled: *How can I know God?* The first unit talks about what God is like (i.e. He is Ruler) using several Old Testament stories as illustrations of each topic. Even in Lesson 1 of this book, there is an immediate application of the lesson. Unit Two discusses ways we can praise, worship, thank and serve God, while unit three immediately turns to Jesus and follows Jesus' life through His birth, life, death and resurrection. Finally, the book ends with a unit on Daniel—a man who loved God—as an illustration of the practical working out of the life of one who knows and trusts in God. The actual Bible stories are printed in simplified form for the students to read for themselves; short fill in the blank, matching and puzzle exercises enforce student learning. There is a great

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<sup>193</sup> www.meisoc.com

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

emphasis on the Christian walk and what it means to follow Jesus. This series of Bible workbooks with accompanying Teachers' Guide is published by Lifeway Christian School Curriculum, a division of Scripture Press Publications Incorporated.<sup>195</sup>

i. Teacher Interviews at MEI Elementary

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004, I had the privilege of interviewing Ms. DM, grade four teacher at MEI.<sup>196</sup> She confirmed for me that, yes, grade K-5 does indeed use the Scripture Press materials in all the elementary grades and this material has been used since the inception of the elementary school in the early 1990s. The grade 4 book, *Winners for God*,<sup>197</sup> includes the study of four Bible characters: Elijah, Esther, Nehemiah and Peter. She added that rarely does she cover each of the four characters; Nehemiah is often left out. Every day teachers use the Bible as a devotional book, reading age appropriate devotional material that often tells a story and links the events to principles from the Bible. Teachers are free to choose their own devotional materials.

In addition, chapel is conducted every week. There the entire school sings together, listens to a speaker or teacher present a testimony or theme, and spends some time in prayer. There is always a service project of some sort on the go. Elementary students have one period of Bible a week; this may be divided into two one half-hour periods for the lower grades or one single period for the

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<sup>195</sup> P. Roberts. *How Can I Know God?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, 1986c).

<sup>196</sup> D:12, p.363.

<sup>197</sup> P. Roberts. *Winners for God*. (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, 1986d).

intermediate grades (4-6). The role of the Holy Spirit is emphasized, as Ms. DM states: “We cannot prepare Bible lessons without the Holy Spirit.”

Every intermediate classroom has a set of Bibles on the shelf; these are used for Bible lessons and sometimes for devotionals. Storytelling is used as a means of teaching Bible. Flannel graphs are used for variety in story telling. Ms. DM shows videos about the life of Esther and Elijah to add color to the lessons; she also uses comic books about Peter and Elijah to make the Bible come alive for her students. Ms. DM views her students as being at various stages of understanding:

We have a huge variety in our school; I have nine non-Caucasian students, most of whom come from a Sikh background. Some are from Christian homes, some go to the temple to worship their Guru Nanak. I have to remember that they all come from varied backgrounds. Some are Christians, but many still have not made a decision for Christ.

Teacher DM places priority on helping students relate the Bible to their own lives: “Scripture Press materials constantly make applications from the Bible lesson to the lives of the students. We do the same with our devotional materials.”

An MEI primary teacher, Ms. LH (interviewed on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004), talked of integration of Scripture with other subjects as well.<sup>198</sup> She saw the Holy Spirit as leading the teacher and the students into the truths of God’s Word. She cited 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 as illustrating that all Scripture was God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. I could sense her joy when she talked of telling the Bible stories, having the students dramatize them and allowing them to pray in class. She, too, views her students as sinners who need to come to Christ; she has led students to the Lord in her

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<sup>198</sup> D:13, p.364.

class. She teaches Bible every day and integrates the memory verse with the theme of the week or month. She does have the Scripture Press books in her classroom, but does not slavishly follow that curriculum. She has devotional stories and tries to integrate those into the daily classroom activities.

## ii. Intermediate Curriculum at MEI Elementary

A look at a workbook and Teachers' Guide for grade 6 entitled "*Christ, The Answer*" encourages the following pattern for each lesson:

- Step 1: Students are asked to Look—I discover the facts.
- Step 2: Students are asked to Think—I will consider what God is saying.
- Step 3: Students ask their own questions by doing research and group work.
- Step 4: Students are asked to make a definite response to Scriptural truth by personalizing the message they have learned from God's Word.

The major goal is that teachers "bring pupils face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ." Teachers are encouraged to "lead students to submit every habit and trait to God that He might mould them into complete lives committed to His glory."<sup>199</sup>

The aim is that a student will relate what s/he learns to his/her own life so that s/he "will develop into a growing, Spirit-sensitive, maturing child of God."<sup>200</sup>

The Holy Spirit is mentioned in only one reference in the student workbook, relating to Acts chapter two and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Everything in this workbook is covered very briefly from the life of Christ to the church in the twentieth century. There is far too much material covered for the

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<sup>199</sup> P. Roberts. *Christ—The Answer: Teachers Guide* (Wheaton, ILL: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1986a), p.2.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

students to get an adequate grasp of the birth and growth of the church. There is no Bible book covered in detail; the Old Testament and the inter-testamentary period are reviewed in one lesson, as is the growth of the early church and the time period from 400 AD to 2000 AD. In my view, students need to cover far too much material in one lesson (especially considering they are only in grade 6). Also, each section entitled, "I'll consider what God is saying," has a selection of exercises about right and wrong behaviour in it to encourage students to avoid sin. Some of these exercises tend to foster moralism and legalism, as if every passage that is personalized is about what is right and wrong in the students' lives. Students are encouraged to use Bible dictionaries, concordances, maps, articles from magazines, church history references and topical Bible study guides to dig deeper into Scripture. God's word is presented as having definite answers to life's questions and students are encouraged to find these practical answers for their own lives.<sup>201</sup>

A second book for sixth graders is entitled *God's Word in My Life*. Again, the major goal is similar to the other textbooks described above. However, this book is mainly thematic, beginning with a unit entitled *God's Word about Me*, using the examples of King David and Saul to teach students how to make important decisions about right and wrong living. Unit 2 discusses *God's Word about My Family* and uses the families of Moses, Jesus, Joseph and a variety of other Bible characters to teach students what God's plan of love, obedience, respect and conflict resolution in families entails. Unit 3 is a section about God's Word relating to friendships and stresses the aspects of good friendship using the

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<sup>201</sup> P. Roberts. *Christ—The Answer*, p.5.

example of David and Jonathan. This is followed by a lesson on choosing godly friends, since wicked friends could lead the students astray. The book concludes with a unit about *God's Word and Others*; this unit includes studies from the gospels and some of the letters with a goal to teach students to accept and appreciate others who are different from themselves. Students are encouraged to care about others, work for God and emulate Jesus in His walk on earth. The lives of Bible characters are studied to determine a "Christ-centered value system for daily life"<sup>202</sup>; Bible truths, especially relating to development of a Christian character, are stressed so that students develop into Christ honouring servants.

These may be important concepts for students to learn, but Bible lessons tend to become moralistic. An example of this would be p. 23 where students are asked how they would get to know God better. The choices are: attending church worship services; reading my Bible every day; daily family worship; participating in Sunday school class; regular Bible study; memorizing Scripture. No mention of the Holy Spirit, the grace of God or the absolute necessity of a Saviour is ever made. Another example would be from p. 27: "God has given us principles in His Word which should guide our decision-making: conscience, government, friends, others, thoughts and church agreement with what God says in His Word." Again, students are never shown that they carry a sinful heart of unbelief according to Jesus' statement: it is not what goes into a man that defiles him, but what comes out (Matthew 15:11-20). In this way, students are taught to be "good Christians" without the help of God Himself, without realizing their need of prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit who leads His people into all truth. The exercises

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<sup>202</sup> P. Roberts. *God's Word in my Life*. (Wheaton, ILL: Scripture Press Publications, 1986b), p. 4.

seem more like recipes for friendship, success, and trying to be a good person. Not once in this teacher guide did I find a reference to the Holy Spirit.

There are two workbooks for grades 7 and 8 entitled *God's Plan for the World – An Old Testament Survey* and *God's Plan for Me – A New Testament Survey*. The Old Testament survey text follows a similar pattern as that of the others: each lesson contains the 'Look' (the students discover the facts of God's Word), 'Think' (about God, about me, about my world, about right and wrong), 'Ask' (a section where students ask their own questions) and 'Personalize' ( a place where the students include their own responses: 'I will meet God honestly on the basis of this scripture'). Students cover the entire Old Testament, with the exception of the book of Jonah; the minor prophets are not covered in depth but just in passing, with perhaps a Scripture quote. Again, this series tends to be moralistic in discovering what was right and wrong about the behaviour of biblical characters so students can apply these concepts to their own lives. The Holy Spirit was mentioned twice, once in relation to Jesus Christ and the Spirit being upon Him (Isaiah 61: 1-3), showing that we, too can be delivered by the Spirit of God) and once in relation to Peter's quote of Joel 2:17-21, relating to the Holy Spirit who is ready to help all those who call on Him.

*God's Plan for Me* is the grade 8 text/workbook and is a survey of the New Testament. This book is divided into four units: thematic lessons about walking in Jesus' footsteps, learning from Jesus' life and teachings, how the church was established, and a look into the future (a quick study of the book of Revelation). The unit aims include learning outcomes in terms of what students need to understand, attitudes students need to cultivate, and skills they should acquire by

the end of each unit. For each day, a workbook page is assigned. Enrichment activities include hymn searches, hymn studies, dramatic presentations, class service projects, map studies, creative writing, interviews, research assignments and/or enrichment readings.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned by name many times throughout this workbook (pp. 19, 20, 22-24, 49, 67-78, 81, 84, 86, 87, 89, 90, 91, 95, 116). The Spirit is often alluded to as well; for example, when students are asked to give their personal responses from Scripture (see pp. 92, 96, 98, 100, 104, 114). Of course the discussion revolves around the beginnings of the early church, and students work through the entire book of Acts seeing the work of the Holy Spirit. Students are reminded that “a person without the Spirit of God cannot understand spiritual things. They are foolishness to him,” according to 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.<sup>203</sup> Later, on page 72, the relationship between God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is discussed, using various Scripture references. On the following page students are asked to look up various passages concerning the Holy Spirit’s ministry and the purpose of that ministry. Students are taught that the Holy Spirit makes the church grow (p. 81); that missionaries are effective because of their commitment to the ministry of the Holy Spirit (p. 86); that the Holy Spirit is given to Jews and Gentiles alike (p. 91); that the Holy Spirit guides believers (p. 95) and convicts men of sin (p. 72); that the Holy Spirit and the Father and the Son work together to effect faith (p. 72). Church growth happens “through instruction, worship, fellowship, service and the ministry of the Holy Spirit” (p. 67). However, I did not find any mention of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22-25), nor the gifts

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<sup>203</sup> J. J. Cairns. *God’s Plan for Me: New Testament Survey* (Wheaton, ILL: Scripture Press Publication, Inc., 1986a), p.49.

of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:11-13), nor the gifts of encouragement (Hebrews 10:24), hospitality (Hebrews 13:2), prayer (Romans 8), and caring (Hebrews 13:3). When the qualities needed for a disciple were discussed, only the following were mentioned: organization, the ability to plan, a caring heart, commitment of his/her purpose and willingness to involve and use others (p. 100).

Not each epistle mentions the word 'Holy Spirit' (see the book of James), but when the New Testament is discussed I would expect to see the fruits of the Spirit mentioned along with the gifts. It is true also that this workbook covers the New Testament in a very cursory manner: lessons 15-17 discuss the final chapters of the book of Acts, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, the Johannine letters and the book of Jude. Hopefully in their later high school years, students will be studying these Bible books in more detail.

### iii. Teaching Bible in the MEI high school

On Tuesday, September 28, 2004, I interviewed Mr. GK, Bible Department Head at MEI Secondary School.<sup>204</sup> He and a group of high school Bible teachers have recently revised, improved, and updated the Bible Study programs in this large high school. In order to meet students' needs, these teachers actually sat down with students and asked them what they would like to see in their Bible programs, grades 9-12. Together, staff and students came up with a comprehensive Bible course that attempts to integrate required government

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<sup>204</sup> D:14, p.365, 366.

courses such as CAPP (Career and Personal Planning, soon to be phased out), Planning 10 and Career Planning courses in grades 11 and 12.

In grade 9 students study Old Testament prophets: Isaiah, Amos and Micah. They continue with fulfilled prophecies in the New Testament: Matthew, Luke and Revelation. They discuss related issues such as materialism, justice, covenant, and superficiality. Since this grade 9 course dovetails with the life skills requirement of the Ministry of Education, students take one class of Bible and the next period they would take Life Skills and so on through the semester. Students learn through debates, group discussions, researching various books of the Bible, and service/ministry type activities to develop faith formation skills through the spiritual disciplines component of the course.

Bible 10 is subsumed in Planning 10: students study careers, graduation requirements, job seeking and keeping, post secondary training opportunities and health and lifestyle issues from a Christian perspective. "What a wonderful privilege to study the Planning 10 topics listed below from a Christian perspective, knowing that each one of us has been uniquely created by God and that He has plan for each one of us."<sup>205</sup> This study is based upon Psalm 139:13-15 and Jeremiah 29:11. This half year Bible curriculum focuses on Wisdom Literature, the New Testament letters and Ethics. "Seeking to understand who we are in Jesus Christ and encouraging wise decision making in seeking to faithfully follow Him in our everyday lives in all that we say and do are common goals to both Planning 10 and Bible 10."<sup>206</sup> MEI superintendent, Mr. PF, stated at the opening of the Middle School: "Our philosophy is more or less the same as that of

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<sup>205</sup> *Course Calendar: Mennonite Education Institute, 2004-2005, p.33.*

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid. p.33.*

the public school, only we are faith based.”<sup>207</sup> What I think he meant by that is that the curriculum MEI follows is that set out by the BC Ministry of Education; along with it, they teach Bible. (In my view, the word philosophy in that quote would imply a contradiction since the public schools are based on the premise of neutrality and secular humanism—also a philosophy.)

Grade 11 Bible is also intertwined with Career and Personal Planning 11. In six week modules, students learn about “Christians in Popular Culture” and “Radical Christianity” (Mennonite History). The roots of Anabaptist history are studied and related to present day; the *Pauline Letters, Missions and World Religions* are electives which may be taken in grades 11 or 12.

Bible 12 continues with Career and Personal Planning studies and also includes six week modules on the life of Christ, using Philip Yancey’s book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*.<sup>208</sup> There is another module on the integration of faith and Science (where issues such as creation/evolution, intelligent design and the Genesis Flood are discussed) and there is a Missions elective (which includes a spring break missions trip, often to Mexico). In grades 11 and 12 students may also take *Life Issues*, an elective with topics such as “justice, abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering and suicide; rites of passage issues related to birth, death and grieving; as well as conflict/war and peace and conflict resolution. The course will require significant student participation through discussion groups, debate and role playing.”<sup>209</sup> The course includes a study of

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<sup>207</sup> *The Abbotsford News*, September 13, 2004, p. A13 (82<sup>nd</sup> Year).

<sup>208</sup> *Course Calendar: Mennonite Education Institute*, 2004-2005, p.37.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

1 Corinthians, the *Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, sexual orientation issues, as well as a discussion of peace and violence. All issues are viewed from the Anabaptist perspective.

Mr. GK, a former pastor, had this to say about the role of the Holy Spirit:

We rely on the Holy Spirit for each lesson. The Spirit leads us to give the right words, to lead, to build the curriculum. We present the different views of the Holy Spirit in our Apologetics class in grade 12. Students learn about the intellectual, scholastic and charismatic perspectives on the Holy Spirit and we teach them the cautions and blessings of each.

All teachers interviewed at MEI believe the Bible to be the inerrant word of God; they base its interpretation on the Confession of Faith, most recently updated by the Mennonite Brethren Church. There is cooperative learning in Bible classes: in the unit on “Radical Christianity”, for example, teacher GK says, “students would divide into groups to study various aspects of Anabaptist history, using computer based Bible Search programs, web pages and library books and then report their finding back to the class.” Biblical story telling is used mostly in the elementary grades; in high school, this method would depend entirely upon the classroom teachers. Storytelling during Bible class can also mean telling stories of the teachers’ own experiences relating to their walk with God.

Teachers at MEI see students as God’s unique creation, but with the ability to choose: “We make no assumptions that they have chosen for God . . . many students do not come from Christian homes. In fact, we have students from Sikh homes.” The Bible is made relevant to the students’ lives through a variety of means: “The teachers give real life illustrations of how the Bible is relevant in their own lives, we have devotions with our students, and we strongly encourage

teachers to invest in students' lives beyond the classroom.” This MEI Bible program in grades 9-12 is clearly marked out, where previously, as teacher GK states, they “were all over the map” in their teaching of Bible. All teachers saw the role of the Holy Spirit as helping them prepare their lessons, guiding them as well as their students into the truths of God's Word.

#### iv. MEI Chilliwack: A Middle School Interview

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004, I had the privilege of visiting the Mennonite Educational Institute in Chilliwack. This campus was formerly Valley Christian School, but was subsumed under the MEI wing in 2000. I talked with Mr. PH, the principal. MEI Chilliwack includes grades K-9; Hills teaches Bible for the upper grades (7, 8, 9) and plans the weekly chapels and yearly Bible themes.<sup>210</sup> Principal PH noted that even though they were now a Mennonite school, the majority of parents, teachers and students are not Mennonites as such: “In fact, even fewer would assume a position of passivism as far as war is concerned. Most don't know it is one of the ground positions of the Mennonite faith.” Mr. PH is passionate about teaching Bible; he notes that students, parents and teachers alike need to use more precise language in describing faith, justification and sanctification. He considers the Holy Spirit totally essential in the teaching of Bible as well as the other subjects. “Only the Holy Spirit can transform a child.” In his school the Bible is viewed as the inerrant, infallible and inspired Word of God. Since coming under the MEI umbrella, the school now has an open admission policy (children from Christian and non-Christian homes may attend the school).

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<sup>210</sup> D:15, p.367.

Thus, there will of necessity be an element of evangelism in the teaching of Bible. (Previously, at least one parent had to be a Christian in order to enrol his/her child in the school.)

Mr. PH and his teachers use storytelling as a means to teach Bible all the time. It is interesting that his first take on the word storytelling was telling a story with a moral to it: “. . . telling a story that illustrates a proverb, an event or concept related to Scripture, either from the teachers’ personal life or from elsewhere.” He later added that storytelling is also used as a means to tell the Biblical stories: “. . . a story draws you in, the Bible is filled with incredible stories. A story involves the whole person and that is what we want.” According to the principal, Mr. PH, the favourite class in this school should be Bible, as he states: “It must connect with the students’ lives.” He views his students as being “in process”:

They are all in need of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. As teachers we need to focus on the objective truths of Scripture, especially in this day and age where experiential and emotional aspects of conversion are stressed at the expense of truth.

Principal PH challenges his students on a weekly basis on whether they know God or are walking with Him:

We as teachers bring the Gospel to them; it is up to the Spirit of God to apply the Word. To make the Word of God come alive for students, that is a wrestling process. I never teach the same curriculum year after year. I look at my students and their needs. I have a broad canvas and I teach within those parameters.

Principal PH encourages his teachers not to be too driven by the Bible curriculum, but to look directly to the Word of God. The Bible curriculum used in the school is the ACSI Bible curriculum (examined below). Previously, the school

used the Scriptures Press Bible curriculum, as described on pages 140-147 of this thesis.

#### 4. ACSI Bible Curriculum

The Association of Christian Schools International with headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colorado publishes a Bible curriculum for schools which belong to its organization. This section will look at the preschool, Kindergarten and grade one workbooks, published in 1995.

The authors of this Bible curriculum are a group of eight qualified teachers from various states in the U.S. A number of resource authors, project manager designers, production artists, assistant illustrators and a photographer complete the team, under supervision of Dr. Sharon Berry, ACSI director of curriculum (who, along with a team of assistant editors, brought this Bible curriculum to fruition). Each of the three books has thirty-six lessons. The grade one and kindergarten workbooks begin with creation, while the preschool workbook devotes two lessons to “Jesus and the children” and then goes on to discuss creation. The inside cover of each workbook gives a six-step guideline on how to remember Scripture: read, reason, rearrange, reproduce, rehearse and review. For these primary children, this six-step program would merely serve as a reminder for the teacher to help students remember God’s word; neither of the groups knows how to read as yet. Each of the three levels presents the story of Adam and Eve; in the preschool and kindergarten books (right after the stories of Adam and Eve) there is a lesson on good and bad behaviour (since Adam and

Eve, “the first people, taught their children to obey God.”)<sup>211</sup> The preschool book has a letter that is to go home to parents, asking them to explain to their children the importance of obeying God “the first time a request is made” (by a parent or grown up). There is a chart on the letter with four categories of obedience exercises: picking up toys, going to bed, coming when called and saying Bible verse. There is a slot for each day of the week so parents can fill in the chart every day with their child. The chart is titled, “The Happy Way is to Obey.” Before the letter to parents is sent home, several pages of pictures depicting good and bad behaviour are noted and discussed. In the kindergarten workbook, the good and bad behaviour pictures are accompanied by happy and sad faces; students can put the right face beside the right behaviour.<sup>212</sup> This chart is sent home again after Lesson 17, when students have learned how “the Boy Jesus obeyed His parents” (p. 71). The following page depicts a certificate, stating: “This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_ has obeyed right away all week.” This certificate is then signed and dated by the child’s teacher.

Each lesson in the workbooks focuses on a Bible character, such as Noah, Isaac, Joseph, John the Baptist, A Little Boy who Shared His Lunch, Nicodemus or David and Samuel. The lessons always elicit good behaviour points from the Bible characters. For example, the preschool book (lesson 7) discusses Noah, and the salient point to remember about him is that “Noah Listened and Obeyed God.”<sup>213</sup> In the grade one book, there is a lesson about Moses stressing what a good helper Miriam was in helping to save Moses’ life while he was floating on

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<sup>211</sup> ACSI Bible curriculum, Preschool workbook, p.28.

<sup>212</sup> ACSI Bible curriculum, Kindergarten workbook, p. 13.

<sup>213</sup> ACSI Bible curriculum, Preschool workbook, p.29.

the Nile River.<sup>214</sup> Each lesson makes an application. In a lesson about Paul and Barnabas in the grade one book, the student is asked to write, “I will serve God faithfully.” Other responses include: “I can serve the Lord by...”, “I should be a good steward of all I have...”, “When I tell friends about Jesus, I am being a good missionary.”<sup>215</sup> Lesson 27 in the grade one book shows nine jars, vessels of honour and dishonour before the Lord according to 2 Corinthians 4:7. The happy jars serve the Lord, read the Bible, are kind and obey God, work hard, and witness to others; the sad jars are unkind, selfish, and mean. The emphasis is always on good behaviour and what Christian boys and girls should/should not do.

Another aspect of these three books is that Bible stories are never presented in chronological order. Of course when it comes to Christmas, Good Friday and Easter, the stories of Jesus birth, death burial and resurrection will be covered. When other Bible material is used, stories are taken from the Old and New Testaments almost randomly. In the Kindergarten book, the story of Mephibosheth is inserted between Baby John (John the Baptist) and Jesus Calms the Storm (pp. 25-36). The Mephibosheth story is chosen to illustrate how God cares for His people; the lesson drawn from this story is that God cares for his children as well. Another example of this random choice is in the grade one book: the story of Lois and Eunice teaching Timothy is inserted in the Joseph story (pp. 25-34). The lesson to be learned is that students can be missionaries, just as Joseph and Timothy were. The ten commandments are covered in one page (p. 39 of the grade one book), right beside a picture of Moses and the

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<sup>214</sup> ACSI Bible curriculum, Grade One workbook, p.29.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., pp.100, 110, 114.

burning bush and right before the lesson on “Peter and the Early Church” (p. 41).

This grade one book also contains a “Good Steward Chart” (p. 105) where students can fill in for every day of the week whether they:

- a. Told someone about Jesus
- b. Helped their parents
- c. Prayed
- d. Read the Bible

The glossary in the grade one book sums up each character neatly in how they pleased God: they were obedient, trusted God, read God’s word, were faithful missionaries, helped their neighbours, shared, had faith, were kind or good friends, etc. A case could be made that each story is chosen to cover a certain aspect of behaviour or certain aspects of God’s care and love, so that students will have a good idea of how to act Christianly by the time they reach the end of grade one.

Interspersed among the Bible stories are other stories (in the same workbook): a fairy tale journey (pp. 15, 16 of the preschool book); a child driving to school with his mother (Grade One workbook, p. 65); a picture story of “Nana and Me”, about a boy on an outing with his grandmother (Kindergarten Book, pp. 47, 48). These always depict good behaviour or right choices. Happy and sad faces are used throughout to stress doing what is right and avoid what is wrong. “God’s Ways Maze” (Kindergarten, p. 46) shows paths named ‘praise’, ‘obey’, ‘love’, ‘reading God’s Word’ and ‘joy’, while at the same time telling students to avoid the big bad dog, the cliffs, the water and the bear cage. On page 99 of the kindergarten book, we see a clown stating the things for which he is thankful. A

picture of Jesus is under the clown, along with toys, food, love and a home (indicating that these items are gifts from God for which we must be thankful). In depicting Jesus under the clown, one wonders what picture students are intended to have of the Son of God.

There is an encouragement for students to come to Christ. In the preschool book, after the study of Jesus' last days on earth, there is a letter to parents:

Help your little one sense the need of a personal commitment to Jesus as Saviour and King; and, if the time is right, aid him/her in making that decision. You may want to use this prayer with your child: 'Dear Jesus: I know I have done bad things. Thank You for dying and taking the punishment for me. Please come into my heart and be my King and my Saviour. I will follow You from now on. Amen.'

The teacher's comment below reads: "If I can be of further help to you as you lead your precious child to Christ, please don't hesitate to ask."<sup>216</sup>

As to the work of the Holy Spirit, the only book out of the three examined that mentioned the third person in the Trinity was the grade one book. The Holy Spirit is mentioned on p. 109 (where deacons are described as being "full of the Holy Spirit," and on p. 122 (where the Holy Spirit, along with God and Jesus is considered belonging in the New Jerusalem).

I see a danger here of minimalizing God's word to a guidebook, showing students what good and bad behaviour is. By including other stories in the same workbooks, students are left with a very fuzzy picture of what is actually in the Bible and what is not. There is no over-arching picture of God's *Heilsgeschichte*. Memory verses too, are used to stress right behaviour: "I have hidden Your word

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<sup>216</sup> ACSI Bible curriculum, Preschool workbook, p.118.

in my heart that I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119: 11, grade one book, p. 64), or Deuteronomy 17:19 which stresses that we are to be careful to observe all the words of God’s law (grade one book, p. 125). The exercises are age level appropriate, but nowhere are children encouraged to make their own drawings. There are no open-ended questions; all exercises are complete in themselves (cut and paste, fill in the blank, puzzles, or drawing lines to complete sentences). In a lesson on “Using Art and Building Skills” (grade one workbook, p. 137), students are asked to find ten words about the temple in a word search exercise. The page is completed with Psalm 122:1: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord’.” On the back of this same page, there is the “Certificate of Carpenter School of Church Builders”, citing 1 Timothy 4:14a (Do not neglect the gift that is in you) and 1 Corinthians 3:9a: For we are God’s fellow workers. The certificate is awarded to “a terrific church builder who has practiced the special gift of \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) this year”. This certificate is awarded on the (date to be included).

It is unclear what students are supposed to learn from this lesson: how does building Solomon’s temple relate to God’s church today; how does it relate to their lives? Perhaps the teachers will be able to explain this. Hopefully, teachers have freedom so that they do not have to stick with this curriculum every day. Mr. PH, from the Mennonite Educational Institute in Chilliwack, stressed: “I encourage my teachers to use their own curriculum.”<sup>217</sup>

An examination of later books in this curriculum uncovers a similar situation as was discovered with the Pre K to grade 1 series. The back cover of

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<sup>217</sup> (D:15, p.367)

the grade two book reads: “Characters from the Bible teach me how to live as I apply God’s Word to my life.” Above this quote is a space for the student to fill in his/her name. All thirty-six lessons describe one or two facets of each Bible character: Moses is Humble/Courageous, Joshua loves God’s word/obeys God, Daniel is confident in God and faithful to God. There are two lessons devoted to each Bible character, each stressing an aspect of character that pleases God: praising God, respecting authority, being compassionate, loyal, loving praying for others, exercising self-control and so on. There are two lessons about Jesus, right in the middle of the book, however Jesus is studied *on an equal basis* with all the other Bible characters. The workbook introduction sums it all up succinctly:

This year we are going to look at different people in the Bible who can help us. They show us what God wants us to be like . . . all of them show us how we can love and serve God. They will be our heroes. Some other people will be with us this year, too. The Johnsons are missionaries. They will be going to Guatemala to tell people there about the Lord. Mr. Johnson is a preacher. Mrs. Johnson is a mommy and a teacher. Timmy and Tina are just your age and they’re twins! They will be learning many new things in their missionary adventures, and so will you.<sup>218</sup>

Again the Bible is depicted as a guidebook, a place to find verses of help and encouragement. It is depicted as a measuring stick for good behaviour, according to charts (e.g. p. 15), obedience checks (p. 12, or 23) or temptation tugs (p. 25). One of the chief aims of becoming a Christian seems to be, “The fear of the Lord and humility bring honour and success.” (p. 39) Sin is discussed using daily life illustrations; students are to give a ‘thumbs up’ or a ‘thumbs down’ depending whether actions or attitudes were God pleasing or not. They are encouraged to confess their sins knowing that God will forgive them, according to

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<sup>218</sup> *ACSI Bible Curriculum, Grade Two workbook, p.5*

1 John 1:9. The Holy Spirit is acknowledged as a Helper to obey God's command (p. 132). The book ends with a final commitment to choose two things the student will do with God's help. A more extended glossary of Bible terms and characters is included in the glossary, along with several maps.

The grade three book is summarized on the back cover: "A study of the life of Christ and the early church shows me God's plan for building His church and how I can be involved."<sup>219</sup> There are 27 lessons about Jesus, his birth, childhood, preparation for ministry and His teachings. Chapter 28 is devoted to the topic of the Holy Spirit and how He empowers believers. The book finishes with the life of Paul and how the church is built. The final chapter encourages students to spread the good news of Jesus to other countries, since that is God's plan for the church. This book, too, concludes with an extended glossary and with maps (of the times of the patriarchs, the judges and the divided kingdom, the early New Testament times, Paul's missionary journeys and the world of today). In the introduction, Aimee and her dog, Arf, are illustrated as companions who "will be with you all year, learning together about the most exciting thing in the whole universe: God's plan for you and me and His Church!" (p. 5). Students are also introduced to Rabbi Asher who will be explaining important things about the Bible to the students. God's plan is summed up as follows:

A very long time ago, God knew there was a big problem with the man and woman He created. Because He loved them so much, He had a wonderful solution to this problem. His plan works out perfectly every time! Discover God's solution to each problem below by unscrambling the letters in the solution column: Saviour, messengers and witnesses; the solution to sin is a Saviour, the way people learn about Jesus is by God's messengers and how people learn about Jesus is for each student to be a witness for God. Then

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<sup>219</sup> *ACSI Grade Three Workbook*: back cover.

Rabbi Asher explains how Jesus existed before creation, how Jesus was the light of the world and how people received the Messiah. Jesus brought us God's grace and truth.<sup>220</sup>

It is unclear why a rabbi would be explaining this to the students. There is no explanation of how the Holy Spirit is honoured in this process, or how Christ is to be lifted up.

Later in this book, students are told (without having to look up the reference in Luke 2: 52) how Jesus built His physical, intellectual, social and spiritual life:

He built His physical life by eating right, exercising and resting. In this way, He grew in size or stature. He built His intellectual life by learning as much as He could and making good choices. This is how He grew in wisdom. He built His spiritual life by spending time with God the Father. He built His social life by spending time with other people. The Bible says that Jesus grew in favour with God and men. (p. 11)

Then students are given twelve little pictures to glue into each of the four sections of Jesus' growth life. For example, a present should be inserted into the 'social life' square of the chart to help students build social life because giving is a part of friendship. The scriptural basis for this lesson is unclear.

When Jesus' baptism is discussed, the Trinity is not mentioned (p. 13). Jesus was baptized to show that He had the approval of His father, that He was the long-awaited Messiah and that He could relate to sinners: "All three reasons helped Jesus spend time by Himself, stay at home with His family and share His message with others." Students are then asked how baptism helps them. Again, the scriptural accuracy of this lesson is unclear; this explanation of Jesus' baptism says nothing about His divinity but simply enforces what—in the eyes of

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<sup>220</sup> *ACSI Grade Three Workbook*, p.5.

the authors—students must do if they want to be like Jesus. Why include those three directives (spend time with family, stay at home, and share the message) in a lesson about Jesus' baptism? How can their own baptism help them? Most primary students in these schools probably have not even been baptized as yet. After Jesus' baptism, the same lesson goes on to say that Jesus passed a series of tests (His temptation in the wilderness--p. 14). Again, even though it is mentioned that Jesus was tempted in every way as we are, there is no mention of His divinity: that only He was able to be God's perfect sacrifice as God's only begotten Son. The lesson concludes with another sword drill, which again illustrates some possible scenarios from every day life so that students can choose which Bible verse would be most appropriate to overcome certain temptations. (These sword drills are interspersed throughout the workbook.)

The next lesson talks about Jesus choosing his first four disciples. The Scripture passage for the week of the lesson is never mentioned in the actual workbook. Each disciple (Peter, Andrew, John and James) is listed with a verse behind his name, stating what he did for God. Quotations come from the book of Acts for Peter and Andrew, while John's deeds come from the book of Revelation and John's first letter. James is described from the book of Acts. As a lesson to be learned from the calling of these disciples, students are asked to fill in the blanks as to what they would do when a coach asks them to play soccer on Sunday. Should they go to church or go with the coach? Another corollary drawn from this lesson is to accept Jesus' gift of eternal life, just as these disciples did: students are asked to pray to accept Jesus' death in payment for their sins. Since "at one time or another we all do something wrong," students are encouraged to

accept Jesus into their life. After they have done that, they are given some things to do: Grow in their Christian life (after checking 1 Peter 2:2), rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4:6) and not give up going to church (Hebrews 10:25). These students are only in the beginning of grade three; one wonders how much of this 'growing' they understand after looking up the three verses. Accepting Jesus is pictured as a task they must matter-of-factly fulfill.

Many lessons begin with a portrait of faith, to illustrate from history how certain Christians were converted and walked with God: John Newton (p. 21), Corrie Ten Boom (p. 33) and David Livingstone (p. 59) are some examples. Meanwhile, Rabbi Asher comes up throughout the book, making students aware of how Jesus helps us in our daily lives (pp. 35, 44, 87, 117). The dog, Arf, spurs students on as well: "Arf is begging for answers to his simple questions about prayer. You can find the answer in your Bible. Look up these references and fill in the correct words" (p. 42). All these ways and means of attracting the students' attention take their interest from the actual word of God and side track them instead. They also detract from the holiness of the word of God and how careful we should be in interpreting it. In every example, God's word is used as the remedy for a problem students may face.

There is one lesson (number 28) on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. The Holy Spirit helps us pray, use our gifts, live righteously; He makes us feel God's love in our hearts and strengthens us. The Holy Spirit is pictured as being in tongues on the disciples' heads and as being in the disciples as they speak in various other languages. There is no mention of how the Holy Spirit moves as a wind. In section "D" of the lesson, the Holy Spirit is shown as

making a vital difference in the lives of the disciples: instead of being afraid, the disciples became courageous; instead of being selfish, the disciples shared; instead of denying Jesus, the disciples were bold to preach Him; instead of being scattered, the disciples were unified in one place; and instead of being few in number, the disciples became very numerous (Acts. 6:7). The final section of lesson 28 has a fill in the blank story about how the students can share their faith. No mention is made of the fruits of the Spirit, as in Galatians 5:22-24. This is very strange, given the emphasis of these books; the Spirit was only described as helping students fight against sin and witnessing.

This book, too, has some charts to fill in to show how the students' behaviour and attitudes can improve. On page 136 we see a prime example:

- a. Mom or Dad needs to relax after a hard day: I will \_\_\_\_\_. I did it! Check it off!
- b. My brother, sister or friend complains about something: I will \_\_\_\_\_. I did it! Check it off!
- c. Any family member is sad: I will \_\_\_\_\_. I did it! Check it off!

The book concludes with examples of three missionaries/groups of missionaries who were good role models for God: Cameron Townsend, the founder of Wycliffe Bible translators; Ida Scudder, medical missionary; and the Moravians of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Again there is a glossary and set of maps to complete this workbook.

Any artwork the students are asked to do is supposed to be on the workbook pages, often in very small spaces (see pp. 19, 51, 71); there are no open-ended, spontaneous questions to draw or illustrate (there is only the

workbook to be filled in). I did notice one responsive reading of several scriptures to allow students to “worship with the Word” (pp. 38, 39). However no actual passages were ever read or told (only single verses here and there were chosen). I did not notice any encouragement to memorize verses, other than the use of Psalm 119:11 to hide God’s word in the heart. According to three teachers I interviewed, this is done during chapels and times of devotions in the classroom.

The grade four book, entitled *Christ and His Word*, is summarized on the back cover as follows: “Basic Bible doctrines, including a study of God the Holy Spirit, salvation, heaven, angels and final events, are explained for my understanding and application.”<sup>221</sup> The book does indeed study all these topics. It begins with eliciting some Bible study tools. In the final analysis, there are five tools needed in ‘Sherlock’s’ tool kit in order to accurately find the teachings of the Bible: a timeline, maps, a concordance, a study of the context of the verse and the Holy Spirit. A boy, Sherlock, and his dog discover these truths (pp. 5, 13, 21, 35, 42, etc.). On page 117, the dog (Woofson) is asked to write sentences about the second coming of Christ. On page 134, three dogs are ambassadors, linking their actions to those of the disciples, the apostle Paul and three children. Then the student him/herself is supposed to fill in the chart about wining souls. Using a dog in this way does not give God’s Word the unique reverence and authority it inherently has by virtue of being the word of God. The Bible is treated on a par with other books, although not intentionally so.

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<sup>221</sup> *ACSI Bible Curriculum, Grade Four*

The workbooks cover the doctrines of Biblical inerrancy and infallibility and three attributes of God in great detail: omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience. Students then study the human/divine nature of Christ and the work of Christ on the cross, after which they spend three lessons on the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit indwells, empowers and enlightens the believer. Students are told that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit if they are believers. They are then asked what kind of temple they are by being shown a list of good and bad behaviours, thoughts and words. Each lesson is always brought to a conclusion discussing what kind of power the Holy Spirit gives to resist sinful thoughts, words and deeds. The final lesson on the Holy Spirit lists four ways He indwells the believer: He convicts, indwells, empowers, and instructs. Each way is accompanied by a verse from Scripture that backs up the claim. Although the work of the Holy Spirit is stressed a great deal in this workbook---more than in any other Bible curriculum I have examined so far---the Spirit is only useful in so far as He improves the student's behaviour or helps him/her in witnessing, or in living a life pleasing to God. The Bible itself is always used for proof-texting.

After the first fifteen lessons about the Trinity, students focus on man. The first lesson stresses man made in the image of God with a variety of gifts, a God-given purpose and a mandate to love his neighbour (who is also made in God's image). When sin is discussed, man is portrayed as inheriting sin from Adam: ". . . we are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners." (p. 69) Man's purpose is to glorify God; when he sins, he misses the mark. This lesson is followed by a "Red Flag Alert" where students are given real life examples of sinful situations and how man rationalizes his way out of doing what is right.

Students are told to write out James 4:7 (Resist the devil and he will flee from you) in order to avoid the trap of sin. Sin and its consequences are illustrated by the story of David and Bathsheba. Again some real life situations, choices between good and bad behaviour, are used to illustrate to students how to avoid sin and what to do about it.

After this, there are three lessons about salvation being by grace, through faith and through Christ alone. These lessons are summed up by a puzzle listing various roads to heaven. The underlying question is: "Will that get me to heaven?" (p. 99). What behaviour and what choices will get me there? The workbook continues with a lesson on what eternity is, using the story of Lazarus and the rich man to illustrate what happens to people after they die:

- Can they still think? Yes, they can because it says in Luke 16:23 that the rich man could see and draw conclusions.
- Can they still feel things after they die? Yes, because the rich man felt torment and agony in the flames of hell (v. 24).
- Can they still talk? Yes, because the rich man talked and so did Abraham (vv. 24-31 records a conversation).
- Can they come back after they die? No, because there was a great chasm fixed between the place where Lazarus and Abraham were and the place of agony where the rich man was.

Students are then asked why Jesus told this story (p. 101). There is no mention of the context of this story, no suggestion that this story could be a parable, and no research done as to why this passage might be included in the greater context

of the book of Luke. Students are then asked to compare heaven and hell, using various texts from Matthew, Luke and John and Revelation.

There is quite a thorough lesson on angels, how Satan was/is a fallen angel, what the role of angels is, and how they protect and serve believers. After a discussion about Satan, the fallen angel, students are again given an exercise to help them resist the devil's temptations (p. 108). There are also three lessons about the Church: as a building (a temple of living stones), the bride of Christ, and the body of believers. A recipe is given for readiness, so that students will turn to God, serve God and wait for Jesus to come and get them (p. 118). Finally students are asked what they would like to be doing when Jesus returns. The two judgment seats of Christ are discussed in a following lesson: Woofson, the dog, and Sherlock, the boy, are to analyze, compare and categorize which labelled blocks fit under which judgment seat of Christ. One judgement is for believers, one is for non-believers, one is for rewards, and one is for punishments. References given are 1 Corinthians 3:8-15 and Revelation 20:11-15. Students are then given a time-line that begins with creation and the fall, which places Jesus' first coming in the middle and concludes with the rapture of the church and Jesus' second coming with his two judgment thrones. The judgment seat of Christ, where fire is the test, contains crowns and rewards. No mention is made of wood, hay or stubble: if man's works are burnt up, "he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." (1 Corinthians 3:14). There is no mention of the millennial reign of Christ. This seems like a very mechanical way of presenting the judgment day of Christ.

The workbook concludes with four lessons about the students' walk with God; prayer, devotions, sharing the good news and holding on to the truth. In this way students are to apply what they have learned to their daily life. The last lesson sums everything up by a discussion of the names of Christ.

The grade five book is "an overview of the Old Testament through a study of the lives of individual characters [with a] focus on the good and bad choices they made and my responsibility in obedience" (see outside back cover)<sup>222</sup>. A look at the table of contents verifies the fact that each Old Testament character is studied to illustrate one aspect of his/her character. For example, Abraham and Isaac - Obedience; Moses - fearing God, not man; Overview of Judges - cycle of sin; Samson - wrong choices; Saul - pride and disobedience; David - confidence in God and sin and its consequences; Absalom – Rebellion; etc. This time, 'Dr. Diggit' helps students ferret out the truths from Scripture. After each study, students are asked to look into their own lives, to set goals for right choices, and to obey God's commands. Many times lessons are concluded with reference to the New Testament, such as when Satan's origin and doom are studied in Ezekiel 28:12-19: students are referred to the New Testament passage in Ephesians 6:10-18 to put on the whole armour of God to withstand the wiles of the devil. There are many other lessons where an Old Testament truth is related to the New Testament (see pp. 74, 76, 83, 107, 122, 135, 143). This is especially true of prophecy and fulfillment. Students are also given stories about more recent saints whose examples they are to follow: Jim Elliot (p. 25), Eric Liddell (p. 44), Fanny Crosby (p. 52) and Amy Carmichael (p. 128). Exercises are of the fill

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<sup>222</sup> *ACSI Bible Curriculum Grade Five.*

in the blank, puzzle, word search, unscramble, true/false and completion variety. If reasoning skills are required, students are given a set of propositions and then asked to draw conclusions, such as the exercise given about Elijah:

Premise #1: A righteous person's prayers are effective

Premise #2: Elijah's prayers were effective

Conclusion: Elijah was a (righteous man) \_\_\_\_\_ (blank to be filled in) (p. 115).

Sometimes students are asked to paraphrase a verse or verses in their own words (pp. 80, 120, 126) or fill in what a Bible character might have said (pp. 67, 79, 129). Art work is always asked for in very small boxes (e. g. pp. 5, 95, 121).

The grade six book is "a survey of the New Testament highlights, familiar and significant passages, with an emphasis on personal application to my life" (see outside back cover)<sup>223</sup>. It begins with a lesson on creation, the fall and the promise of redemption. The Old Testament books are reviewed and the stage is set for the coming of a Saviour. An overview of the gospels is given in one lesson, while one lesson is devoted to each of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The lesson on the gospel of Matthew starts with a discussion about money. Some important truths about this subject are taken from Matthew 6:19 and 6:25-34. Students are asked about their investments and then told to write Matthew 6:21 or 33 in a treasure box. Then they are asked the question: whom will you serve? They are given Matthew 6:24, Philippians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 6:8 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 as reference. They are asked to explain their own attitude to their possessions and, finally, they are to put their answer in perspective by

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<sup>223</sup> *ACSI Bible Curriculum Grade Six*

comparing their lives with children in Vietnam, Costa Rica and Bangladesh. Here ends the discussion about the book of Matthew. Mark is covered in a similarly cursory manner, only this time the topic is 'success'. Mark's early failure is mentioned (Acts 15:37-40) and his later successes are discussed (2 Timothy 4:11, Colossians 4:10). What is Jesus' definition of success? Mark 8:34-38 gives the answer. Students are then asked to read the parable of Luke 12:16-21 and make it contemporary, showing how the rich fool thought he was successful but in reality was not. Then they are asked to find some teaching in the Old Testament about success. The secret of success is found in Joshua 1:7, 8. Finally, Paul's admonition to Timothy about success in 2 Timothy 4:7, 8 is used to encourage students to fight the good fight of faith. Who are some 'giants' of the faith in your life? How can you be a giant of the faith?

The book of Luke is used to give illustrations of 'enemy attacks'; Saul's attack on David is used as the first example. What does Jesus say if we are attacked by enemies? Look up Luke 6:27, 28 to find out how you, too, can turn the other cheek. Then some real life situations are discussed and students are asked how God wants to use them to change their enemies: according to Luke 6:38, you are to make your enemies your friends. How does Luke 6:37-42 ask us to deal with our 'grudges, judges and smudges'? Consider the beam in your own eye and be merciful when you relate to your fellow man. The lesson concludes with a discussion on how Jesus treated the outcasts. Students are encouraged to show Jesus' love to those who need it. This concludes the study of the book of Luke.

The one lesson from the book of John is how the Holy Spirit helps, comforts, counsels and guides believers (John 16:13-15). The names of the Holy Spirit are discussed (John 14:8, 16:17, 26), the work of the Spirit is stressed and the divinity of the Holy Spirit is emphasized. Finally, students are asked to write a thank-you letter to the Holy Spirit for all He does for them, how He has led them, convicted them or comforted them. The chapter ends with a story from Phil Renicks, director of ACSI, who along with his friend, Henry, was sent to Hungary in July of 1991. Each time they encountered a difficulty, road block or language barrier, God provided help and guidance for them in most miraculous ways. Again, it seems unrealistic to expect students to understand each of the gospels in one lesson. How can they understand the message of each of the books by looking at one aspect? And is that one aspect really explained according to its *sitz im tekst*, *sitz im Buch* and *sitz im Kanon* (i.e. explained in the context of verse, Bible book and place in the canon)? In my view, there is a danger that this type of study may lead to wrong conceptions about God and His word.

After this cursory 'covering' of the four gospels, lesson eight, entitled "The Church on Fire" covers the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: how His fire spread to Peter and the early church, and how the Spirit enables us to witness. The next lesson illustrates what it means to be alive in the Spirit by having students read the story of Ananias and Sapphira, the apostles in the temple, and the persecution that resulted. Students are then asked to write their own "Godincidences" in their lives: "Has God ever worked through 'coincidental' circumstances in your life . . . to accomplish His purposes?" As evidence of the spreading of the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit, the lives of Stephen,

Peter and Paul are studied in one fell swoop: a chart for Stephen comparing his death and that of Christ's; a maze for Peter, showing how he was empowered to do great things for God; and a puzzle for Paul's three missionary journeys. Then there is a chapter on some of the New Testament epistles which "provide instruction on what we should believe and how we should behave" (p. 46). The book of Revelation is mentioned in one page: students are asked to decode a message that reveals all the 'sevens' in this book. This chapter concludes with a word search puzzle that includes all the New Testament epistles (p. 48). Next there are three lessons on man's guilt, his inner spiritual struggle and how to conform to Christ. Again, students use word searches, completing sentences, decoding messages (texts), matching, and sentence answers to discover how they should act by God's standards. Three lessons on the purity, unity and love in the church complete the picture of how believers need to behave in the Body of Christ.

In the final exercise, students are asked to choose bricks that describe the building up of the church and to reject bricks that tear the body of believers down. There are some blank bricks to add to their own 'bricks': junk food, non-prescription drugs, lots of sugar and fat, wasting time, hard rock music, and listening to bad jokes are some of the choices to be discarded. Positive building blocks include: praise choruses, helping others, devotions, enough sleep and rest, vegetables and fruit, Bible study and time with family. Nowhere is the student given the idea that all of life is to be worship to God; our very work is our worship. There are just some things to avoid and discard and others to do and all will be well.

The next chapter is devoted to the resurrection, focussing on 1 Corinthians 15. It contains Scripture proofs for the resurrection, a discussion of the fact that Christianity is the only religion whose leader actually arose from the dead and a chart to fill in about how our resurrected bodies will be different from our earthly bodies. A certain joy is portrayed in the glory and power of the resurrection.

After a lesson on 'sowing and reaping' (meaning sin and its consequences), three chapters are devoted to interpersonal relationships: *Managing Our Relationships*, *Managing our Feelings and Friends*, and *Managing Thoughts for Success*. Transformed thoughts lead to transformed actions; both Old and New Testament examples are used to illustrate each aspect of good and bad relational skills. Always Scripture verses are used to make applications in the students' own lives. A chapter on encouraging one another, based on 1 Thessalonians 5:11-23 shows students the joy and satisfaction that comes with a life of encouraging fellow believers. *Standing Firm*, *Winning the Real Prize* and *Working to Please Christ* are three chapters concerning the Christian warfare, which is compared to being a soldier in boot camp, an athlete in a race, or following a blueprint. Several subsequent chapters are devoted to growing in the faith and how this happens: forgiveness and restoration, the strength of love and accepting discipline. All steps are indicative of a faith that works. Chapter 29, *Growing in the Faith* takes the students to the book of Hebrews, showing how Christ is better than all past Jewish beliefs and practices, why His sacrifice is better, which covenant is superior and what faith actually is. On p. 118, they are asked to choose which covenant "best meets yours needs." What is being taught here? Does the Old Testament not meet our needs? Do we choose between the

two covenants or do we choose the God of the covenants? Self-control, service and sanctification are the ultimate goals. The final chapters take the students through the book of Revelation, encouraging them to flee from God's wrath and wait for the second coming of Christ. The way of salvation is reviewed once more.

All intermediate books conclude with a glossary, a concordance and a set of maps. Each of these three books is written by the same team of educators, under the direction of Dr. Sharon Berry, with Mary Jo Kynerd, Renee Pate and Dr. Bette Talley as assistant editors. All books are published in 1995 and reprinted in 2001. Sometimes Scripture Press workbooks such as *The Hiding Place* (which covers the life of Corrie Ten Boom) or *God's Adventurer*<sup>224</sup> (a workbook, complete with ditto masters, on the life of Hudson Taylor—missionary to China) are used to supplement the teaching of Bible.<sup>225</sup> The teacher editions for each of these eight levels of workbooks contain more than 400 pages “which provide Scripture references, suggested memory verses, devotionals, background material, outlines, stories, discussion questions, evaluation mechanisms and thousands of creative, instructional ideas.”<sup>226</sup> This is certainly evident in the massive teacher editions for each of the levels.

The foundational beliefs of this Bible curriculum are as follows:

1. The primary focus of a Bible series should be on application of Biblical principles to the lives of children.

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<sup>224</sup> Patricia Skriba. *God's Adventurer: Hudson Taylor*. (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, 1984)

<sup>225</sup> John and Elizabeth Sherell. *The Hiding Place* (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1982)

<sup>226</sup> ACSI Teacher Edition: *Elementary Bible Series*. (Colorado Springs, CO: Association of Christian Schools International, 1995)

2. The Bible itself should be kept central in the teaching process.  
Teachers should hold it and teach from it directly. Students should be personally using it.
3. While a Bible series will present various stories, topics, passages studied, etc., there should be unifying themes which permeate many, if not all of the lessons.
4. The Bible series should have a complete Teacher Edition which contains the daily instructional program, answer keys and an array of ideas to enrich and enhance the teaching of Bible.
5. The Bible series should be characterized by a variety of creative, exciting teaching methods and student activities.
6. Knowledge of Bible content is important in building a foundation for application. However, care should be taken in learning Bible facts for the sake of knowledge alone.
7. The Bible series should not waiver from the fundamentals of the faith as set forth in the ACSI statement of Faith. However, it should allow for variation in both practices and beliefs which exist beyond the ACSI statement of faith.
8. The Bible series should be characterized by colourful graphics and contemporary art which are age-appropriate and inviting for students.<sup>227</sup>

Of all the themes and emphases, the stress on application to the daily lives of the students came out as the strongest aspect of this curriculum:

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<sup>227</sup> ACSI Teacher Edition *ACSI Elementary Bible Series*, p.10

“Ultimately the test of faith is in outward behaviour.”<sup>228</sup> Consequently, each workbook level has certain “life issues” which are stressed. For example, Preschool and Kindergarten studies stress being obedient, honest, and unselfish; sharing with others, getting along with others, taking turns and telling the truth.<sup>229</sup> These themes are augmented each year. A sample of the grade six themes include: wanting to be accepted by peers, negative peer influence, self-esteem, preparing for adolescent changes, being honest and what disrespect to adults involves.<sup>230</sup> A strong emphasis on missions and a focus on getting along with others complete the themes. Each level from preschool to sixth grade focuses on a theme that is developed throughout. Four major Bible translations are used in this series: the King James Version, the New King James Version, the New American Standard Bible and the New International Version. Memory verses are assigned from the NKJV or the NIV.

There are suggestions for memory work in each Teacher Edition; however, in schools where the memory work is done in chapels or taken from larger passages of Scripture, freedom is given to adapt the curriculum to the various schools. There is a doctrinal statement to be signed by all schools who wish to be part of ACSI; this Bible series focuses mainly on teachings held in common with a variety of denominations and Christian beliefs. There are allowances made for differing student abilities and minority groups are represented in pictures throughout the series.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> ACSI Teacher Edition: *Elementary Bible Series*, p.10.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid. p.11.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p.16.

In terms of telling Bible stories, each lesson in this series has at least one Bible story 'boxed in' (i.e. the story text for the Bible passage being studied). Teachers are encouraged not to read this story verbatim, but to include their own creative ways of telling the story. Teachers are asked to "develop a personal, lively style that keeps students on the edge of their seats as they enjoy and assimilate the Word of God."<sup>232</sup> Biblical story texts are provided in the primary teachers' manuals only. Upper grade levels "take students to a specific Bible passage to read and discuss."<sup>233</sup> Evaluations for primary grades are informal. From grade two to six, a formal 'testing' activity in the shape of black-line masters is provided every three weeks. Teachers are encouraged to design their own tests as well, so that their own specific emphasis is more accurately reflected in test questions. Chapel suggestions to dovetail with the Bible program are also suggested. The entire Bible series is well structured to accomplish the aims set out in the Teacher Editions. The introduction in the teacher editions ends with a comment about God's Word based on Hebrews 4:12: "The Bible needs no defence. It needs only to speak for itself. The promises regarding its efficacy and power are certain as it produces in its hearers exactly what God has ordained."<sup>234</sup>

On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004, a primary teacher at one of the schools that uses the ACSI curriculum informed me that there "is way too much material. We cannot possibly cover all the lessons." Instead of following each lesson sequentially, she said most teachers take sections out of the curriculum that fit their needs and the needs of the students. Teachers at MEI Chilliwack and other

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<sup>232</sup> ACSI Teacher Edition: *Elementary Bible Series*, p 22.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27

schools that use these materials usually pick and choose which lessons and which parts of the lessons they will include in their yearly plans. Another interesting comment I heard from this primary teacher was that since only in the Grade Five curriculum was there any sense of chronological order of Scripture, students were often left with 'snippets' of knowledge with no over-arching meta-narrative. Most of these schools have chapel at least once a week: Scripture is sung and memorized in choral speaking, other speakers are invited in to teach from the Word, and students pray corporately for the needs of the school body.

It is also important to note that this ACSI curriculum is written from an American perspective: there is talk about American heroes (p. 25, Grade 5), American money (p. 137, Book Four) and the American way of life (p. 134, Book 6). This makes it a little awkward for Canadian teachers and students.

The ACSI curriculum certainly stresses the work of the Holy Spirit. Students would not be left guessing about how the Holy Spirit works, how He empowers, indwells, instructs and encourages believers.

In terms of the Word of God, it is possible that students could sometimes be mixed up as to which stories actually come from the Bible and which were taken from "real life". By using a dog to illustrate Bible truths, the activity and the Bible itself is sometimes put on a par with any other book. The methodology of including moral stories from real life would substantiate this position even more.

It seems to me also that the theme of God's revelation in creation was under valued in this series. The creation story is told in the various grades, but the emphasis on creation being another revelation of our great Creator God is not found. The great passages that revel in the creative power of our God (such as

Genesis 1 and 2, Proverbs 8, Moses song in Deuteronomy 32:1-43, Psalms 8, 19, 96, 104, 148, 150, Job 38-41, Isaiah 40-45, Jeremiah 10:12,13, etc.) are not studied at all in the eight workbook levels of this Bible series. The doxology of Romans 11: 33-36 cannot be sung with joy and gladness as students revel in the creative powers of their great God if these textbooks alone are used.

Sometimes following the Word is reduced to this one question: Will this get me to heaven? This reductionism fails to take into account the Christian's role in the world: he is to be an ambassador for Christ in all his activities. Christian activities are not to be relegated to church, mission work or good behaviour. Also, using specific verses or texts, could reduce God's word to a book of proofs or rules we must follow in order to gain eternal life. The great desire to apply the principles of Scripture and the examples of comparing the lives of all Biblical characters to the lives of the students could also lead to reductionism, since passages are seldom studied as a whole; entire books (e.g. the Gospels in the Grade 6 text) are glossed over to find one behavioural principle. The entire "Heilsgeschichte"—or how God works in history—is never discovered because the Bible is not covered from book to book. Bible books are not seen in their relation to the canon, or their relation to God's plan. The Psalms and prophets that constantly remind Israel to remember God's glorious deeds of the past are not stressed (e.g. Deuteronomy 32, 2 Samuel 22, Psalms 78, 81,105, or Habakkuk 3). Passages were presented to buttress certain doctrines or behaviours rather than the Word itself coming with power to teach the students who God is and what His claim is on our lives. If the workbooks in this series are followed sequentially, students may come away with a basic knowledge of how to

apply Bible passages and characters to their own life situations in a moralistic way. Students could come away with viewing the Bible as “a reactional filter that helps them to screen out what is wrong.”<sup>235</sup> They could come away with knowledge of basic Bible doctrines, although the methodology is a scholastic one: “the Bible is assumed to be a collection of dogmatic truths put together in propositionalistic form.”<sup>236</sup>

Reducing Bible study to fill-in-the blank exercises, puzzles, behavioural questions, true or false statements to be answered, etc., robs students of seeing the beauty of God’s word; it does not allow group discussions that bring about growth; students do not often study God’s truth in community and so miss much of what it means to grow in their relationship to God and one to another.

## **II. Pentecostal Schools**

### **1. An Interview**

Other schools that also use the ACSI Bible Series are schools of the Pentecostal or charismatic persuasion. On November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004, I visited Cornerstone Christian School in Abbotsford, one of several of these schools in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.<sup>237</sup> This school is run by the Abbotsford Christian Assembly Church. The school was established in 1979; its goal is “to teach students the spiritual and academic skills to prepare them for work in the

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<sup>235</sup> Richard J. Edlin. *The Cause of Christian Education*. (Adelaide, South Australia: Openbook Publishers, 1999), p.59.

<sup>236</sup> Gordon Spykman. “Moralism and the Bible” in *The Story of God and His People*. (Langley, BC: Society of Christian Schools in BC, 1995), p.24.

<sup>237</sup> D:16, p.368.

church and around the world.” The school is in the church building; Mr. DS, (the head Bible teacher) described this church as Pentecostal, full gospel: teaching the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is known as the second blessing. After water baptism, the student is saved but should seek the second blessing for his/her life. Students and teachers go on spiritual retreats where this blessing is encouraged and sought.

There is no formal Bible curriculum at Cornerstone, as teacher DS states: “We don’t really have a Bible program that is a curriculum. We do use some of the ACSI Bible stuff.” The grade 11 and 12 teacher uses some materials from *Understanding the Times*, a Biblical worldview curriculum published by Summit Ministries. The purpose of Summit Ministries, founded by Dr. David A. Noebel, is to “equip servant leaders in worldview analysis, training champions of the Christian faith, and inspiring them to love God with both their hearts and minds.”<sup>238</sup> *Understanding the Times* is a video-based curriculum, designed for use primarily with upper-level high school students. Another set of videos, *Lightbearer’s Christian Worldview* curriculum, is used for students in the grades 7-9 category. According to Dr. James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family, (head-quartered in Colorado Springs), Summit Ministries provides one of the very best resources available for teaching worldviews. I found other schools in the Fraser Valley using this curriculum as well for the upper grades (e.g. Valley Christian School and Pacific Academy). Video titles in the curriculum include: *Attitudes and the Christian Leader*, *Clergy in the Classroom: The Religion of Secular Humanism*, *Secrets of the World Changers*, *Loving God with All Your*

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<sup>238</sup> Kevin Bywater, Director of Curriculum and Research, Summit Ministries, Manitou Springs, CO in a letter advertising the curriculum, no date given.

*Mind, Responding to Relativism, A Harmony of Differences, The Wonders of God's Creation, True Fiction: Modern-Day Parables, Hollywood: Power and Philosophy, Pornography: Addictive, Progressive and Deadly.* These are well presented resources to teach students discernment in worldview, showing them the lies Satan would have them believe about their culture, their faith and their personal lives. The head Bible teacher at Cornerstone (Mr. DS) also gives students a lecture once a week on "a topic of God's choice." Students then take notes in a journal/notebook and illustrate certain points made in the lecture. He showed me some of the notebook entries; they were very personal and individual responses. Occasionally students do research in interesting Bible topics such as 'Where is the real Mt. Sinai?', 'Why did Pharaoh's daughter want Moses?', or 'The Fear of the Lord in the Old Testament.'

Teacher DS uses the ACSI publications *To the Ends of the Earth* (on the book of Acts, author Jay Borkert) and *Mastering Bible Study Skills* (author Paul Pyle) for grades 8 and 9. Last year, he had the entire high school involved in a Scriptorium, where students became scribes, using feather ink pens, candles, and a chapter from the Bible. They were to copy it under the same rules the scribes and monks were under in the Middle Ages. Students and teachers were all in one room with light only from the candles and the teachers had on uniforms, dressed as monks. He used this illustration to say that teachers do not follow any curriculum slavishly, but teach topics as the Spirit leads them: "The Holy Spirit designs the curriculum." The teachers look at the needs of the students and feed them spiritually accordingly. Students are encouraged to read the entire Bible in one year in their devotions. The focus of the school is evangelistic; students are

viewed as a mixed body, either Christian or non-Christian. The school accepts only high school students who choose to be part of the school (elementary students are sent by their parents' choice). There are some East Indian students as well as some of other nationalities.

## 2. History: Origins of the Pentecostal Movement

The Pentecostal movement broke forth, as Richard J. Foster writes:

in the most unassuming of places in the heart of Los Angeles. [It was] destined to become the fountainhead of a worldwide Pentecostal explosion. William J. Seymour was the divinely chosen leader of this work, which came to be known as 'the Azusa Street Revival.'<sup>239</sup>

Seymour was from a black slave family, born in May of 1870 in Centerville, Louisiana. During his growing up years, he imbibed black Christian spirituality; drinking in the spirituals, the yearning for heaven and the sense of community borne of suffering and persecution. His burning desire was to "seek racial reconciliation through the power of the Spirit."<sup>240</sup>

Seymour had been a pupil of Charles Parham, a charismatic pioneer of the Pentecostal movement, who ran a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas.<sup>241</sup> Under Parham's itinerant preaching, "participants were converted, sanctified, baptized with the Spirit and healed of sickness."<sup>242</sup> Seymour was invited by a black woman pastor of a Negro Holiness church in Los Angeles, Neelly Terry (who had earlier

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<sup>239</sup> Richard J. Foster. *Streams of Living Water* (San Francisco, Ca.: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), p.112

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p.114.

<sup>241</sup> W. J. Hollenweger. *The Pentecostals* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), p. 22.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22

visited a small coloured Nazarene church in Houston, Texas and met brother Seymour while visiting there), to help with meetings in her church.<sup>243</sup> However, when he preached his first sermon on Acts 2:4, affirming that everyone who received the Holy Spirit must of necessity also speak in tongues as the disciples did on the day of Pentecost, Seymour was barred from continuing his work in the Nazarene Church.<sup>244</sup> He continued preaching in homes; when these were no longer adequate because of the many converts, Seymour rented an old Methodist Church at 312 Azusa Street in 1906. This place is regarded by most Pentecostals as the cradle of the world-wide Pentecostal movement: "For three years, without interruption, prayer meetings took place here, with speaking in tongues, singing in tongues and prophecy."<sup>245</sup> This outpouring of the Holy Spirit continued for about a thousand weeks at the Azusa meeting place and became the most significant revival of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in terms of a global perspective.<sup>246</sup> Influences of this movement spread to other parts of the United States, Brazil, South Africa, Europe, Russia, and the Scandinavian countries<sup>247</sup>; it has spurred traditional churches to examine their pneumatology as well.

As far as basic doctrines of the Pentecostal movement, there is no definition of who is the most genuinely a Pentecostal since there is not an international body in the Pentecostal movement which defines doctrines. The early years of the Azusa street revival involved mostly simple workers, men and

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<sup>243</sup> Nils Block-Hoell. *The Pentecostal Movement* (Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1964), p.31.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>245</sup> W.J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, p.22.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xix

women, blacks and whites alike who came to receive the Holy Spirit baptism.

According to H. H. Barber, a Canadian Pentecostal from Winnipeg, Manitoba:

In the city of Winnipeg there are people who claim to be Pentecostal who are hyper-Calvinists, some who are strong Arminians, some who look upon the doctrine of the Trinity as a pagan superstition, others who are staunchly Trinitarian, some who believe in baptismal regeneration {while} others deny any regenerative virtue of baptism. Some cherish a rabid type of independence, others are loyal to the requirement of ordered denominational affiliation.”<sup>248</sup>

Thomas William Miller, a leading historian of the Pentecostal Movement, states that the ‘religious parentage’ of this movement can be traced back to the Methodism of John and Charles Wesley, the necessity for a born-again experience stressed by revivalists such as Gilbert Tennent, Jonathan Edwards and the Methodist circuit riders who brought the doctrines of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, necessary holiness of living, and true repentance from sin.<sup>249</sup> The Methodists brought their innovative evangelistic tool of camp meetings from the United States to Canada; the first of their camp meetings was held at Hay Bay (near Napanee) Ontario in 1805. These camp meetings were later expanded with protracted prayer meetings, such as those held during the Azusa street outpourings, accompanied by an altar call. The earliest signs of an Azusa Street Pentecost were evidenced in Toronto in 1906 and Winnipeg in 1907.<sup>250</sup> (The Winnipeg Pentecostals group soon became Canada’s largest Pentecostal church, under the leadership of A.H. Argue, who began a work there in 1907.)<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> H.H. Barber in *The Pentecostals* by W.J. Hollenger, p. xix

<sup>249</sup> Thomas W. Miller. *Canadian Pentecostals: A History of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada*. (Mississauga, ON.: Full Gospel Publishing House, 1994) p.21.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39

<sup>251</sup> Robert K. Burkinshaw. “*The American Influence Upon Canadian Evangelicalism: Greater Vancouver as a Test Case.*” (An essay submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirement of a B.A. degree at the University of British Columbia, April 1980.), p.58.

The first Canadian to receive the experience of speaking in tongues was Mrs. Ellen Hebden, an independent evangelist who had emigrated from England to Canada. She had heard about the Azusa Street outpourings of the Spirit but initially she was opposed to tongue speaking and resisted it. Later, on November 17, 1906, while she was praying in her room for more power in her ministry, she sensed an unusual moving of the Spirit of God. A report of her baptism in the Spirit was sent to William Seymour and published in his paper. Mrs. Hebden and her husband bought a three storey building at 651 Queen Street in Toronto, which later became known as the Canadian Azusa.<sup>252</sup> Pentecostal world leaders made a point to stop in at Toronto to see this work of God; however, the established churches protested and warned their parishioners against the errors of the Hebden's. One such antagonist was a certain George Chambers, a pastor of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ church in Toronto. In God's plan, this man was later to become a founding father of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.<sup>253</sup>

At first, Pentecostals were strongly against forming any formal denomination; since the Spirit of God was leading them, they felt no need for institutionalization. Many of the mainline churches were—in their view—dry and dead in their preaching, governed by ecclesiastical bodies from above, and ruled by rock hard theologies that were not supposed to change. By 1917, however, a shift in attitude toward organizing the body of Pentecostal believers had taken place and George Chambers became the first chairman of the Pentecostal

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<sup>252</sup> T.W. Miller. *Canadian Pentecostals*, p.40.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Assemblies of Canada (PAOC).<sup>254</sup> Several purposes of the PAOC mandate are relevant for this study: the PAOC as a newly formed body was to:

- a. conduct a place or places of worship
- b. to organize and conduct schools of religious instruction
- c. to carry on home and foreign missionary work for the spread of the gospel;
- d. to publish, sell and distribute Christian literature and papers. <sup>255</sup>

The fellowship started out in 1917 with twenty seven assemblies across Canada, including Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver. It is difficult to define what exactly constitutes Pentecostalism; one leader, Thomas Ball Barratt, founder of the Pentecostal movement in Norway, states the enigma very succinctly:

In baptismal formula, we are Baptists. As regards sanctification, we are Methodists. In aggressive evangelism, we are as the Salvation Army. But as regards the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, we are Pentecostal!<sup>256</sup>

The Canadian signers of the PAOC constitution stated that they “disapprove of making a doctrinal statement a basis of fellowship . . . but that they accept the Word of God in its entirety, conducting themselves in harmony with its divine principles and Apostolic example . . .”<sup>257</sup> One doctrine seems certain: there must be a “second work of grace wrought in our hearts by the power of the blood and the Holy Ghost.”<sup>258</sup>

When the Pentecostal Movement did become more organized, doctrines were described in more detail. In their book, *Foundation of Pentecostal*

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<sup>254</sup> T.W. Miller. *Canadian Pentecostals*, p.114.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>256</sup> Nils Block-Hoell. *The Pentecostal Movement*, p.175.

<sup>257</sup> T.W. Miller. *Canadian Pentecostals*, p.116.

<sup>258</sup> William J. Seymour. “Receive Ye the Holy Ghost” in *Azusa Street Sermons*, Dr. Larry Martin, ed. (Joplin, MO: Christian Life Books, 1999), p.49.

*Theology*,<sup>259</sup> Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave devote almost one hundred pages to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, followed by a chapter on divine healing. This is by far the longest section in the book. However, the book discounts the phrase 'second definite work of grace', since its authors believe that "perhaps there is a third, fourth, fifth, etc. work of grace"; the word 'second' is not used in the Bible, hence, the authors stress there must be a continual growth in grace.<sup>260</sup> So although one doctrine may be 'certain', it is still difficult to nail down exactly. Maybe the one certainty is that the work of the Holy Spirit is emphasized in Pentecostal churches more than in any other denomination. Rev. Bernice Gerard, a pastor with the PAOC for twenty-one years in Vancouver, writes "it must be remembered . . . that the movement is 'Spirit centered' rather than organizationally based and so the focus of the movement is not to be defined."<sup>261</sup> The baptism of the Holy Spirit "is a definite experience, subsequent to salvation, whereby the Third Person of the Godhead comes upon the believer to anoint and energize him for special service."<sup>262</sup> This special power was promised by Jesus Himself when He said: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) This power is for service, for spiritual warfare, for filling to overflow and for ability to work for God; it is for all who believe and they shall receive it by faith in God's promises (Galatians 3:14, John 7:39). This power is received by all while they wait expectantly for the Holy

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<sup>259</sup> G.P. Duffield and N.M. Van Cleave. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA.: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983).

<sup>260</sup> G.P. Duffield and N.M. Van Cleave. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, p.305

<sup>261</sup> B. Gerard. *Today and for Life*. (Burlington, ON: Welch Publishing Company, Inc., 1988), p. 126.

<sup>262</sup> G.P. Duffield and N.M. Van Cleave. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, p.305.

Spirit to come (Acts 2:1-4), while they wait in prayer and faith (Luke 11:9-13; John 7:37-39) and through the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:14-17, 9:17, 19:6). The initial evidence of this baptism is "speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance (Acts 2:4); sometimes this is accompanied by prophecy (Acts 19:6): "Speaking in tongues is not the Baptism with the Holy Spirit—it is the initial evidence, but not the only one."<sup>263</sup>

To sum up, the Pentecostal hermeneutic is one in which:

. . . experience and Scripture are maintained in dialectical relationship. The Holy Spirit is the one who maintains this ongoing relationship. Scripture is the final authority as truth . . . truth must be fulfilled in life experience. Lived faith is the result of a knowledge of the Scripture.<sup>264</sup>

The spread of the Pentecostal Movement in Canada was brought about by several distinctive methods used by early Canadian Pentecostals. First was the holding of evangelistic/healing campaigns across the nation, often led by healers and Holy Ghost preachers from the United States. Another tool was the camp meeting, often conducted by itinerant Methodist preachers who had come under the Holy Ghost fire.<sup>265</sup> Then there was the cottage prayer meeting, such as the one held in the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Black in Vancouver. These prayer meetings were held in several districts of this western city and each grew into larger groups:<sup>266</sup> "A dramatic surge of Pentecostal growth occurred in the province [of BC] during the 1920s. In 1921, only 247 people claimed Pentecostal

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<sup>263</sup> G.P. Duffield and N.M. Van Cleave. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*, p.322.

<sup>264</sup> Cheryl Bridges Johns. *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy among the Oppressed*. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p.87.

<sup>265</sup> T.W. Miller. *Canadian Pentecostals*, p.185.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

affinities in the census, and only four Pentecostal congregations existed.”<sup>267</sup> The 1931 census “reported nearly a tenfold increase in Pentecostal in the province to 2,277.”<sup>268</sup> The rapid growth of the Pentecostal movement in Victoria and Vancouver was largely attributed to the evangelist and faith healer, Dr. Charles S. Price<sup>269</sup> whose campaigns included spectacular reports of miraculous healings to which thousands came.

The groups of churches established in the 1930s were later known as the “British Columbia District”, which in turn elected its own superintendent. The first person to be elected to this position in British Columbia in 1944 was Percy S. Jones, a pastor and leader who was well aware of the dangers of “excessive denominational machinery” as the Pentecostals saw it.<sup>270</sup> Bible colleges, too, were established to train young people to take the Holy Spirit fire around the world. The first Bible school in British Columbia began in Victoria in 1924, and was later re-established in that city in 1941 as the British Columbia Bible Institute. After its move to North Vancouver in 1951, the school was later moved to Abbotsford, BC in 1962 and was renamed Western Pentecostal Bible College. This college was the first of PAOC Bible colleges in Canada to receive provincial permission to grant a college degree. The buildings on this campus (now known as Summit Pacific College) are named after the original founders: P.S. Jones auditorium; L.T. Holdcroft dormitory; Phil and Jenny Gagliardi gymnasium.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Robert Burkinshaw. *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*. (Montreal and Kingston, QUE/ON: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), p.100.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, p.101.

<sup>269</sup> R. Burkinshaw. *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*, p.101.

<sup>270</sup> Thomas W. Miller. *Canadian Pentecostals*, p. 200. See also R.K. Burkinshaw. “Strangers and Pilgrims in Lotus Land: Conservative Protestantism in British Columbia, 1917-1981” in his doctoral thesis, April 1988 for University of BC, p.255.

<sup>271</sup> [www.summitpacific.ca](http://www.summitpacific.ca)

Here young people are trained to bring the ‘foursquare’ (the four cardinal doctrines: salvation, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, divine healing and the second coming) gospel to all parts of the world.

### 3. Pentecostal Day Schools in BC

After establishing their own Bible schools, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada saw the necessity of starting their own day schools to train their children in the ways of God. Cornerstone Christian School is one such school, established in 1979; another such school is Pacific Academy<sup>272</sup> (started in 1985), now one of the largest independent Christian schools in British Columbia. Pacific Academy also uses the ACSI Bible Curriculum, although not as extensively as it did when the curriculum was first published in 1995.

On December 6, 2004, I visited a primary teacher and an intermediate teacher at Pacific Academy.<sup>273</sup> The first teacher I interviewed was a grade five teacher, the principal of the elementary campus. Her response when asked about the role of the Holy Spirit in her teaching of Bible was that:

. . . the third person of the Trinity is vibrant, alive and active in every classroom. We honour the Spirit’s personality, gifting, His healing power, and His work in our students’ lives. Even though this is a school operated from a Pentecostal perspective, we do not ask students if they are baptized in the Holy Spirit. If the topic comes up, we will discuss it, but we do not teach this doctrine as such.

When asked about other teachers in this large school, this teacher felt that perhaps seventy or eighty percent of teachers have received the baptism of the

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<sup>272</sup> [www.pacificacademy.net](http://www.pacificacademy.net)

<sup>273</sup> D:17, p.370, 371.

Holy Spirit (though not all staff belong to a Pentecostal church). Church affiliation is a factor taken into account when teachers are hired.

Since all students (over 1,000 students, in three buildings) come from varying denominational backgrounds, all are viewed as sinners in need of redemption. They need the justifying work of the Holy Spirit in their lives; they need the continuing work of the Holy Spirit to live a sanctified life. Teachers view the Bible as the infallible, irrefutable Word of God, upon which they base their life and teaching. The staff at Pacific Academy has just spent some time in discussing the Bible curriculum; they wish to integrate the Biblical worldview in all areas of the curriculum and to see the Scriptures integrated in all subject areas. They want to see the Bible as the core of what is being taught in all disciplines: “We don’t just want the Bible as icing on the cake,” emphasized this principal.

According to this same teacher/principal, storytelling was used—probably more than anything else—in the teaching of Bible. The stories are not necessarily Biblical stories, but stories from the teachers’ personal lives, showing how the Bible relates to every detail of a person’s life. The school has a time of devotions every day: the principal reads a portion of Scripture every morning over the public address system and then each class has a devotional time. Bible periods happen twice a week, with chapels once every two weeks. Parts of the ACSI Bible curriculum are used in the elementary grades, but most Bible curriculum is teacher generated. Just recently, the staff has put out a survey among their teachers to see if the entire Bible is covered; they have discovered some gaps. The story of Esther and the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Job were not discussed, nor were some of the New Testament books. Some books were only

mentioned for a memory verse. The New Testament was emphasized far more than the Old. The church calendar events are covered throughout the year. The four major themes that the study identified for all Bible teachers were: *Know God, Know His Word, Live His Word* and *Know His World*. Under “Know God”, the following topics were mentioned: relationship (covenant), God’s character, names and personhood, God’s plan (creation, the fall, redemption and restoration), the nature of sin, God’s plan of salvation, His grace and His sovereignty. Under “Know His Word”, certain Bible passages were chosen for memorization: the Lord’s Prayer, the Beatitudes, the fruits of the Spirit, the ten commandments, etc. Living God’s Word included living out of the Holy Spirit: baptism, praying, power, filling gifts, fruit. The spiritual disciplines were emphasized: prayer, study, meditation, memorizing Scripture and obedience to it. Character qualities such as truthfulness, integrity, respect and wisdom were listed as being crucial. The following aspects of the Christian life completed the list: decision making, sanctification, continued growth, worship, outreach and service. Finally, “Know God’s World” included knowing God’s plan of creation-fall-redemption and restoration, study of current events, awareness of other cultures, God’s grace in the world, how we are shaped by the world and how we can make an impact by our outreach.

The teacher/principal interviewed stated that they “want to instill a love for God’s word in their students’ hearts.” The school is currently looking at a walk through the Bible curriculum called “Building on the Rock”, put out by Summit Ministries (see p. 164). Clearly there is a desire to understand worldview issues and apply biblical thinking to current issues in our western culture. There is an

emphasis on applying biblical truths to the students' hearts and lives. The teacher/principal interviewed was highly in favour of communal learning, driven by the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the students and teachers alike: "We have a lot of interaction, communal sharing, and lots of prayer. We encourage this daily. We want to strike a balance between the experiential and the intellectual learning of Bible truths." There is a great desire to have students apply Bible truths to their own lives, to have them live it out through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The grade two teacher at Pacific Academy, Ms. JH, also stressed the Holy Spirit's leading in the teaching of Bible.<sup>274</sup> She too, views the third person of the Trinity as God—the One who inspires, leads and gives insight:

We want to be sensitive to His leading. We do not 'officially' mention the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but when the topic comes up, we use it as a teachable moment. We see the Bible as the inspired, infallible word of God. Many of the stories are new and exciting to the kids. For example, one student whose name is Joshua was very happy to learn about the character and events in the life of the Joshua of the Bible. He only knew that his name meant 'strong warrior'. This is typical of the students that come to our school today; a lot of them have seen "Prince of Egypt", the video about Joseph, but very few now know the actual biblical story. Many students have seen every 'Christian' video there is, but they are still ignorant of the actual teachings of the Bible. They relate to the visual and audio, but they are not good listeners. A simple story must be told very well before a teacher can catch their attention. That is a great challenge for primary teachers today.

In the primary grades at Pacific Academy, Bible curriculum is related to the themes being studied. For example, in the month of December, classes study everything related to Jesus' birth, even though the main topic for grade 2 is the life of Moses. In grade one, the creation and life of Noah is studied; in grade

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<sup>274</sup> D:18, p.372.

three, the life of Daniel is looked at in depth. This method of the study of Bible characters is mainly geared to help students make connections in their own life. For example, Ms. JH's students learn about Moses' character: his meekness, leadership abilities, stand for God in the face of opposition. Teacher JH felt that sometimes these character traits were too contrived, too obviously making a point (even though they were not mentioned directly in the Biblical text), since each character from the Bible is supposed to teach the students how to apply God's Word to his/her own life. Ms. JH does use story telling in her classroom as a means of teaching Bible: "We act out the Bible story, we do art work related to the story and we try to involve the students as much as possible in the story. But we go through the Bible in terms of the themes we are studying." She does follow the ACSI curriculum to some extent: teachers are free to use the material about Daniel (from the Grade 2 ACSI book, p. 69), showing how Daniel is confident in and faithful and obedient to God, but they may also bring in their own methodology and exercises:

In my class, we talk about the Bible all day, we are so relational in the primary grades. Our chapels too, are very intimate. Since we have such a large number of primary students, we have our own chapels geared to the age level of the students. That is a blessing.

Ms. JH, too, felt that it was important to look at the Bible curriculum as a whole so that the entire Scriptures are covered: "Currently, the memory work program in the primary grades is too piece-meal. We learn verses here and there, but there is no over-arching Bible memory chart so that we can say that at the end of the elementary program, our students know these portions of the Bible by memory." This primary teacher makes the Bible come alive by "having the students

participate in it, by allowing them to make connections to their own lives as they participate in the Biblical story.”

In schools of the Pentecostal persuasion, the work of the Holy Spirit is emphasized a great deal, although the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not stressed as a doctrine. (At Cornerstone Christian School, this topic would be addressed in the church and during retreats or special meetings.) Those Pentecostal schools that have the ACSI curriculum available use it sparingly and certainly not slavishly. Teachers have freedom to choose and blend their own Bible curriculum. There is much sharing of personal stories, much prayer time and much communal discussion of what God is doing in the lives of teachers and students alike. The Bible is not, apparently, studied chronologically. There is an emphasis on worldview studies in the higher grades as well as a teaching of Bible study skills and a stress on living out God’s word in today’s culture. The high school Bible teacher who described his course of study to me, was very emphatic about getting students to interact with the Biblical text. For example, He would take his students through the Biblical wisdom books, honouring their canonical placement and the power of the Word itself, allowing students to journal, question and interact with the text, and apply the text to their own lives. Personal application of Biblical texts and passages was stressed in both Pacific Academy and Cornerstone schools. Students were viewed as sinners in need of Christ. The Bible was seen as God’s infallible word and the work of the Holy Spirit was stressed both in the teaching and application of biblical truths.

### III. Lutheran Schools

#### 1. History: Origins of Lutheranism

Martin Luther, the great reformer of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, was born in 1483 in the village of Eisleben, Germany of peasant parents. His father was a miner and his mother was a woman of prayer.<sup>275</sup> In 1501, he entered the University of Erfurt where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Arts degree in January of 1505.<sup>276</sup> One day in July, as he was walking to his university village, a thunderstorm overtook him. A bolt of lightening blinded him and threw him to the ground. He cried out in terror and promised by St. Anne that he would become a monk.<sup>277</sup> He entered the cloister of the Augustinians on September of 1505. After a rigorous theological study in the monastery, Luther became a Doctor of Theology at the University of Wittenburg in 1512.<sup>278</sup> There he began his lectures on the book of the Psalms in the fall of 1513. He continued with lectures on the books of Galatians and Hebrews. This study led him to post his 95 Theses on the church door of Wittenburg on October 31, 1517. This would be the official beginning of the Protestant Reformation, although at the time Luther did not know his theses would unleash such a tremendous upheaval in the thoughts and minds of people all over the world.<sup>279</sup> The 95 theses, otherwise known as “Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences”, demonstrate in every aspect that the forgiveness of sins cannot be bought with money as Tetzl (a seller of indulgences) proclaimed so loudly, but only through faith in the blood of Jesus

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<sup>275</sup> Bernhard Lohse. *Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work*. (Edinburgh, UK: Edmondsbury Press, 1987), p.20.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>277</sup> James M. Kittleson. *Luther the Reformer*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1986), p.50.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.

<sup>279</sup> Roland M. Bainton. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1955), p.61.

Christ. The 94<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> theses state: “Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their head, through penalties, death and hell, and thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace (Acts 14.22).”<sup>280</sup>

These ninety-five statements opened up the door to persecution, excommunication and tremendous hardship for Luther; they also opened great freedom of conscience for himself and others who believed that faith in Christ brought liberty from the bonds of the law. It is from Luther’s works (especially his sermon on Galatians) that we learn of Luther’s journey from works righteousness to a righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus Christ. During the course of Luther’s life, he wrote and preached against many other non-Biblical practices of the Roman Catholic Church.

Luther’s beliefs and statements of faith were compiled for the Diet of Augsburg held in the summer of 1530 at the request of Emperor Charles V, who wanted “Lutheran princes and municipal governments to identify their public teaching.”<sup>281</sup> Other leading Lutheran theologians, notably Philip Melancton and John Eck wrote much of the Augsburg Confession, including in them many of Luther’s articles and writings. (“The history of the Augsburg Confession is extremely complicated”.<sup>282</sup>) Later, during the 1560s, the confessions of the Lutheran believers were compiled under the name of “The Book of Concord”. They included the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the Smalcald Articles,

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<sup>280</sup> Martin Luther. *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, Timothy Lull, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1989), p.29.

<sup>281</sup> *The Book of Concord*. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, editors. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2000), p.1.

<sup>282</sup> Leif Grane. *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), p.17.

and Luther's Catechisms and together they explicated the doctrines and statements of faith for what later became the Lutheran churches.<sup>283</sup> Because Luther himself did not write any Institutes of the Christian faith as Calvin did (nor did he systematically describe his own beliefs in doctrinal statements as such), we learn of his view of Scripture, his perspective on the relationship between law and gospel, his view of the role of the Holy Spirit and his doctrine of the bondage of the human will from his sermons and writings.

i. Luther's view of Scripture

The following is a summary statement from Luther himself, demonstrating his view of both Testaments:

Just as the Old Testament is a book in which are written God's laws and commandments, together with the history of those who kept and of those who did keep them, so the New Testament is a book in which are written the gospel and the promises of God, together with the history of those who believe and of those who do not believe them.<sup>284</sup>

Luther employs what is known as the "hermeneutic of contemporaneity",<sup>285</sup> briefly stated, this means that the Word, written thousands of years ago, is still relevant and made contemporary in the current age in which it is interpreted. As Timothy Maschke explains:

Luther came to understand the Scriptures as the most effective vehicle through which God communicates his love and grace in Christ to the world. Although he sought to plumb the deeper spiritual truths of Scripture, Luther always worked with the text as

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<sup>283</sup> *The Book of Concord*, pp.1, 2.

<sup>284</sup> *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, Timothy Lull, ed., p.13.

<sup>285</sup> T. Maschke. "Contemporaneity: A Hermeneutical Perspective in Luther" in *Ad Fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther: Essays in honor of Kenneth Hagen's Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. Timothy Maschke, Franz Posset, Joan Skocir, editors. (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), p.165.

God's revelation and communication. The Holy Spirit had brought these words to human writers and continues to communicate God's sacred truths through these writings.<sup>286</sup>

Many examples of this principle can be found in Luther's writings. For instance, when explicating Galatians 3:23, Luther states:

Paul is referring to the time of fulfillment, when Christ came. But you should apply it not only to the time but also to feelings; for what happened historically and temporally when Christ came—namely, that He abrogated the Law and brought liberty and eternal life to light—this happens personally and spiritually every day in any Christian, in whom there are found the time of Law and the time of grace in constant alternation.<sup>287</sup>

He reiterates this principle when explicating Galatians 5:26:

For if Divine Scriptures are treated in such a way as to be understood only with regard to the past and not to be applied also to our own manner of life, of what benefit will they be? They are cold, dead, and not even divine. For you see how fittingly and vividly, yes, how necessarily, this passage applies to our age.<sup>288</sup>

In other words, if Scriptures are not relevant to the present age, they are not divine. For Luther, then, God's Word is just as alive and relevant for today as it was in the day of Paul or Moses or David. In his view, "the text is a living, vibrant and contemporary Word, which brings the good news of God's grace in Christ for all time to those of faith."<sup>289</sup>

Coupled with the belief in the relevance of God's Word for all time is Luther's view that the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of believers through the Word of God. Again, in his commentary on the book of Galatians (3:10), Luther writes: "Therefore let us permit the Holy Spirit to speak, as He does in the

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<sup>286</sup> T. Maschke. *Ad Fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther*, p.175.

<sup>287</sup> M. Luther. *Lectures on Galatians*, in *Luther's Works*, 26, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Press, 1963), p.340.

<sup>288</sup> Martin Luther. *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535. Vol. 27. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, editors. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p.386.

<sup>289</sup> Timothy Maschke. "Contemporaneity: A Hermeneutical Perspective in Luther" in *Ad Fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther*, p.176.

Scriptures, either about abstract, bare, and simple faith or about concrete composite and incarnate faith.”<sup>290</sup> As we will see later, this view came out very strongly in each of the lessons of the *Faith Alive* series used in Zion Lutheran School, discussed below. In the objectives of each lesson, it is stated that it is “by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word, students will . . . ”<sup>291</sup>

## ii. Luther’s view of the child

Luther and Kathe had seven children of their own. (Luther married a former nun, Catherine von Bora on June 13, 1525.)<sup>292</sup> Luther made numerous hymns for his children as well as a catechism to teach them the doctrines of the Bible.<sup>293</sup> When writing about the birth of his first daughter, Luther wrote to the prospective godmother: “Dear lady, God has produced from me and my wife Katie a little heathen. We hope you will be willing to become her spiritual mother and help make her a Christian.”<sup>294</sup> After birth, he brought each of his children to the sacrament of baptism. Luther, like Calvin, saw Old Testament circumcision and infant baptism as analogous: “The precept of circumcision is to be noted for use against the ragings of the Anabaptists. They hold that baptism must be repeated and that adults only should be baptized.”<sup>295</sup> Luther taught that Christ, through His Word and by means of baptism, works faith in infants: “To be sure

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<sup>290</sup> Martin Luther. *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535. Vol. 26. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, editors. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p.266.

<sup>291</sup>Jill Anthony, Edward Grube, James Klawiter, Richard Maas, Lawrence Sohn, Sandy Sutter. *Faith Alive: New Testament Survey—Teachers’ Guide Grade 8*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), pp.9, 11, 14, etc.

<sup>292</sup> E. M. Plass. *This Is Luther*. (St. Louis, MO.: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), p.249.

<sup>293</sup> James M. Kittelson. *Luther the Reformer* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), pp.217-220.

<sup>294</sup> Roland H. Bainton. *Here I Stand*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1977), p.229.

<sup>295</sup> Ewald M. Plass. *What Luther Says: An Anthology*. (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), p.50.

children are brought to Baptism by the faith and work of others; but when they get there and the pastor or baptizer deals with them in Christ's stead, it is He who blesses them and grants them faith and the kingdom of heaven. For the word and act of the pastor are the Word and work of Christ Himself."<sup>296</sup> Luther taught that pastors were to baptize all infants because of Christ's command, not because of their faith.<sup>297</sup> Luther believed that at baptism, children were blessed by faith and membership in the kingdom of heaven; parents, pastors, god parents and the church body had a duty to instruct them. This belief was brought home to me recently as I read about a slain Mountie (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) whose family attends a Lutheran Church in Alberta. Speaking about his slain brother, Peter, Michael Schiemann said: "Shortly after his birth, Peter was forgiven all of his sins through the waters of baptism, May 23, 1979. The Holy Spirit claimed Peter as his child, and from that day on, Peter was safe in the arms of Christ."<sup>298</sup>

Luther did make one concession, however: "Faith saves without baptism,"<sup>299</sup> but baptism must be accompanied by faith in order to be effective. We see now why we have Lutheran Christian schools to this day: the triangle of home, church and school may not be broken, since that body of believers has a duty to train their youth in order to bring them to faith.

Luther's view of man also has bearing on how a teacher in a Lutheran school will view his/her students: if they are from a Lutheran background, they will be considered in the faith since they have been baptized as infants. However, if

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<sup>296</sup>E. M. Plass. *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, p.51.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>298</sup> Meghan Wood. "Slain Mountie known as a devout Christian" as quoted in *The BC Christian News*, April 2005, Vol. 25:4, p. 2. (Published by the Christian Info Society, Langley, BC).

<sup>299</sup> E.M. Plass. *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, p.52.

they are of non-Christian background, and perhaps other Christian backgrounds, they will need the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit in their lives if they are to call themselves by the name of Christ. In his treatise entitled *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther explicates Romans 3:10 and Psalm 14:2:

How then, can they strive after the good when they are totally ignorant of God and neither seek after God nor pay any regard to Him? How can they have a power worth anything as a means to the good when they have all turned aside from the good and are altogether worthless?<sup>300</sup>

When replying to Erasmus of Rotterdam on this issue of freedom of the will, Luther unequivocally stressed that man of his own accord does not seek after God. A work of God's grace was needed to bring people to Christ; first the law's demands needed to be known in order for a person to understand the work of Christ on the cross and so come to Him in faith:

Free choice is completely abolished in this passage (Romans 3:10, Psalm 14:2) and nothing good or virtuous is left in man, since he is flatly stated to be unrighteous, ignorant of God, a despiser of God, turned aside from him, and worthless in the sight of God.<sup>301</sup>

Luther goes on to say: "Free choice may do the works of the law but not fulfill the law."<sup>302</sup> Only Christ fulfilled God's law according to the demands of God's righteousness; hence all those found in Him are dead to the law and alive to God. Article 2 of the Augsburg Confession calls this disease 'original sin'; it "brings eternal death on those who are not born again through Baptism and the Holy

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<sup>300</sup> M. Luther. "The Bondage of the Will" in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, T. Lull, ed. (Minneapolis, MO: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1989), p.185.

<sup>301</sup> M. Luther. *The Bondage of the Will*, pp.186, 187.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid. p.188.

Spirit.”<sup>303</sup> Thus, salvation, according to Luther, “rests in the gracious election of God, which he has revealed to us in Christ, out of whose hand no man can snatch us.”<sup>304</sup> Because of these doctrines, the textbooks of Zion Lutheran Church focus on the law/gospel issue as one of the objectives in every lesson.<sup>305</sup> Speaking to the teachers, the guide book states: “The lesson plans will help you structure your lessons so that your students will experience both Law and Gospel.”<sup>306</sup> The implication is: first you must see your sins, then you will go to Christ. Only those in Christ are the elect.

### iii. Luther’s view of the Holy Spirit’s work

Article I of the Augsburg Confession states: “There is one divine essence which is called God . . . yet there are three persons of the same essence and power, who are also coeternal: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And the term ‘person’ is used, as the ancient Fathers employed it in this connection, to signify not a part or a quality in another but that which subsists of itself.”<sup>307</sup> This Confession does not contain an article solely about the Holy Spirit, but does include the Spirit in the article about the Son of God: “Afterward he (that is Jesus) ascended into heaven to sit on the right hand of the Father, forever to reign and have dominion over all creatures, and to sanctify those who believe in him by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts to rule, comfort, and quicken them and

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<sup>303</sup> Leif Grane. *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary*. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), p.40.

<sup>304</sup> *Book of Concord*, p.655.

<sup>305</sup> *Faith Alive Series: New Testament History*, pp.9, 11, 14, etc.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>307</sup> Leif Grane. *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary*, p.1.

defend them against the devil and the power of sin.”<sup>308</sup> So the Holy Spirit is absolutely central to Luther’s view of the Trinity: justification by faith alone, and sanctification by the Spirit alone. Thus, “Luther understands that human beings are helpless and are saved only by the gracious action of the Divine Third Person on their hearts through the twofold proclamation of law and gospel.”<sup>309</sup> The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring the sinner to salvation and to conformity to Christ; for Luther, “justification is always and in each case ‘opus Dei extra nos’.”<sup>310</sup> (Salvation is a work of God outside of us, i.e. salvation is God’s work and not ours.) It is interesting that Luther does not talk of spiritual gifts very much, other than to say that speaking in tongues was only for the Pentecost church, not for the church of the ages following. The signs of fire, wind and speaking in tongues were for the Pentecost believers, “but after the church was gathered together, and confirmed with those miracles, it was not necessary that this visible sending of the Holy Ghost should continue any longer.”<sup>311</sup> We read nothing of the spiritual gifts in Luther’s catechism on the third article of The Apostles’ Creed discussing the person, work and function of the Holy Spirit.<sup>312</sup> Of course he discusses the fruits of the Spirit in his sermon on Galatians 5:22-24.<sup>313</sup>

Gleaning from his writings, Luther has a widely encompassing view of the Trinity: the Word “stands synonymously for God’s honour, his Spirit, for Christ

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<sup>308</sup> Lief Grane. *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary*, p.50.

<sup>309</sup> Stanley M. Burgess. *The Holy Spirit: Medieval Roman Catholic and Reformation Traditions*. (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 1997), p.147.

<sup>310</sup> Heiko A. Oberman. *The Dawn of the Reformation*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), p.115. Translation mine.

<sup>311</sup> Martin Luther. “Epistle Sermon: Pentecost Sunday” in *A Compend of Luther’s Theology*. Hugh Thomson Kerr, ed. (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1943), p.68.

<sup>312</sup> Martin Luther. *Small Catechism* (Saint Louis, MI: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), pp.122-131.

<sup>313</sup> Martin Luther. *Lectures on Galatians: Chapters 5, 6*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1964.), pp.372-378.

and therefore also for grace and eternal life, death, sin and all things—that is, for an understanding of the world and the human being that is oriented to God’s Word.”<sup>314</sup> Luther’s theology of the Trinity encompasses the “gantzen Gott” (the whole God), as Ulrich Asendorf explains it.

#### iv. Lutheranism in North America

Although Luther did not want any churches named after him, “the term ‘Lutheran’ was given the movement by its Roman Catholic opponents”<sup>315</sup>; the designation “Lutheran Churches” began to appear in the sixteenth century. Lutheranism spread throughout Germany to the Scandinavian countries, and then to the Americas. With the discovery of new lands and places, it spread to the uttermost parts of the earth. Many Lutherans arrived on the shores of what is now the United States to find freedom of religion and peace to pursue their own faith in a new and free country. When the Dutch Calvinists settled in what is now known as New York, they sent Rev. Goetwater (the first Lutheran pastor, called in 1657 by the Dutch settlers there) back to Amsterdam. It was either “become a Calvinist or leave”, according to governor and Calvinist Peter Stuyvesant.<sup>316</sup> Earlier, in 1620, two Danish vessels (sent to seek a northwest passage to India) landed in Hudson’s Bay, Canada, where they buried forty of their sailors on the shores of the Bay. The first Lutheran pastor, Rasmus Jensen, was also among the crew of the Danish vessels; he conducted the first Lutheran Christmas

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<sup>314</sup> Ulrich Asendorf. “Holy Scripture and Holy Spirit” in *Ad Fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther*. Timothy Maschke, Franz Posset and Joan Skocir, editors. (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001), p.5

<sup>315</sup> Eric W. Gritsch. *A History of Lutheranism*. (Minneapolis, MN.: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2002), p. xi.

<sup>316</sup> Inez Steen. *The March of Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1939), p.81.

service in North America. Just two months later Jensen died and was buried in the same cemetery on the shores of the Hudson Bay.<sup>317</sup> Swedish Lutherans came to Delaware in 1639, while Lutherans in Germantown, Pennsylvania conducted their first service in 1694 with Rev. Heinrich Loester. Rev. Heinrich Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787) was the Moses who pioneered and shepherded the young Lutheran churches along the entire eastern seaboard.<sup>318</sup> He and his wife had eleven children, whose education he supervised scrupulously; he sent three of his sons to Halle, Germany for further education. Dr. Muhlenberg's roots were in Halle, the seat of the German pietistic movement under leadership of Dr. Franke. (The pietistic movement in Germany, circa 1675-1817, stressed personal holiness, spiritual union with Christ, small groups for Bible study and mission work.<sup>319</sup>)

From this beginning on the east coast, Lutheranism spread throughout the United States. To unite the German Lutherans, Muhlenberg called for an official assembly of Lutheran ministers on August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1748 "labelled as the most important event in the history of Lutheranism in America, the foundation of the 'Ministerium of North America.'"<sup>320</sup> All was not harmony; soon a rift appeared between orthodox Lutherans who held to the doctrines of the Book of Concord and "The Ministerium", who were pietist in their orientation and took their cues

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<sup>317</sup> Inez Steen. *The March of Faith*, p. 81

<sup>318</sup> E. Clifford Nelson. *The Lutherans in North America*. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1975), p.50

<sup>319</sup> Eric W. Gritsch. *A History of Lutheranism*, Chap.5

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, p.175.

from the Moravians and Pietists of Herrnhut in Germany. Muhlenberg sighed:

“They decry us as pietists without reason.”<sup>321</sup>

Hartwick Seminary (the oldest Lutheran seminary in the North America) was built in 1797 in New York; it started with Dr. J. C. Kunze as its leader and professor. Gettsburg Seminary was opened next in 1826, under leadership of Pastor S.S. Schmucker. Thus the teachings of Martin Luther spread through the new land, mostly by Dutch, Swedes, Germans and Swiss Lutherans.<sup>322</sup> It is not the purpose of this paper to dissect and describe all the nuances and diversifications of the Lutheran churches since their inception in the United States: between 1840 and 1875 alone, nearly sixty synods of various Lutheran persuasions were established.<sup>323</sup>

As soon as they were well established in the US, many of the Lutheran churches, infused by an awakening missionary zeal, moved north to spread the Lutheran gospel into Canada: “Canada was treated not as a ‘foreign’ mission field but as part of the ‘home’ mission enterprise; Canadian Lutherans were gathered into synods, districts or conferences of the Lutheran Churches based in the United States.”<sup>324</sup> With the Loyalist ‘invasion’ of Canada in the late eighteenth century, Lutheran churches were established in Nova Scotia and Upper Canada (now Ontario).<sup>325</sup> These Lutheran churches kept their links to their U.S. counterparts for more than one hundred years. Most influential in this spread of Lutheranism was the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, which

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<sup>321</sup> Eric W. Gritsch. *A History of Lutheranism*, p.177.

<sup>322</sup> Inez Steen, *March of Faith*, p.94.

<sup>323</sup> Eric W. Gritsch. *A History of Lutheranism*, p.190.

<sup>324</sup> Norman J. Threinen. *Fifty Years of Lutheran Convergence: The Canadian Case Study*. (St. Louis MO: Lutheran Historical Conference Publication No. 3, 1983), p.iv.

<sup>325</sup> E. Clifford Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*, p.101.

established roots in Saskatchewan. While in 1922 Lutherans in western Canada were largely separated along ethnic lines (German and Scandinavian), by 1972 these two ethnic groups merged with the Germans of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church to become the Lutheran Church-Canada.<sup>326</sup>

In North America today (2002 census), Lutheran churches have a membership of about 8.5 million; about 290,000 of those members live in Canada. Canada has three main Lutheran churches: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (about 192,000 members), the Lutheran Church-Canada (about 80,000 members), and the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (about 12,000 members).<sup>327</sup> The textbooks used in Zion Lutheran School are printed under auspices of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod which “acknowledges its adherence to the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and to the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church constituting the Book of Concord of 1580 as its own.”<sup>328</sup> Besides a reliance on the Book of Concord as its creed for interpreting the Bible, the Missouri Lutherans taught that *Soli Deo Gloria* could only be a reality by teaching the doctrine of divine election as Luther did; salvation was a work of God. Justification did not happen in view of faith, as some Lutherans believed, viz. that God foresaw who would choose him, but by faith alone, solely through the merits of Christ as article 11 of the Formula of Concord succinctly stated. By 1929, “the Missouri Synod suspected all other Lutheran synods of false teaching. Its convention voted to

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<sup>326</sup> Norman J. Threinen. *Fifty Years of Lutheran Convergence: The Canadian Case-Study*, p.206

<sup>327</sup> Eric W. Gritsch. *A History of Lutheranism*, p.248. As of the 2004 census, the Lutheran Church-Canada had 76,011 baptized members. Available: [www.lutheranchurch.ca](http://www.lutheranchurch.ca)

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, p.196.

withdraw from all inter-synodical conferences.”<sup>329</sup> All other Lutheran synods were henceforth to be looked upon as opponents.

#### v. Lutheranism in BC

Between the immigrant years of 1941-1961, Lutherans were counted as the “largest Protestant immigrant-based church in the province”<sup>330</sup> of British Columbia. Many of them (up to 100,393 according to the 1961 BC census) aligned with the Missouri Synod and were “considered conservative Protestants because of their firm affirmation of the Bible as the written Word of God.”<sup>331</sup> In 1958, the three geographic Canadian districts of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Churches (Ontario, Manitoba/Saskatchewan and Alberta/British Columbia) joined together to become the Lutheran Church-Canada.<sup>332</sup> Later, in 1965, a Lutheran Theological Seminary was established on the campus of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. Many of the faculty were graduates of Missouri Synod’s Theological Seminary in Saint Louis. Gradually between the years of 1922 to 1972, there was a convergence of Lutheran churches in Canada, a unity made up of both the Scandinavian and German speaking Lutherans. This was due to a variety of factors, not the least of which was their cooperation in the theological education of their pastors.<sup>333</sup> Somehow there was the opinion that English could not translate the ‘pure’ Lutheran doctrine as well as German,

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<sup>329</sup> Eric W. Gritsch. *A History of Lutheranism*, p.199.

<sup>330</sup> Robert K. Burkinshaw. *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*, p.194.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p.194.

<sup>332</sup> Norman J. Threinen. *Fifty Years of Lutheran Convergence: The Canadian Case-Study*, p. 36

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, p.207.

possibly because Luther himself was German and he translated the German Bible. (This fear was true of other ethnicities as well: God spoke to them in their own language.)

Thus Lutherans set up their own parochial schools, since day schools for their youth were seen “as principal means of conversion and spiritual formation.”<sup>334</sup> According to Burkinshaw, Lutherans have had little affiliation or fellowship with their evangelical protestant counterparts in British Columbia because of their state-church leanings, their view of the sacraments, their own language and their liturgy.<sup>335</sup> Their schools, too, are under separate leadership; they also have a separate teachers’ association. Their isolation has kept the ‘salting’ influence of their evangelical Christian brothers and sisters out of their reach; it has also been a barrier in reaching the lost, since the Lutheran Church retains much of its own ethnicity and language. The German language is still used in some Lutheran Churches in British Columbia. Even the Lutheran Church across the road from my own church (The Evangelical Free Church of Canada in Abbotsford), established in Abbotsford in 1955, has a German as well as an English service every Sunday to this very day.

## 2. Zion Lutheran School, Cloverdale, BC

On February 2, 2005, I had the privilege of visiting Zion Lutheran School, a K-8 school located in Cloverdale in the Fraser Valley.<sup>336</sup> According to the principal, Ms. DD, there are ten Lutheran Schools in British Columbia; some are

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<sup>334</sup> Eric W. Gritsch. *A History of Lutheranism*, p.196.

<sup>335</sup> R. K. Burkinshaw. *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*, p.195.

<sup>336</sup> D:19, p.373.

only pre-schools and some are K-8 schools. Zion Lutheran is definitely one of the largest of the ten. The teachers are members of the Lutheran Teachers' Association; they often join Alberta teachers for conventions and Pro D days. This school had recently been renovated; it is attached to the Zion Lutheran Church. It numbers about 157 students (2004 census).

The first activity on this Wednesday morning was chapel. The entire student body and the teachers participated in this time of worship and prayer. Two students stood at the entrance of the sanctuary with offering plates, since that day's offering was to be for the Lutheran Mission work in Central America for "money for the street children who needed a home and the gospel of Jesus." The students also support missionaries in Ukraine. (In fact, it turned out we had a mutual acquaintance from Dniepropetrovsk, Ukraine: Roland Simes, whose sister teaches at Zion Lutheran School). It was the turn of the grade 1 teacher to lead chapel. After singing along with the grade one students, the teacher read a story to fit the Lenten season. The story was a type of allegory, depicting a priest with a filthy robe who received a clean white robe from the Prince of Peace. The focus was clearly on the cleansing power of Jesus' blood.

After the chapel, I asked Principal DD what she considers the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Bible (she teaches the higher grades "Christian Studies" as it is called). She responded that through "the Holy Spirit we receive Christ and any good works we do, the Holy Spirit works in us. The Bible is viewed as the inerrant Word of God and it penetrates every lesson in this school. Creation is also God's way of speaking to us." She went on to give examples of a Social Studies lesson and a Science lesson demonstrating how the Bible

influences those lessons: “In Science as we study the eye, for example, we see God’s handiwork in creating such an exquisite body organ; in Social Studies, we emphasize the necessity of being good citizens of the country God has placed us in.” The Bible is taught as a ‘whole class lesson’ with group work being done rarely. Story telling is used as a means of teaching Bible to the primary grades. According to this principal, the student population in Zion Lutheran School is about one third Lutheran background and one third other Christian denominations. The final third enters school not knowing about Christ: “We plant the seeds here.”

The Lutherans in this school believe that at the time of (infant) baptism, the Holy Spirit enters the life of the child and starts His saving work of grace. Children are usually confirmed in the church between the ages of 11 and 13, at which time they receive all the rights and privileges of church membership: “We don’t lead students to Christ in the classes; we refer them to the pastors.” Teachers make the Bible come alive for the students in a variety of ways:

We do a wonderful Christmas programs: children do role playing, they hear stories about people’s lives, the parents and the entire community are involved. We did a dowel movement dance at the Christmas program and now we will be celebrating Lenten season in a similar way.

When asked how the teachers help students relate the Bible to their own lives, Ms. DD replied that

. . . in the classrooms we try to encourage our students to do their very best, we make them aware of the little things in life that we must be thankful for, we ask them to keep prayer diaries to show how God has answered their prayers, we practise Biblical discipline, asking students to forgive one another and to restore them to fellowship to prove genuine forgiveness.

After the interview, Ms DD and I prayed together and she provided me with all the student Bible texts from Grade 1 to grade 8. The entire curriculum is published by Concordia Publishing House, the Lutheran publishing headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri.<sup>337</sup> I was not able to talk to an intermediate teacher at this school and I only viewed a primary teacher telling an allegorical story in chapel.

#### i. The Bible Curriculum at Zion Lutheran School

The grade one Bible curriculum consists of nine big Bible picture books of 16 pages each. The first one entitled *Beginnings* starts with the creation of the world and takes students to the exodus. The focus of each story is always what Christ has done. The first page reminds students that God rested: "Every seven days (Sunday) we celebrate in worship all God has done to care for us and to save us through Jesus."<sup>338</sup> After the creation story, the fall into sin is described in story form; teachers can read about Genesis 3:1-14 and show students the accompanying picture. Students are immediately reminded on the next page that "God sent us a Saviour, Jesus. He wraps His love and forgiveness around us and makes us able to live for Him."<sup>339</sup> Students are then taken through the story of the flood, God's promises to Noah, God's blessing to Abraham, the births of Isaac and Moses and finally the exodus from Egypt, without mention of the 10 plagues. After each story there is a page of reminders to the students to think about God's plan, His care, His blessings and His faithfulness. Almost every page brings the students a reminder of God and His plan of salvation in Christ.

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<sup>337</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God's Word*, Carolyn Bergt and Karen Arnold, editors. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2001).

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

Book 2, *Moving On*, continues in a similar vein. The book begins with the rescue at the Red Sea, showing how God rescues His people from peril and how he rescues us by His Son, Jesus. The book goes on to describe the giving of the Decalogue, a story about gathering manna in the wilderness, the ten spies coming back with their bad report, mention of Joshua's and Caleb's good report, Joshua as a leader, entering the promised land with the fall of Jericho and Rahab helping the spies. Each story brings the students back to God's faithfulness, and how He has provided us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Book 3, *Leaders*, begins with the story of Ruth. The text demonstrates how God took care of Ruth, telling the students that God takes care of them, too: by giving people around them, and by sending Jesus to die for them. The book continues with stories about Hannah, Samuel, David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Naaman and Jonah. After each story there is a page of very simple seat work such as an exercise to connect the dots, to draw a picture or to discuss a diagram. After the page about Jonah, students are reminded that God wants us to share his message with everyone.

Book 4 is entitled *Waiting* and takes students from the story of Daniel, to Nehemiah, to John the Baptist, and then to the stories related to Jesus' birth. Book 5, *Listen*, depicts Jesus' life, starting with his being in the temple at age twelve and ending on the 16<sup>th</sup> page with the parable of the two sons (Matthew 21:28-32). Book 6 entitled *Changes* contains stories about Jesus' life on earth while Book 7, *Salvation*, depicts Jesus' final weeks on earth, beginning with the story of Jesus' relationship with Mary and Martha, Palm Sunday and the foot washing and ending with Jesus' death on the cross. Book 8, *Alive*, depicts Jesus'

resurrection, his appearances, the great commission and the resurrection; it closes with two pages about Paul's missionary journeys and stressing the need for students to share the good news of the gospel. Book 9, entitled *Praise*, depicts ways and means we can praise God, beginning with examples from the Psalms and concluding with Psalm 150. Each Psalm or story in this final 16 page book encourages students to praise God in their own lives and to share this joy with others.

It was interesting to see how even in grade one, the students are left with an over arching picture of the word of God. Stories were chosen that would be easy to relate to the students' lives, but the entire plan of God's salvation in Christ was presented. Students were given the big picture. Each time a Bible story was discussed, the Biblical reference was presented. Students were not bogged down with seat work at all. Students were always reminded that Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament and His work for us, in us and in the world is the message of Scripture.

The grade two program of "Christian Studies" consists of nine books as well, beginning with the creation story and ending with Paul in Rome (Acts 11:11-30).<sup>340</sup> This time, some of the stories that were not covered in the grade one series were included. For example, the grade 2 series includes a story about Adam naming the animals (Genesis 2:15-20) as well as the stories of Abraham, Lot and Jacob. As in the grade one series, a page about caring for God's creation is included right after the creation story. Again, God's plan of salvation in Christ is explained in detail on page 8, while each Old Testament story is related to God

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<sup>340</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God's Word: Go Tell About Jesus-Grade 2*, Carolyn Bergt, ed. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2001).

and His promises in Christ. The exercises are simple, age appropriate and minimal, so that student and teacher focus on the word of God.

The third grade student guide book is one textbook, with eleven units and sixty two-part lessons: enough material for one Scripture lesson every day. Lesson one part 'A' discusses the beauties of creation and how we sin when we don't take care of God's beautiful world. Part 'B' section one depicts Adam and Eve in paradise and how in Christ we too can become new creations. The next section discusses the fall into sin and how Jesus provides a way out for us. Lesson 3, part A, tells of Cain and Abel and their sacrifices and applies that story by bringing the distinction between 'law' and 'gospel' in section B. This law/gospel contrast is brought out throughout this Lutheran curriculum. First the law and its demands are given, then the gospel of Jesus Christ is explained to show how we can be delivered from our sins and miseries. Every lesson has that dual focus. For example, lesson 2B extrapolates from the story of Cain and Abel how God looks at the heart: "The one thing that made Abel different from Cain was love—the love that comes from God. God's love made the difference in Abel's heart and attitude." Abel is viewed in light of Hebrews 11:4 and 12:24. Students are then asked to study 1 John 4 with a partner and are then shown how God leads us by His Holy Spirit to love our neighbour and bring forth fruits of love according to Ephesians 4:32. The entire Old Testament is thus related to the New Testament. The deluge (Genesis 6-9) is discussed in light of 1 Peter 3:18-22, comparing God's plan for the time of Noah to His plan for us today. Baptism is compared to the new beginning after the waters of the flood destroyed the world: "He saved us

through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).<sup>341</sup> Children are then asked to remember their baptism and think what the Holy Spirit would have them do in various common situations of temptation. The tower of Babel is discussed in terms of the people’s pride in wanting to be like God. Students are taught that true greatness is to live like Jesus would have them live. Students are considered redeemed by God at baptism. In this lesson they are asked to memorize Isaiah 43:1: “I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine.”

Throughout this book, each Old Testament story is related to the New Testament in part B. In that way, students see the law and gospel side of Scripture, the law being viewed as our school master to lead us to Christ: “. . . the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24-NIV). Each lesson is linked to the Bible by a citation of the Scripture passage to be studied. Students are encouraged to look back to the Old Testament and then look ahead to the New Testament: for example, p. 30 depicts a table comparing Abraham offering up his only son Isaac to the New Testament sacrifice of Christ on the same Mt. Moriah. This Grade 3 text covers most of the major Old Testament stories and many of the stories in the gospels, and ends with the life of the apostle Paul. The final pages include a map of the twelve tribes in the promised land as well as a map of Palestine at the time of Jesus’ birth. The book ends with a glossary of difficult terms.

Student exercises are very minimal as well as age appropriate. The lessons are meant to be 45 minutes a day; each lesson includes at least one

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<sup>341</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God’s Word- Grade 3*, Clarence F. Berndt, ed. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), p. 22.

New Testament application. For example, in lesson 33 about Daniel's three friends in the fiery furnace, students are asked to respond personally about how they are witnesses for Christ in difficult times. Not only is the Old Testament viewed through the lenses of the New, but students are also encouraged to make a personal application in their own lives. Throughout, the work of the Holy Spirit is stressed. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word that the students will learn how the Bible applies to their own lives.

In the intermediate grade, the grade five textbook begins with a ten lesson introduction about the Bible: *God's Word, God's Promises, God's Word Revealed, God's Messengers, God's Word as Seed, God's Word as Rock and Shield, God's Word Provides Wisdom, God's Word Foretold and Fulfilled, God's Word Teaches* (parables), and *God's Word Assures and Strengthens*.<sup>342</sup> This is followed by ten lessons about God's Word in the life of Martin Luther. It discusses the pre-reformation era, Luther's early life, his struggle to learn that man is justified by faith alone, how he nailed his ninety-five theses on the church door of Wittenberg, what his family life was like, and how Luther's life and teachings relate to students today. Lesson 20 ends this unit with a description of the Augsburg Confession, Luther's Large and Small Catechism, as well as the Book of Concord; it is noted that "Lutheran pastors and teachers promise to accept the confessions in The Book of Concord as true statements of the Word of God."<sup>343</sup> The textbook then continues with "God's Word—A Message of Deliverance" beginning with Exodus chapter 1 and continuing on to the death of Moses in

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<sup>342</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God's Word—Grade 5*. Rodney L. Rathmann, ed. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2001).

<sup>343</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God's Word—Grade 5*, p.47.

Deuteronomy 34. Unit 4 is entitled “God’s Word Tells about Old Testament Leaders”; it takes the students from the first chapter of Joshua to 1 Samuel 7. Unit 5, “God’s Word Tells about Israel’s Kings”, takes students from Saul as king (1 Sam. 8) to the building of the temple by Solomon (1 Kings 5-8). Unit 6, entitled “God’s Word Tells about God’s Prophecies”, begins with selected Psalms of David, some Proverbs from Solomon, the book of Ecclesiastes, and ends with 2 Kings 6:1-7 (“The Axhead Floats”). Unit 7, “God’s Word Tells of Israel’s Captivity and Return”, begins with King Joash and ends with Jerusalem being rebuilt with Nehemiah. The final three lessons are devoted to showing how prophecies from Isaiah and the Psalms fulfill God’s promises for the Jews, while at the same time emphasizing all the Messianic prophecies and how they were fulfilled. Unit 8, “God’s Word Tells of the Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus” begins with Matthew’s gospel of Jesus’ birth and ends with a lesson about the Last Supper. The final unit, “God’s Word Tells of Our Risen and Ascended Lord,” brings students from the resurrection, through the book of Acts and ends with selected chapters from the book of Revelation, describing the new heavens and the new earth where we will live with Christ forever. It ends with the third article of the Apostles’ Creed: “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”

<sup>344</sup> The final question for the grade 5 students is “What does this mean?”: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel,

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<sup>344</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God’s Word-Grade 5*, p.247.

enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”<sup>345</sup> This is truly the Lutheran message: God by His Word and Spirit working faith in the hearts of the students so that “on the last day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.”<sup>346</sup>

Students in the Lutheran schools are taught emphatically that they cannot understand the Word of God apart from the Spirit of God, Who was given to them at baptism. In this book, too, the emphasis is on digging into the passages of Scripture and applying the truths to the students’ lives, all the while relying on the Holy Spirit: “You know when you want to do God’s will, the Holy Spirit has put that desire in you.”<sup>347</sup> Students are always studying the Bible with the entire “Heilsgeschichte” in mind. They are not left with snippets; they understand God’s entire plan of salvation from a Lutheran perspective. There are some simple exercises, but no ‘who, how, what, when, or where’ questions. As to right or wrong behaviour, and applying God’s word to the students’ life, these types of questions always flow from the story: when Peter denies Jesus, students are asked personal questions about when and if they have ever denied Jesus.<sup>348</sup>

Grade 6 students have another in-depth look at Old Testament history. The students begin with another look at the creation story (missing from the grade 5 book), beginning with the book of Exodus. This time, as in the grade 3 book, the focus is on stewardship of God’s beautiful creation:

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<sup>345</sup> Voyages: Exploring God’s Word-Grade 5, p.247.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., p.247.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., p.229.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., p.231.

In our study of creation, we are going to discuss what we can do to help retain and protect the usefulness and beauty of God's world. As the Holy Spirit moves us to lives of grateful service to our God, we can be His helping hands in the preservation of the world.<sup>349</sup>

There is a short exercise about how sinful people have affected God's creation, encouraging students to think about the effects of sin and the fall (Genesis 3).

The memory verse for this chapter is Hebrews 11:3, stating that "by faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command..."

The fall of Adam and Eve into sin is connected to the rescue in Christ, just as Luther had stated: sin is always related to grace; law is always expounded with a view to the liberation of the gospel. Genesis 3:15 is related to Galatians 4:4, 5. This time, students are encouraged to write their own report of the fall into sin, in the form of a newspaper article. The story of Cain and Abel contains a similar emphasis: sin and grace. "Working through the Word, the Spirit of God enables us to love others as God in Christ has loved us. In the second table of the law, we focus on various ways we honour God in our relationships with others."<sup>350</sup> The story of the flood is related to water baptism: "By grace, through faith God offers salvation in the waters of Baptism."<sup>351</sup> In the tower of Babel account, students are asked to read the passage together and then to respond to five discussion questions. The only means by which God and people can ever be brought together according to 1 Timothy 2:5, 6 is through the one Mediator given: Jesus Christ. The story is then made relevant to the students' lives by giving two examples of students who received God's gracious and healing forgiveness.

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<sup>349</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God's Word: Junior High Student Book* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), p.4.

<sup>350</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God's Word-Grade 6*, p.9.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

Each section of the Old Testament studied confronts the students with the demands of God's law and the liberating news of the gospel. Almost every lesson ends with a memory verse from the New Testament: "Just as God kept every promise to Abraham, we, together with all others who trust in Jesus have certain hope in all of life's circumstances."<sup>352</sup> Unit two takes pupils from Exodus to Deuteronomy, the birth of Moses until his death. Unit Three covers the books of Joshua, Judges and the birth life, and work of Samuel; again, the text does not go into all details but picks out the salient events and narratives. Unit 4 describes how each king either served God or did not; Unit 5, entitled "God's Grace in Troubled Times", takes selected stories from 1 Kings to some readings in Jeremiah. The final unit, "God's Promises Endure," takes selected studies and readings from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and covers the entire books of Jonah, Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah. There is only one chapter about the entire books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Depending on how the teacher handles these lessons, students can be short changed in their study of these Bible books. However, they are included to give students the entire history of God's plan of salvation in Christ, beginning with creation until the "Homecoming of God's People" as described in Ezra. This homecoming is related to the Christian's final homecoming to heaven; students are asked to look up John 10:27, 28; Romans 8:28-30; and Ephesians 1:3-6. The book ends with a paragraph about "Jesus our Joy" taken from Nehemiah 8:10:

That joy is most clearly revealed in God's Son, Jesus Christ. Believers have true joy because Jesus, our Saviour, took all of our sins to the cross. We have true joy because Jesus rose triumphantly from the grave. We have true joy because we are

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<sup>352</sup> Voyages: *Exploring God's Word-Grade 6*, p.19.

forgiven . . . we look forward to the joy we will experience eternally in heaven with our loving Lord and Saviour.<sup>353</sup>

This hermeneutic statement sums up the entire Lutheran approach to the study of the Bible: Christ is the central theme of Scripture and in Him all the riches of God are ours.

The Grade 7 book in this series of “Voyages” focuses on the history of the church from a Lutheran perspective. However, these texts contain a broad inclusiveness that acknowledges other Christian denominations and their doctrines and works of mercy. The student text begins with the early church; the power of the Holy Spirit is emphasized throughout this unit. The answer to the question on page 7 “Where does the Church get its Power?” illustrates this immediately: “He {Jesus} sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost to give the church power. That same Holy Spirit gives us power to believe in Jesus as our Saviour.”<sup>354</sup> This is then personalized with a question to the students as to how they will use the Holy Spirit’s power. After the second lesson describing the age of the apostles, students are asked to remember Acts 2:38: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Students are encouraged to stand up for their faith, even as the early martyrs did; they must become what they are: “a baptized child of God.”<sup>355</sup> The Lutheran view of the three major creeds (viz. that they have Christ as their central focus) is stressed strongly in Chapter 6. Lutheran liturgy, which includes the recitation of the

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<sup>353</sup> *Voyages: Junior High Student Book*, p.123.

<sup>354</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God’s Word: Church History*, Edward Grube and Rodney Rathmann, editors. (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2001), p.7.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

Apostles' Creed, is highlighted; however, each time the students are reminded that they join a world-wide church that worships the living God.<sup>356</sup> Augustine's life, too, is described in detail; Luther drew on Augustine's life, work and example.<sup>357</sup> Chapter 13 describes the life of Martin Luther: "He discovered and taught three important themes found in God's Holy Word: People are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, by the Scripture alone."<sup>358</sup> Later the students are asked, as they compare their lives with this great reformer, how they will share the Good News of the saving Gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit. The views of Calvin, Luther and Zwingli are compared regarding the Lord's Supper in chapter 14. The text comments that differences of opinion are alright when it comes to hymn tunes (although Christians have certainly been deeply divided over issues of music in the church as well), but differences when it comes to God and His plan of forgiveness and salvation must be clearly spelled out on the basis of Scripture: "Luther felt the differences concerning the Lord's Supper were too important to allow compromise."<sup>359</sup> Students are urged to ask themselves first what God's Word says about this issue or that question, rather than relying on human beings for answers.

Reforms in the Roman Catholic Church, such as the council of Trent, are taught, but always in a matter of fact and respectful manner (no one is called "Accursed", as found in the Canons of Dordt). The enlightenment movement is discussed, as is rationalism. In each instance the students are asked questions about how these changes in faith relate to their own lives: "Can our reason or

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<sup>356</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God's Word-Church History*, p.17.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.

intellect lead us to God? Read Romans 8:7.”<sup>360</sup> The work of William Wilberforce and William Booth is described, urging students too, to be active in social justice and in the alleviation of the troubles of the poor. The gospel is more than right doctrine; even pietism is discussed, and students are encouraged to be balanced in their thinking (right thinking leads to right actions).

The origins of the Lutheran church in America are explained, beginning with a discussion of the first amendment. The chapter ends with Luther’s teaching of the two kingdoms: “the Kingdom of the Left which consists of God’s rule in the world to maintain order and peace” and the “Kingdom of the Right {which} refers to God’s rule of mercy and grace in the church.”<sup>361</sup> Students are asked to memorize Romans 13:1 and encouraged to pray for their rulers. After two chapters about the Great Awakening(s) of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in America, the history of the Lutheran influence in the United States is described. Finally, the book is brought right into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and students are brought face to face with “the challenge for today”: how can the gospel of Christ be spread today? Students are encouraged to “stay in touch with the Spirit and the community through the Word and Sacraments by which the power can flow into you.”<sup>362</sup> Then the state and spread of Christianity is described throughout the world: Europe, Asia, the South Pacific, Africa and Latin America. One chapter is devoted to each continent. The last chapter urges students to eagerly anticipate the second coming of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>360</sup> *Voyages: Exploring God’s Word-Church History*, p.39.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.

Each lesson asks the students one or two personal questions about their relationship to Christ, how they can be effective witnesses or how they are experiencing the truths of God's Word, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

At Zion Lutheran School, the eighth graders study the New Testament History series entitled *Faith Alive*. The teachers are encouraged to share "God's Good News" with the students in their class; the good news being the death burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ: "As the Holy Spirit works through God's Holy Word, He continues to nurture the saving gift of faith in our hearts and empowers us as we bring the message of forgiveness, new life, and salvation to others".<sup>363</sup> This is the job of the teachers. The aims of *Faith Alive* series are as follows:

That, through the Word and Spirit of God, people of all ages

- may know God, especially His seeking and forgiving love in Christ;
- may respond in faith and grow up into Christian maturity;
- see themselves as the reconciled, redeemed children of God and individual members of Christ's body, the church;
- live happily in peace with God, themselves and their fellow human beings;
- express their joy in worship of God and in loving service to others;
- value all of God's creative work in His world and the church;
- witness openly to Christ as the Saviour of all people;
- participate actively in God's mission to the church and the world;<sup>364</sup>
- live in Christian hope.

To accomplish these goals the *Faith Alive* curriculum is Christ-centered so that students will have optimal opportunity to grow in their relationship of faith and life with God.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> *Faith Alive: New Testament Survey: Teachers' Guide Grade 8*, Rodney Rathmann, ed. (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), p.5.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6

This outline of goals is followed by a brief description of the physical, social, psychological, intellectual, and faith development characteristics of middle school students (grades 6-8). The 60 lessons are meant to be taught daily in 45-60 minute slots with the Bible and Luther's Small Catechism available for "quick and easy reference":

The first page of each lesson lists the lesson title, Law/Gospel focus, objectives and materials needed . . . worship suggestions, step-by-step activities for teaching the content of the lesson, memory suggestions, ideas for enrichment and reinforcement activities, and closing worship suggestions.<sup>365</sup>

The section on "extending the lesson into the classroom" relates the Bible passages directly to the lives of each student. Examples include such activities as keeping a journal about Bible passages read; inviting people into the classroom to discuss pertinent issues; and exercises that bring the Word of God into focus for the students' personal lives. There is far more material than is necessary for one 45-60 minute lessons; teachers can tailor each lesson to the needs of their class. Each lesson ends with a section on "extending the lesson into the home": suggestions are made for students to assemble their family and read portions of Scripture with them, pray with them and discuss God's Word together. Closing worship options are usually hymn suggestions taken from the Lutheran Worship Hymnal. The Law/Gospel focus for each lesson always brings to the fore how sin has destroyed God's good creation and how the gospel in Jesus Christ restores and reconciles. For each lesson, the objective is stated: "That by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, the students will..."

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<sup>365</sup>*Faith Alive: New Testament Survey: Teachers' Guide, Grade 8, p.7*

After one lesson on each of the four gospels, students study the gospel of Mark in depth. Students read through each chapter section by section until the entire book is completed. The book of Acts is studied next, although not chapter by chapter. It is interesting to note that there is one chapter (36) devoted to the day of Pentecost. The power of the Holy Spirit is acknowledged in bringing men and women to Christ; the fruits of the Spirit are discussed, but the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12-14) are not mentioned. The speaking in tongues, the wind and the flame, are called “miraculous happenings.”<sup>366</sup> Rebirth, coming to Christ for the first time, is emphasized; students are asked to fill in the date of their birth and then their rebirth.<sup>367</sup> The Pauline epistles are covered in three lessons; Titus and Philemon take up one lesson, as does the entire book of Hebrews. The epistle of James is included in one lesson, as are the two letters of Peter; John’s epistles take up two lessons, while Jude is covered in one lesson. The book of Revelation is covered in two lessons. As an example, the objectives for the book of Hebrews are as follows:

That by the power of the Holy Spirit working through God’s Word, the students will

1. recognize the dangers in being comfortable in a life not centered in Christ;
2. see in Jesus Christ, their personal Lord and Saviour, the One to whom all of Scripture points;
3. express confident trust in Him and not in temporary or false saviours;
4. acknowledge the many heroes of faith as examples of how to live joyful, confident, God-pleasing lives.<sup>368</sup>

Teachers are asked to underscore “that both the Old Testament and the New Testament point to Christ and the forgiveness, life and salvation offered

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<sup>366</sup> *Faith Alive; New Testament Survey*, p.111

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, p.113.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, p.132.

freely in Him. Both Old and New Testament believers face the temptation to trust in the practices and traditions that point to Christ, rather than Christ Himself. Jesus says Scriptures testify to Him as the way of salvation.”<sup>369</sup> As a home extension of this lesson, students are asked “to find in their ancestry those who in some way were heroes of faith.”<sup>370</sup> They are then asked, in the closing worship, to list some heroes of the faith today (such as their pastor, teachers, and volunteer workers in their community; later, the list could include missionaries, evangelists, and others). Clearly, all these activities could not be included in one lesson on the book of Hebrews. However, the absolute sufficiency and supremacy of Christ would certainly be brought out since this is a hallmark of the Lutheran tradition. Every lesson contains some short seat work exercise, although this work is almost always related to class discussion, the Scriptures verses relating to the lesson, or a personal application of the Bible passage to the lives of the students.<sup>371</sup>

In addition to the student text, eighth graders also have several booklets that help them deal with issues. *Friendship Builders*<sup>372</sup> is one such unit; it discusses how to be a faithful friend in light of the sin/grace cycle (if we know that we personally have been forgiven much, we have mercy and grace for our friends and are more ready to forgive them); how to be an effective communicator; what it means to be confident in Christ and how that impacts friendships; and how to resolve conflicts. These mini lessons come complete with opening and closing

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<sup>369</sup> *Faith Alive: New Testament Survey: Teachers' Guide Grade 8*, p.133.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>371</sup> See pp.116, 118, 121, etc. of the Student Text.

<sup>372</sup> *Friendship Builders: Student Magazine*. Rodney Rathmann, ed. (St. Louis, MO:Concordia Publishing House, 1998).

devotions, family time and enrichment activities. Another such unit, *Managing My Free Time*<sup>373</sup>, helps students understand issues such as alcoholism, drug addiction, contemporary music, television, peer pressure and gives them Biblical suggestions to flee temptation and follow Christ. Another booklet used in grade 8, entitled *Christian Callings: Church Work and Other Vocations*,<sup>374</sup> begins with discussions of a pastor's calling; the Christian teacher's vocation; a job description of the work of a director of Christian Education; and concludes with a chart listing all other possible Christian vocations. Even though the final chapter is about a girl that chooses to use her God-given gifts in the business world, choosing a 'Christian' vocation is clearly most pleasing to God. There is a dichotomy created between so called 'Christian work' and secular vocations; the booklet later emphasizes that humans are to glorify God no matter what job: "As the Holy Spirit worked in her (the girl who chose a business vocation) heart through the study of God's Word, she was reminded that even when you have a computer-related job, you still work among and for the benefit of human beings."<sup>375</sup>

*Faith Alive* authors have also published a student text entitled: *Contemporary Issues*.<sup>376</sup> It begins by focussing on the students' relationship to God in Christ, and discusses how the student honours God by his participation in the life of the church, by his/her work, and by his/her relationships with family. Relationships, abortion, euthanasia, addictions, sexuality, and the use of a

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<sup>373</sup> Janet Robson and Rodney Rathmann. *Managing My Free Time* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1990).

<sup>374</sup> R.L. Rathmann. *Christian Callings: Church Work and Other Vocations* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1993)

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>376</sup> *Faith Alive: Contemporary Issues*. Thomas Doyle, ed. (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1993).

person's gifts to the glory of God are all issues that the teachers are asked to discuss with the students. The book ends with an admonition to "abide in Christ." (John 15:5-8) Only in so doing will students be able to honour God with their entire lives.<sup>377</sup>

In summary, this series of student workbooks is well written, well focussed and well designed. Student exercises are kept to a minimum; discussion of the Biblical text is fostered throughout. There is an emphasis on presenting the whole counsel and plan of God by constantly taking the students through the entire Bible. The focus on Christ being the centre of the Word of God, the distinction between law and gospel, and the desire to have every Bible lesson a worship time are Lutheran distinctives that leave no doubt in the students' mind about the importance of Christ in their lives. The emphasis on the Word and the Holy Spirit working together to bring about faith in the lives of students comes out in every lesson. The fruits of the Holy Spirit were not mentioned very often and the gifts of the Spirit were never mentioned. The work of the Spirit is stressed only in making God's Word alive to them and in how that work relates to the students being born again. Taking the lesson home to discuss Biblical truths with family is another important method of training Lutheran students in the ways of God. However, there is a dichotomy between sacred and secular particularly evidenced in some of the discussion exercises and brought out in the booklet entitled *Christian Callings: Church Work and other Vocations*. The Word of God was brought to bear upon creation issues; an emphasis on the stewardship of God's beautiful creation was found in every Genesis 1-2 account. However, how this Word of

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<sup>377</sup> *Faith Alive: Contemporary Issues*, p.93.

God is integrated in the various other disciplines such as language study, Social Studies or Math, is not often brought out. The principal I interviewed talked about the Bible influencing every lesson in the school. She saw the work of the Holy Spirit's as bringing students and teachers to Christ and working in them to do good works. She viewed the Bible as God's inerrant Word. Story telling was used mostly in primary grades; allegorical stories were also used to illustrate biblical truths. Lutheran children are viewed as receiving Christ at baptism according; pastors lead students to Christ. Group work is rarely done in the teaching of Bible. The Bible curriculum is followed quite carefully and Lutheran liturgy and doctrine permeate the chapel times.

## CHAPTER 4

### TOWARD A BLENDED IMPROVEMENT IN THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING IN THE TEACHING OF BIBLE IN BC CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

#### I. Blending Process and Practice

##### 1. Blending roles of Church, Home and School

We have now moved into the twenty-first century. Parents who came here from Europe after WW II are now, for the most part, living in comfort, peace and even affluence. Why should they continue to send their children to Christian schools? What do these schools have to offer them now that they are settled in their beautiful, large churches? Why can the church not educate their children in the ways of God? Then they can send their children to the public school and educate them about God's word at home and at church. Again, the answer to those questions lies in similar situations in which their forebears found themselves: the religion of the public schools in BC, as quoted earlier in the first chapter of this thesis, is "to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic, pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy."<sup>378</sup> The BC Public School Act goes on to state that "all provincial schools shall be conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles; no religious dogma or creed shall be inculcated."<sup>379</sup> Christmas must now be referred to as 'Winter Festival' and Easter holidays are now 'Spring Break'. The religion of the public school system is secular humanism, "a religious worldview based on

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<sup>378</sup> BC Public School Act, p.C-9.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p.C-46.

theological atheism, philosophical naturalism, biological spontaneous generation/evolution, moral relativism, legal positivism, and political globalism.”<sup>380</sup> No mention of living all of life for God and neighbor, nothing said about honoring God’s glorious creation, and no recognition given of man’s sin and need of a Savior. The mandate of the public schools assumes neutrality under the guise of secular humanism. Christian families of the Reformed persuasion see this assumed neutrality even more clearly now than in the days of Groen van Prinsteren. Christian parents of Mennonite and Lutheran origin too, would look back at the faith struggles of their ancestors and want to see their children educated as responsible disciples of Jesus Christ in an atmosphere of nurture, love and respect. Parents of children in the Pentecostal stream would want to see their children taught by Holy Spirit led teachers. So what is the role of Christian schools today? A quick glance at the world wide web, under the appropriate addresses of four of the schools mentioned in the previous chapters gives us some answers. Here are their four mission statements:

Abbotsford Christian School, the largest Christian school of the Society of Christian Schools (schools of Dutch Calvinistic background): “Abbotsford Christian School (ACS), operated by the Abbotsford Christian School Society members, seeks to serve Christian families by providing a secure learning environment in which God’s children can continue to explore, experience and evaluate all of life under God.”<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> David A. Noebel. *Clergy in the Classroom: The Religion of Secular Humanism*. (Manitou Springs, CO.: Summit Press, 1995), p.iii.

<sup>381</sup> [www.abbotsfordchristian.com](http://www.abbotsfordchristian.com)

Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI): “The mission of MEI, in harmony and cooperation with the home and our supporting churches is to prepare young people to strive for excellence in all things so that they can contribute positively to God’s kingdom and society as faithful disciples of Christ.”<sup>382</sup>

Pacific Academy (PA): “Although not affiliated with any church or denomination, the schools’ statement of faith is distinctly evangelical and Pentecostal, seeking to allow for the movement of God’s Holy Spirit in the daily life of the school.”<sup>383</sup>

Zion Lutheran (ZL): “The program of education in Lutheran schools seeks to develop the child’s personality and guide him/her in growing toward Christian maturity. The school is vitally concerned with developing the whole personality and shaping the child’s response and sensitivity to God and the world. We do not replace the parental role but help them in this important responsibility.”<sup>384</sup>

Looking at these four mission statements, each of the schools exists to help parents of certain denominational persuasions nurture their children to live for God. All are open to students of denominations other than their own; in fact, Abbotsford Christian serves families of over sixty different denominations. Each of the other three schools is also multi-denominational, multi-racial and multi-cultural.

While some Lutheran and Reformed schools may still have a few of their students receive instruction in their respective catechisms, most churches offer their families extensive youth programs once a week, along with the regular

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<sup>382</sup> [www.meisoc.com](http://www.meisoc.com)

<sup>383</sup> [www.pacificacademy.net](http://www.pacificacademy.net)

<sup>384</sup> [www.zionlutheran.org](http://www.zionlutheran.org)

Sunday morning worship service (most Sunday evening services are now non-existent; members often opt for cell groups or fellowship meetings in homes). Christian families no longer have that loyalty to one denomination that they had fifty years ago when their forebears pioneered and it was so necessary to stick together for mutual help, fellowship and the preservation of cultural norms. Now parents have so much choice in churches; they can travel to them readily because of modern transportation methods and in one month they might have opportunity and reason to attend various churches and denominations. They are no longer looking for denominational distinctives; they may want a well-run nursery for their toddler, fellowship groups during, after or before the service for different age levels, or they may go to a church for its style of music. Denominational differences, doctrinal principles and ethnic traditions are falling away as children of early immigrants become Canadianized. In light of this trend, the school often provides a greater place of stability and security for children than the church, or even the home.

Christian families, too, are changing. According to sociologist Zheng Wu, the divorce rate in Canada now hovers around 40%.<sup>385</sup> It is difficult to obtain statistics about Christian families, but according to a 2002 poll conducted by *Focus on the Family Canada*, Christian families that attend church regularly are “equally likely to have been divorced as never attenders,”<sup>386</sup> so many single parent Christian families need as much support as they can get to train their children in the ways of the Lord. Coupled with the fact that most families are now

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<sup>385</sup> *Divorcing Marriage*. Daniel Cere & Douglas Farrow, editors. (Montreal, Que.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), p.17.

<sup>386</sup> *Focus on the Family Canada National Survey*, conducted by The Strategic Counsel (Vancouver, BC.: Focus on the Family Canada Association, 2002 ), p.35.

double income families, and we have a situation where the school has become a vital and necessary component in the normal Canadian child's life. S/he must be at school or in a day care while the parents are at work. In these days of increasing harassment, bullying and swarming, Christian schools offer a place where the child can feel "safe, welcome and valued" to quote a phrase from the Zion Lutheran school website. Each of the four statements above suggests that these schools offer great help to parents in the discipleship training of their sons and daughters.

There are other reasons that parents need the help of Christian schools: the freedom of speech and religion of Canadian Christians is eroding rapidly: the Bible has been declared hate literature in our land, same sex marriage has been legalized and court cases dealing with the freedom of speech and religion of professionals are very common.<sup>387</sup> Now more than ever Christian parents need to equip their children with tools to stand up for Christ in the marketplace of life. To sum it up in the words of Ted Byfield in his article written for the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada:

More than ever, we need Christian schools. But we must be sure that what we teach in them is Christianity. We must be sure they are not really secular schools whose Christianity consists entirely of crosses and biblical pictures on the wall. Christianity should touch, influence, even shape every subject taught. For we are in the midst of an ideological war, as crucial as any military one, and victory will greatly depend on what goes on in those Christian classrooms.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> See the website of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada: [www.evangelicafellowship.ca](http://www.evangelicafellowship.ca)

<sup>388</sup> Ted Byfield. "Shouldn't Christians Know Better?" in [christianity.ca](http://christianity.ca) (A ministry of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada). Available: [<http://christianity.ca/education/christian-schools/2005/11:000.html>].

## 2. Blending Goals

What goals do these Christian schools have for students so that they will be equipped for life in their local and national communities? (taken from each schools' web site):

Abbotsford Christian: "We aim to nurture students in the discovery and development of their abilities and unique gifts so that they are enable to be faithful, discerning, obedient and creative servants of God and of neighbor, and stewards of His creation."

MEI: "Our goal is to provide a comprehensive co-ed program that encourages intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and physical growth of our students... excellence in all areas of the curriculum is offered according to the potential of each individual so that students can contribute positively to God's kingdom and society as faithful disciples of Christ.."

Pacific Academy: "Pacific Academy exists to prepare students for service and leadership through a commitment to excellence by providing the best in spiritual, intellectual and physical development based on a foundation of Christian principles in the Pentecostal tradition."

Zion Lutheran: "Our philosophy views each child as God's most complex creation. It is the task of the Christian educator to guide the child's mental physical and spiritual qualities by an application of God's law and God's gospel."

Another glance at the websites of each of these schools and we see that they offer extensive sports programs, education in the Arts, and varied service opportunities—a host of extra-curricular and in-curricular possibilities to nurture and develop students to their full potential to the glory of God. Since each school

now enrolls a 'mixed multitude' schools such as MEI and PA stress evangelism: teachers are encouraged to lead their students into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Abbotsford Christian, a school in the Reformed tradition, does not focus on this aspect in its statements of goals, but teachers are open to opportunities of evangelism, as evidenced by the comments of teacher NH (see p. 72 of this thesis). Zion Lutheran is also open to evangelize students into the faith but leaves baptism and confirmation of children and youth to the church, as evidenced by Teacher DD's statement: "We refer them to the pastors for this." (see p. 196) Lofty goals, increased opportunities, openness to evangelism and help to train their students from a Christian perspective and we can see why many Christian parents are thankful to have such schools for their children, often sacrificing financially to enroll them. Clearly, there is a crucial role for the Christian school that parents and churches cannot deliver on their own.

### 3. Blending Curriculum and Best Practice

#### i. An overview of the interview questions

On page 72 of this thesis, I presented four questions that each teacher in the various schools was asked to answer. I have blended the answers in chart form for easy reference; I have included the pages in this thesis where the comments, summaries or quotes can be found only for the question about "What is your view of the Bible?", since all other questions find their answers on the same relevant pages:

Question #1: What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Bible?

	Website comments	Teacher comments	Textbooks
ACS:	not mentioned on website	NH: Absolutely essential; MP: The Holy Spirit must change hard hearts.	Mostly mentioned the Holy Spirit in connection with relevant Scripture passages: Joel 2 Acts 2, etc.
MEI:	Empowerment of the Holy Spirit basis for teaching and living.	DM: We cannot prepare our lessons without the Holy Spirit. LH: Leads teacher and students into truths of God's Word.	ACSI: Extensive teaching on the work, role and empowerment of Holy Spirit. Lifeway: Very few references to Holy Spirit.
PA:	Allow for the movement of the Holy spirit in the daily life of the school.	Principal: We honor the Spirit's personality, gifting, healing power and His work in our students' lives. The Holy Spirit is vibrant, alive and active in every classroom.	ACSI: see above.
ZL:	not mentioned on web site	DD: Holy Spirit enters a child at the time of baptism and begins His work of grace. Through the Spirit we receive Christ.	Holy Spirit works in tandem with the Word of God to reveal truth.

\*The question on the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Bible will be dealt with near the end of this thesis.

Question # 2 (a): What is your view of the Bible? (b) Do you use storytelling as a means of telling Bible stories? (\*indicates website comment.)

ACS	<p>*Academic excellence and spiritual vibrancy are built upon the eternal values of Scripture  Teacher NH: The Bible is a letter from my Lord. (pp. 71,72)  Teacher MP: It is God's overarching Story: we seek to live out its truths. (see pp. 73-77 for discussion with this teacher)  Textbooks: Doctrines of inerrancy, infallibility, etc. taken from Reformed Creeds. Strong emphasis on Creation, Fall, redemption and restoration themes. More focus on Old Testament because of covenantal views.  Bible taught in canonical order, for the most part (pp. 55-70). Students encouraged to make an <i>informed</i> commitment to Christ (p. 56).  Bible curriculum for high school students mostly teacher generated; Worldview studies included in upper grades (pp.74, 75).</p>
MEI	<p>*We believe in the authority of the Bible.  Teacher LH: Scripture is God breathed: 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 (p.123).  Teacher PH: Look directly to the Word of God, not Bible curriculum (pp. 133,134).  ACSI textbooks: The Bible itself should be kept central in the teaching process; teachers should hold it and teach from it directly (p. 157). More emphasis on New Testament since having a relationship with Jesus Christ is central to Bible teaching. ACSI textbooks: pp.134-162. Bible taught according to topics or themes: e.g. Character building, obedience, moral living, right and wrong behavior (see discussion of Lifeway books, pp.124-129). Bible not taught canonically.  High School Bible curriculum largely teacher generated; worldview studies included in upper grades; Mennonite history taught (pp.129-132).</p>

PA	<p>*no mention of the word “Bible” on website</p> <p>Principal: The Bible is the infallible, irrefutable Word of God upon which teachers base their life and teaching. We instill a love for God’s Word in students’ hearts.</p> <p>Textbooks: ACSI (pp. 134-162): Focus on Biblical principles for obedience; Bible taught from theme or topical perspective; great stress on the work and operation of the Holy Spirit. Bible not taught in canonical order. Strong moralism; stress on leading students to Christ.</p> <p>Teachers school-wide are now in process of revising the Bible curriculum under four major themes: <i>Know God, Know His Word, Live His Word and Know His World</i>. A survey is being taken to see if all Bible books are covered throughout the grades (pp. 174-178). Worldview studies included in upper grades at PA and at Cornerstone (p. 164).</p>
ZL	<p>*Absolute truth is found only in God’s Word, the Holy Bible</p> <p>Teacher DD: The Bible is viewed as the inerrant Word of God and it penetrates every lesson in this school (pp. 196, 197).</p> <p>Textbooks: Over arching picture of God’s Word; stress on teaching the Bible canonically; Lutheran distinctives taught. Christ central in Biblical teaching. The Holy Spirit works in tandem with the Word to reveal God’s truth (pp. 197-216).</p> <p>Contemporary Issues: Worldview questions for Grade 8 (pp. 213-215).</p>

All teachers in each of the schools used story telling as a means of teaching the Bible stories in the primary grades. At MEI and PA, teachers tell “experiential” stories of God working in their own lives or in the lives of others to illustrate truths from the Bible. (See teacher interviews with Mr. PH and the principal teacher at PA.) At ZL, I witnessed a primary teacher teaching an allegorical story referring to Jesus as the Prince of Peace, who takes the sin away and offers a robe of righteousness instead.

All schools have chapel services (some weekly, others bi-weekly) where the Bible is read, there is a time of prayer, singing and worship and someone (a teacher or invited speaker) shares from the Word of God or shares about certain topics relevant to daily life. Students and teachers also pray for the entire school during chapel and in home rooms; sometimes special prayer requests are shared.

Question #3: How do you view your students?

ACS	<p>*God's children who need to discover and develop their abilities and unique gifts. Teacher NH: Students need to come to Christ.          Teacher MP: Students are at various levels of commitment in their faith walk. Inclusive education for all levels of ability.          Textbooks: Students are Imago Dei, each with unique gifts that need to be developed for God's glory. Students also in need of grace.          Many service opportunities offered in the community and abroad.</p>
MEI	<p>*Encourage intellectual, spiritual emotional, social and physical growth of students; develop potential of each individual; devise learning opportunities suited to each.          Teacher DM: Many students have not yet made a decision for Christ.          Teacher PH: All in need of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.          Textbooks: All are sinful by nature, guilty before God and in need of forgiveness offered by Jesus Christ.          Many service opportunities offered at home and globally.</p>
PA	<p>*Introduce students to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.          Provide students the resources and skills necessary to live a life of service.          Principal: They need the justifying work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and the continued work of the Holy Spirit to live a sanctified life.          ACSI Textbooks: Strong emphasis on students needing to come to Christ and then living for Him in obedience and service, empowered by the Holy Spirit.          Many service opportunities at home and abroad.</p>
ZL	<p>*Strong emphasis on developing the whole child: intellectual, social, spiritual and physical aspects. The child is God's most complex creation. Each child has a God given responsibility to serve God and his/her neighbor.          Teacher DD: We don't lead students to Christ; we refer them to pastors. Lutheran students receive the Holy Spirit of Christ at baptism.          Textbooks: Application of God's law and God's gospel needed to bring students to maturity.          One service project observed (K-8 school only).</p>

Question #4: Is your classroom a community of learners?

ACS	<p>*We commit to live faithfully with our Lord, personally and communally. We foster servanthood and leadership development; we recognize and affirm each other's uniqueness.</p> <p>Teacher B: We have communal discussions and cooperative learning where students share their learning with one another in Bible classes. (p.73). Teacher MP: I give open-ended assignments foster class discussions to bring out the truths of God's Word.</p> <p>Each of the three campuses has a curriculum coordinator as part of the administrative team. Teachers regularly review each subject area to improve the integration of faith and learning. Great stress on the school as being a community of learners.</p>
MEI	<p>*Teachers celebrate in equipping students to function as productive citizens and servant leaders and are passionate about ways to contribute to local and global communities.</p> <p>Teacher GK: Allows for some student generated curriculum. In his class, students learn through debates, group discussions, researching various books of the Bible and participating in service/ministry type of activities to develop faith formation and spiritual disciplines. High school Bible teachers meet together to decide on curriculum.</p>
PA	<p>*The school is a community reflecting Christ working in our lives. Service and leadership are empowered by the Holy Spirit within and beyond the school community.</p> <p>Principal: Teachers are now busy in community to restructure the school's Bible program. We are highly in favor of communal learning, driven by the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of teachers and students alike. We have a lot of interaction, communal sharing and lots of corporate, daily prayer throughout the school. We want to strike a balance between the experiential and the intellectual learning of Bible truths. Textbooks did not allow for much communal learning.</p>
ZL	<p>*Education is a shared responsibility between parents and teachers in the process of a child's development. Let us jointly strive to help your child grow in the love of the Lord.</p> <p>Teacher DD: Bible is taught as a whole class lesson with group work being done rarely. Students are encouraged to share their Bible lessons with their parents. Textbooks encouraged some discussions.</p>

ii. Blending Bible Curriculum

We will begin with question number 2 (a): What is your view of the Bible?

All teachers were in agreement that it is God's Word to us throughout the ages.

All believed the Bible to be infallible, inerrant and Spirit breathed. Some showed

great passion for the Word of God and wanted to share that passion with their students. Because of certain faith beliefs, some schools stressed the Old Testament more than the New Testament, while others gave the New Testament more emphasis. How can we blend these views to give students a high view of Scripture, emphasize both Testaments equally and give all students a picture of God's entire 'Heilsgeschichte' (plan of salvation)? No matter what plan we follow, we will see the Bible through different lenses, depending on which faith beliefs we have been taught. Gleaning from the summary tables, I see that each of the schools would desire the following goals from their teaching of Bible:

- a. Give students a thorough knowledge of and a love for God's Word.
- b. Pray that each student come to a saving, personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the study of the Bible and interaction with teachers about the Bible, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the students' lives.
- c. Desire to see all students grow intellectually, spiritually, socially, emotionally, and physically through a study of God's Word and how it relates to all areas of life.
- d. Allow students to evaluate and explore all of life under God through a biblical lens.
- e. Provide teaching to discern the spirits of the age, thus putting the Scripture knowledge into practice; emphasis on worldview studies.
- f. Give students an opportunity to put their faith into action through providing many opportunities of serving their neighbors around them, whether that be in the school, the community or globally.

In order to achieve those goals, I suggest certain curriculum templates be superimposed upon the teaching of Bible in each of these Christian schools. A curriculum template or framework will allow each school to teach Bible from its own perspective, use the textbooks they have with discretion and at the same time blend the desire of each of these schools to teach the whole counsel of God from all of Scripture along with allowing students to enjoy the study of God's Word. This blending of frameworks and beliefs can be done as teacher teams work together in community. (Section II about the blending of faith beliefs will have more to say about the basis for faith beliefs.)

### iii. Curriculum Coordinators: Blending Teacher Expertise

As we have seen from the summary charts, teachers are working in community groups and in collegial dialogue to develop curriculum from a Christian perspective for their schools. This is also true in the area of Bible curriculum. Schools of the 'reformed' persuasion have been especially active in this area because of their Kuyperian background. Curriculum coordinators meet regularly to discuss best practice, topics to be covered, methods to be used, as well as how to integrate faith practices with teaching and learning. Teachers at Pacific Academy are meeting in 2005 to examine their Bible curriculum to be sure all Bible books are covered at least once during the K-12 years. Teachers at Abbotsford Christian have been doing that since they started with the NUCS Bible curriculum in the 1950's. High School teachers at MEI are getting together to make sure their school is not "all over the map" in the teaching of Bible, according to Teacher GK.

#### iv. Blending Curriculum Frameworks

In order to meet the above goals for the teaching of Bible, I suggest the following curriculum templates or frameworks of understanding that could be superimposed upon existing textbooks and Bible curriculum to allow for discretionary use of textbooks that are lacking in certain areas of emphasis:

**Framework A:** Cover all Bible books during the K-12 school years.

I recommend the primary grades study the Pentateuch and the gospels, following the major stories in each book. The intermediate grades could cover the Old Testament, the gospels and Acts; the high school grades could study certain groups of Bible books together: e. g. the history books, wisdom literature, the Twelve prophets, the gospels, the Pauline letters, the Johannean corpus or the apocalypse. Time frames should be decided by curriculum coordinators.

**Framework B:** As each Bible book is studied, the following questions should be kept in mind in order to provide a context for the Bible curriculum:

- a. Where are we today? Making present the Story.
- b. Where have we come from? Telling the past and discovering a vision.
- c. How now shall we live? Building a future while receiving life.<sup>389</sup>

**Framework C:** Creation-Fall-Redemption and restoration paradigm.

As students move through the Bible and learn the over arching Story of God's creation, man's fall, as well as redemption and restoration through Christ, they can apply this framework to other subjects as well. For example, when studying the rainforests of South America, students will discover how beautiful God has made this forest, how man is ruining it and what man can do to restore it. This

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<sup>389</sup> Robert Koole and Ruthann Raycroft. *Educating with Heart and Mind: Perspectives for Curriculum in Christian Schools*. (Langley, BC: Society of Christian Schools in BC, 2003), p. 50.

will give them a vision or plan of action for their lives. They live in God's beautiful creation as stewards who use their time and resources for God's glory. Lutheran teachers (and others) could keep a Christo-centric paradigm in mind while those of the Mennonite and Pentecostal persuasion could add the phrase "Holy Spirit empowered" or "Spirit-led" to their over-arching framework.

**Frame work D:** World view studies

Each of the schools had a worldview study program for the upper grades. Zion Lutheran only goes to grade 8, but the supplementary workbooks for grades 7 and 8 included discussion of how to live in our culture today (see pp. 213-215). Teaching worldview studies assumes that students cannot face justice issues of their day without a study of the Old Testament prophets or the life of Christ; young people will not see environmental problems from a biblical perspective if they do not know about God's creation and have never heard that the earth and all its fullness belongs to the Lord as we read in countless Psalms and creation accounts of the Bible; they cannot discuss ethical issues if they have not imbibed Psalm 139 and knowing that they are Imago Dei. As Charles Colson states:

Christian education is not simply a matter of starting class with Bible reading and prayer, then teaching subjects out of secular textbooks. It consists of teaching everything, from science and mathematics to literature and the arts, within the framework of an integrated biblical worldview. It means teaching students to relate every academic discipline to God's truth and his self-revelation in Scripture, while detecting and critiquing non-biblical worldview assumptions.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Charles Colson. *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1999), p.338

Colson also recommends the books and work of Summit Ministries in Colorado, already in use at Pacific Academy and Cornerstone Christian (see p. 164).<sup>391</sup>

Teacher MP at Abbotsford Christian uses books and presentations by Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, as well as Middleton and Walsh.<sup>392</sup> These worldview studies will enable students to evaluate all of life using a biblical lens since “worldviews have spiritually formative and cultural power in the lives of individual people.”<sup>393</sup>

**Framework E:** A School-wide memory work plan

Memory work should flow out of passages and books being studied. By the end of elementary school I recommend the student know the following:

The Books of the Old and New Testaments

The Ten Commandments: Exodus 10:1-17

The Great Commandment: Mark 12:30

The Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20

The Cultural Mandate: Genesis 1:27,28

Living in the Great Community: 1 Corinthians 13

Luke 2:1-20

The Lord’s Prayer: Matthew 6:9-13

Psalms 1, 23, 139 and 150

\*Each of these passages should be learned in community and individually. There could be lots of choral speaking involved.

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<sup>391</sup> Charles Colson. *How Now Shall We Live?* p. 339.

<sup>392</sup> C. Bartholomew & Michael Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding our Place in the Biblical Story.* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic Press, 2004).

B. Walsh & J. Middleton. *The Transforming Vision.* (Downers Grove, ILL.: Intervarsity Press, 1984).

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., p.29.

Other passages could be added as various books are being studied (e.g. Jonah 2 when the book of Jonah is being studied). If choral reading is called for, such as in Psalms 24 or 136, students should learn these pericopes in community. If singing is called for, communal praises sung to the glory of God will enhance the learning process. At the end of grade 12, students should know the outline of many Bible books (as well as more memory work passages that flow out of books being studied) so that each student will be thoroughly equipped for every serving God and neighbor in all areas of life.

These frameworks are pieces that could be kept in mind as teachers and students search the Scriptures together. Covering the Bible in this way would minimize the danger of over emphasizing one testament over the other or one book or set of books over the other (e.g. the Pentateuch studied in more depth than the gospels) or presenting the Bible in too piece-meal a fashion. This does not mean that we should do away with all Bible curriculum that has already been prepared for each (denominational) school. For the students of 'reformed' schools, I would still recommend *The Story of God and His People*, especially since it tries to cover the entire 'Heilsgeshichte' or plan of God. I would only use exercises/discussion suggestions from these books that would enhance the study of the Bible itself. For the Mennonite schools and the Pentecostal stream, I suggest that much of the methodology and topical perspective of the textbooks currently in use do not aid students in their quest to obtain a thorough knowledge of the Bible. One Mennonite teacher told of a grade 12 student in his class who had come through the Christian school system from the age of 5

onward who did not know where to find the book of Mark in the Bible. The ACSI curriculum, though it stressed the work of the Holy Spirit, was too reductionistic, and too moralistic in focus. The Word was not studied in a holistic manner, nor was it treated as the very word of God, as evidenced by the inclusion of other stories, by allowing dogs to teach children the truths of the Word or by simply using God's Word to back up certain beliefs. Teachers and leaders are beginning to see this and changes are being made. The Lifeway curriculum, also, was too focused on right and wrong behavior, too piece meal, disjointed and moralistic. In both these curricula, the glory of God's creation, the over arching picture of the biblical story and the order of the canon were entirely lacking. Teachers at both MEI and Pacific Academy are meeting in curriculum committees to discuss these very details because they realize that the textbooks do not meet their goals of teaching Bible.

For Lutheran schools, since they are probably the most denominationally focused of all four streams, I recommend using their curriculum currently in use, but always keeping in mind that God's rule is over all; there is no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular.

For all schools it is better to have Bible curriculum made in Canada so that American pictures, culture, and worldview lenses do not crowd out issues that are particularly Canadian in focus. For example, when teaching worldview issues and discussing environmental disasters, Canadian textbooks would focus on examples that happen right in Canada, not those that happen in the United States.

What about a time frame for each of the school levels? I do not think a rigid time frame is necessary. Teachers could study each book in as much detail as their grade level warrants. They should also be encouraged to integrate their study of the Bible in other subject areas. When writing a novel in the style/framework of a Hebrew narrative such as Jonah or Ruth, this could be incorporated into the English program; when studying the history of Nineveh, geography and social studies could come into play. Throughout, art, language art and music activities could be incorporated into the Bible lessons. As long as the broad frameworks listed above are kept in view, teachers may have freedom to teach and camp around a book. When they feel interest is waning and the topics have been exhausted, it will be time to move on.

Using these frameworks of understanding as they formulate their Bible curriculum, teachers in all four Christian schools would be better equipped to meet their goals for teaching Bible and to integrate the teaching of Bible with the entire school curriculum, thus improving the integration of faith and learning.

#### v. The Classroom Learning Environment

How students absorb the materials being studied depends in part on the classroom learning environment. In Christian school classrooms, the walls and halls glorify God as well. Most primary teachers are very adept at integrating Art, Music, Science, Social Studies and Language Arts to create beautiful murals, creative corners, learning and community centers to illustrate how God's Word impacts and interacts in all areas of learning. For the primary grades, students should have ready access to good picture story books depicting stories from the

Bible. In the higher grades, every classroom should be equipped with a rich library of resource materials about the Bible, especially in high school grades, so that students can study word meanings (maybe even Greek and Hebrew word meanings), historical context and cultural context, literary forms, canonical placement of books, internet resources, geographical details that enhance the texts, etc. This will help them come away with a much greater understanding of the meaning of Scripture than what they started with, all with a view to putting this knowledge into practice. Various translations and copies of the Bible in different languages (maybe the language of their forebears) would also help students to see various nuances of meaning and interpretations possible. The latest editions of the CSI Bible textbooks by Rachelle Wiersma and team (pp. 65-70) are good examples of implementing a host of resources to enhance understanding of the biblical text. In fact, each CSI teacher handbook contains excellent resource lists for each grade level for students as well as for teachers. History books and videos describing students' own particular heritage as well as the faith developments of other cultures and denominations should be readily available.

#### 4. Blending Pedagogy

By looking at the answers to questions three and four together, we will discover ways and means to improve the teaching of Bible by looking at how each of the four Christian schools views their students and how they should be taught. In combining answers to these last two questions, we can learn some valuable tools of pedagogy and methodology to convey biblical truths.

i. Question #3: How do you view your students?

This question originally arose to seek answers to the question of whether or not teachers saw their students as Christians, depending on their view of baptism. A quick glance at the summary tables will show that students of MEI and Pacific Academy were “all in need of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit” to quote teacher PH (MEI) and could expect to be introduced to Jesus Christ as Savior at MEI and along with that, “live a Spirit-filled life”, to quote the PA website.

Students at Abbotsford Christian were described as “God’s children” perhaps because of their being created by God, as we also read in the Lutheran statement regarding the child, or perhaps still because of the Christian Reformed view of baptism which considered children of believing parents to be in the covenant and God’s children unless they proved otherwise. The Lutheran principal explicitly stated that “we don’t lead students to Christ; we refer them to pastors” (p. 196).

All schools now face ‘mixed multitudes’, having to teach students from many varying religious and denominational backgrounds. Some schools, like Abbotsford Christian, ask in their admissions policy that at least one of the parents of student(s) to be admitted be a committed Christian. Others, like MEI, allow a certain percentage of their students from non-Christian backgrounds because their mission is evangelistic in focus. All schools saw their students as unique creations, *Imago Dei*, who needed to discover and develop their unique gifts and abilities to the glory of God. All schools also recognized their students

as fallen creatures in need of redemption. Coming to Christ would allow their students to serve both God and neighbor with the right motivation. Abbotsford Christian, MEI and Pacific Academy offered a host of service opportunities at home and abroad, as well as a wide variety of exposure to the Arts and sports activities. All schools were desirous to see their students grow intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, socially and physically to the glory of God.

ii. Question #4: Is your classroom a community of learners?

As we look at the combined answers to the last two questions, we can learn some more valuable tools of pedagogy and methodology to help convey Biblical truths to students in Christian schools:

From the answer on the ACS website we learn that the entire school community “commits to living faithfully with the Lord, personally and communally.” Phrases such as ‘servanthood’ ‘mentorship’, ‘leadership development’ and ‘affirming mutual uniqueness’ were used to describe the school’s methods of teaching the students body. Teachers interviewed mentioned communal discussions and cooperative learning where students shared their learning with one another in Bible classes. Open-ended assignments were given to foster class discussions in order to bring out the truths of God’s Word. Not only did students work communally, so did the teachers. Both Abbotsford Christian and MEI mentioned the word ‘celebrate’ when discussing learning and equipping students. Teacher GK allowed for student generated curriculum. Pacific Academy describes the school as a “community reflecting Christ working in our lives” while Zion Lutheran mentioned the strong bond of community between the school and the home: “Let

us jointly strive to help your child...” At Pacific Academy, the elementary principal stressed the fact that teachers were “highly in favor of communal learning, driven by the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of teachers and students alike.” As we look at the Imago Dei view of the student and the desire for communal interaction in the teaching and learning process we can distil some best practice from these schools in how to teach and reach the child in the transmission of Biblical truths.

### iii. Christian Pedagogy: How to Teach the Child

“Integrating faith with the subject matter is a significant part of excellent Christian teaching, but equally important is considering how pedagogy and the learning process are affected by Christian faith and spirituality.”<sup>394</sup> How we teach students matters and what they learn is largely due to how we teach them.

#### a. Know Your Students

In light of the summary charts above, how do we teach students such as these? Imago Dei means that students can be creative; “they can be inventors, intuitive learners, intellectuals with a bent for theory or implementers who get to a task and immediately wish to put learning into practice.”<sup>395</sup> Some students may be a combination of all of the above. Each will have a different learning style, whether that be visual, auditory, kinesthetic or a variation of all three styles or a combination of two. Students can perceptually experience knowledge; they can

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<sup>394</sup> David Smith. “Excellent Teaching” in *The Christian School Teacher*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: CSI Publications, Vol. 5 No. 3, Spring 2005), p.8.

<sup>395</sup> B. McCarthy in *Walking with God in the Classroom*. H. VanBrummelen. (Seattle, WA.: Alta Vista College Press, 1998), p.106.

learn by doing, by experience, by intuition, by methods of reasoning, by memory and by what is known to them a priori.<sup>396</sup> Therefore it is incumbent upon teachers to know their students intimately. Of course it will not be possible to accommodate all students in the same lesson, but allowances must be made for these preferences and needs during the Bible lessons. Plans and groupings must be made to accommodate and celebrate these gifts. That is why small group work is so vital, especially when teachers are able to vary their groupings with a variety of learners who have different styles of learning and unique gifts. Each student, too, will have varying emotional and social needs. Developmental stages of students as well as family backgrounds come into play as well. As all work and learn together, the strong are to help the weak; the ones with more knowledge and insight are to share their insights with those less endowed, all with a view to honoring Christ in their learning, and all with the purpose of serving one another with the gifts they have received. Since all learn at different rates and all have varying needs, it is incumbent upon the teacher to search out these learning styles and create groups of students that can help and complement one another in their learning. "Learning is enhanced when students are rigorously involved in meaningful activities using their gifts and abilities in the context of community, sharing their discoveries and their learning with others."<sup>397</sup> Pedagogy and methodology must be geared to the variables in the class.

In order to foster the importance of accountability and responsibility in students' learning, skilful teachers need to build into their lessons the opportunity

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<sup>396</sup> David A. Jacobson. "Philosophy and Knowledge" in *Philosophy in Classroom Teaching: Bridging the Gap*. (Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Merrill Publishing Company, 1999), pp. 39-41.

<sup>397</sup> H. VanBrummelen. *Walking with God in the Classroom*. (Seattle, WA.: Alta Vista Press, 1998), p.35.

for students to take charge of their own work as well. Giving them choices as to which tasks they would like to perform or which group they would like to belong to for certain projects and presentations in the Bible lesson is crucial to develop a students' own sense of worth and accomplishment. As teachers observe their students interact, take charge of their own work or discover new concepts, lots of encouragement comments will be in order. "Well done!" "Good observations!" "Excellent group work!" for work well done, are goads to spur students on to do more of the same or move on to higher levels. Servanthood should also be praised as students interact with one another in respectful and loving ways as they go about their studies. By knowing their students, Christian teachers can cause them to grow, explore, and celebrate in ways that honor their own personhood as they begin to learn what it means to glorify God in all (subject) areas of life, thus helping them to integrate their faith and learning.

#### b. How to Draw Them In

I talked to one Christian teacher just recently who said she uses the 'Hook, Look, Took and Book' method to draw her students in to the Bible lesson. I queried her about this method and she explained:

By 'hook' I mean an exciting prop (a helium balloon going up, chocolate on my face, a loud noise referring to my story, a story from my life, a video clip, to cite some examples), to get their attention. By 'look' I mean that their attention is now on me and they are ready to look at what I am trying to teach them; by 'took' I want them to buy into what I have to say and by 'book' I refer them to the Bible.

In other words she had her students figured out; she often taught large groups and she had her ways of drawing them in. Her little rhyme brought me back to the textbook “Steeping Stones to Curriculum” where the four phases of learning are discussed. First teachers set the stage (the anticipatory set) by providing the setting, posing problems, drawing out experiential knowledge or leading students into the lesson to motivate them to learn. Second, teachers disclose what it is they are trying to teach (disclosure stage). Students then are called to collect information, integrate what they are learning with what they already know, conceptualize, draw inferences or attempt to build new views of knowledge. Then teachers reformulate by coaching their students, asking them questions, providing reinforcement and practice activities, while students in turn try to solve simple problems related to the new concepts. The final phase is the transcendence stage where teachers provide opportunities and choices so that students can make personal responses, choices and commitments to put their learning into practice.<sup>398</sup> This would be a pedagogical template teachers could keep in mind when teaching their Bible lessons.

The transcendence stage is crucial in Christian education. Each of the schools has tried to recognize this, as evidenced by the host of service opportunities offered both in school and out. The desire of parents and teachers is to see their students as responsible disciples of Jesus Christ, so translating faith into action is of great importance. Since children often learn best by doing, skilful teachers will always be alert to linking theory with practice.

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<sup>398</sup> H. Van Brummelen. *Steeping Stones to Curriculum*. (Seattle, WA.: Alta Vista Press, 1994), p.185.

c. Example from the Book of Jonah<sup>399</sup>

In teaching the book of Jonah to grade 5 students, for example, teachers could set the stage by having the entire back wall covered by blue, green, black and yellow paper (in the appropriate places of course): the blue for the sky, the green for the sea, the black for the city of Nineveh and the yellow for the desert area outside the city. As soon as they enter the class and it is time for the Bible lesson, the teacher can draw their attention to the beginnings of this huge mural to depict the story of Jonah (setting the stage). Then s/he could begin by telling the story of Jonah from memory, using voice modulations to imitate the characters and perhaps wearing a robe to impersonate Jonah. After the story has been told, four students could read it in turn, chapter by chapter, the others following along in the Bible (disclosure). The reformulation stage could include asking students to describe the various characters in the book, asking students personal questions about Jonah's actions to relate his experiences to their own lives, or asking them to tell the story to one another, a section for each student. The transcendence stage could be the actual 'building' of the mural to put the story firmly into their minds, showing that by their art work, planning the parts of the mural or organizing the people in their own groups for specific tasks they have learned the contents of the book of Jonah. Grouping could be done by the teacher or students could be permitted to group themselves, provided they are mature enough to choose a capable leader. In this way, visual, aural and tactical learners have the opportunity to excel in their special gifting. Their

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<sup>399</sup> Subsequent lesson ideas on teaching this book are included on pages 288-292 of this thesis.

'Imago Dei' has been respected as they listen, creatively put the project into practice according to their respective abilities and interact with their fellow students in community. In this way, too, faith beliefs about the student, wise pedagogy and ways of allowing students to put these beliefs into practice can enhance the learning process and allow teachers to integrate their faith beliefs about the students as they go about their daily teaching. "Whenever we teach, we teach not only the explicit content of our lesson but also, through all of the processes that we introduce into the classroom, an implicit view of what learners are and what it is to teach them."<sup>400</sup>

#### d. The Classroom Atmosphere

Since learning is both personal and communal teachers must present the Bible lessons in such a way that students can be touched as individuals and also learn from one another to put new knowledge into practice in life changing ways. Life in this microcosm of learning demands a patient process of listening, observing, studying and acting together in new and fresh ways. When there is an atmosphere of acceptance, students are willing to take risks, try new ideas and see what works for them. Assignments must be geared to help students grow in personal ways, so they can put their knowledge into practice in the community of the classroom and out into their world. They learn to incarnate the Word, just as their teacher has modeled it for them. Such a classroom atmosphere is truly a community of shalom where each lives for the other and all live for God. Yes, there will be sin, broken relationships, jealousy, anger—in short all the sins it is

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<sup>400</sup> David Smith. "Excellent Teaching" in *The Christian School Teacher*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: CSI Publications, Vol. 6, No. 3, Spring 2005), p. 11.

possible for mankind to commit---but there is hope; it is incumbent upon the teacher to facilitate healing, encourage confession and forgiveness and urge students to persevere with one another, just as Christ did for His people, being their Hope. That is why each classroom community needs to be “a place where students feel safe...where they feel supported, and where every individual is honored and where a sense of interdependence is built into the culture.”<sup>401</sup>

In this classroom atmosphere, the opinions and knowledge of the students will be considered as well. If we view them as Imago Dei, beings upon whom God has conferred His love, we might consult them about what they would like to learn, how they feel the learning process can be enhanced and what they think would be profitable for them, just as teacher GK from MEI did when he asked his students which Bible books they would like to learn more about and which worldview topics they were most interested in. As one educational researcher noted: “There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire [educational] system without consulting at any point those it is ostensibly designed to serve.”<sup>402</sup> We teach them in community, we address their varying learning styles, we honor their creative abilities and we provide a safe place for them to express their views, their faith and their questions. Our pedagogy embodies our Imago Dei view of the student.

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<sup>401</sup> David A Levine. *Building Classroom Communities* (Bloomington, IN.: National Education Service, 2003), p. 1

<sup>402</sup> Alison Cook-Sather. “Authorizing Students” Perspectives: Toward Trust, Dialogue, and Change in Education” in *Educational Researcher* (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association, Vo. 31, No. 4, May 2002), p. 3.

## 5. Blending Methodology: How to reach the child

### i. Storytelling

Each teacher interviewed and each textbook surveyed stressed story telling as a means to convey the stories of the Bible. Teachers of primary students especially told the biblical stories so that the Word could be heard and related to their students' prior experiences, both in their personal lives and in their previous knowledge of biblical truth. Jesus Himself used parables, scenes from everyday life and personal illustrations as He showed His disciples "how it's done." As they use their curriculum materials and textbooks, it would be wise to introduce each Bible story by means of storytelling. In fact, I recommend story telling not only for the primary grades, but throughout grades K-12, first by the teacher and then by the students (or the other way around, depending how the lesson is introduced). Scriptural narratives can then be looked at from three perspectives: the rhetorical moves, the events and situations, and 'the telling' by teacher and students.<sup>403</sup> Each grade could 'camp' around a book or section of the Bible, hear the story/pericope read from a good translation or from different translations and maybe even in a variety of languages, and then each story should also be told, since transmission of the Scriptures originally was by word of mouth: "Storytelling is powerful because it has the ability to touch human beings at the most personal level."<sup>404</sup> Since God's Word came and comes to us by auditory means first, telling the Bible story enhances learning of God's Word in the following ways:

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<sup>403</sup> Carola Canle. "An Anatomy of Narrative Curricula" in *Educational Researcher*. (Washington, DC: American Education Research Association, Vol. 32, No. 3, April 2003), p.5.

<sup>404</sup> Mark Miller. *Experiential Storytelling: (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2003), p.33.

- a. The teacher/student must thoroughly know the story from the Word before s/he can tell it without using notes.
- b. By studying certain passages and biblical stories in such a way as to be able to tell them, the teacher/student will have searched the Scriptures, meditated upon it and given the Holy Spirit time to work through their own lives, thus receiving new truths. As teachers wrestle and pray about how to present passages to the students, they will realize their dependence upon the Holy Spirit.
- c. After modeling this type of study and telling to the students, teachers will not only grow themselves, but students will also learn how it is done.
- d. Students can then re-tell the stories to their groups. Afterwards, they can illustrate the stories, dramatize them, do related exercises, or memorize key passages.
- e. This in turn will lead to involvement of the parents, since students can be asked to tell the stories to their parents or ask them to help with memorization of key passages. Another community of learners has been involved.
- f. As students interact with the Word, questions can be asked—either individually or in groups—and all can go back to the Scriptures to see what God has said. The teacher, too, must constantly be encouraged to ask open-ended questions, so that students will be able to give their insights and discoveries without fear of giving wrong answers.

- g. Any exercises that are assigned from textbooks or made by the teacher should come directly from the Bible book being studied: questions of geography, context, content, history, language, figures of speech, literary forms, etc.
- h. Study helps should be readily available in the classroom; in fact the classroom should be a rich learning environment as has already been stated on p. 236.
- i. After students have thoroughly investigated a story, pericope or book, they can again be asked to retell it in their own words, comparing their final interaction with the text to their first interaction with it, thus discovering how much they have learned.
- j. Students should be encouraged to keep a journal, showing their own interaction with the passages studied. By reading their journal entries from the first day of study of a particular Bible book to the day they complete this book, they can realize their progress in how they understand the text.
- k. All this study and interaction with God's Word can be done with great hope and joy, since teachers in Christian schools believe that God's Word does not return to Him void, but it will accomplish what He pleases through the work of the Holy Spirit.

What are the major goals, then of telling the Biblical story? This is the answer Dennis Dewey, biblical story teller by profession, gives:

1. to experience the power of biblical story telling.
2. to make connections between lifestory and biblical story.
3. to consider the implications of the Bible's rootage in oral culture.

4. to reflect on the spirituality of having the stories by heart.
5. to learn some techniques for internalizing the telling of Biblical stories.
6. to discover storytelling gifts and develop confidence in storytelling skills.
7. to begin to internalize and to practice the telling of an actual biblical story.<sup>405</sup>

Once the story has been told, teachers should be open to telling it again and again; primary students, especially, like to hear the same stories over and over. Teachers should be constantly open to the students' self expression in relation to the biblical stories. They will be meditating on the Word of God as they internalize the story to re-tell it to the others in the class.

After the hearing, comes the reading, studying, memorizing and mediating. And so teacher and student alike become hearers and doers of the Word.

I see the biblical story as a unity, beginning with Genesis and going to Revelation. Within this book, the stories of individual lives, events and prophecies should be studied and told orally as well as read from the printed page in order to give a full range of interaction with the biblical text. When the Bible story is told, the community of listeners hears how God has dealt with His people in the past and the Holy Spirit can apply the events, decisions, consequences and any other happenings in the story to the lives of students and teachers alike in His sovereign way. Christian teachers know that when students find themselves identifying with the characters in the biblical story, they will be drawn into it by the power of the Holy Spirit, thus integrating faith and learning. As Mark Miller, student of biblical storytelling sums it up:

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<sup>405</sup> [www.dennisdewey.org](http://www.dennisdewey.org)

We were created with a curiosity, a complexity, and a need for meaning. That longing to understand the bigger questions is a deep need that cannot be filled with mere facts. God did not choose to reveal a list of facts to us. The Old Testament was given to humanity in the form of narratives and poetry. Even the writing of the law took place in the midst of the deeply compelling story of God redeeming his chosen people.<sup>406</sup>

The following Jewish teaching story sums it up so very well:

Truth, naked and cold, had been turned away from every door in the village. Her nakedness frightened the people. When Parable found her, she was huddled in a corner, shivering and hungry. Taking pity on her, Parable gathered her up and took her home. There, she dressed Truth in story, warmed her and sent her out again. Clothed in story, Truth knocked again at the villagers' doors and was readily welcomed into the people's houses. They invited her to eat at their table and warm herself by their fire.<sup>407</sup>

I believe narratives in Scripture should be studied as narratives, taking into account the distinctives of Hebrew narrative (such as the narrator, the scenes and the characters and their dialogues). Repetition, parallelism of plot (such as those in the book of Jonah for example), and inclusios should be noted. Poetry too, should be studied in light of all the features of Hebrew poetry: the various types of parallelisms, repetition, question and answer style, and the many figures of speech. Psalms should be memorized and sung. The beauty of the poetic style should be highlighted with the students. The types of Psalms should be brought out as well as why they were sung. For example, a lament such as Psalm 13 should be read out loud several times by student and teacher alike. The four "how long" questions should be analyzed, to show how they cover the problems

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<sup>406</sup> Mark Miller. *Experiential Storytelling: (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 2003), p.33.

<sup>407</sup> Mark Miller. *Experiential Storytelling: (Re)Discovering Narrative to Communicate God's Message*, p.29.

of our entire life. The fact that Hebrew poetry often places the theme in the centre of a psalm should be noted: "Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death." In other words, David prays for a new perspective or else he will die. The three distinct sections of the Psalm demonstrate the flow from problem to prayer to praise. The final praise of God's salvation made known because of His unfailing love (*hesed*) should bring both teacher and student to sing out in praise to God.<sup>408</sup> Scripture sections that cannot be told as story should be read. (For primary children, some sections need to be left out and just the story highlights need to be told: e.g. Levitical rules or laws from Deuteronomy). That is how most Bible story textbooks cover the Bible books. Even genealogies can be very interesting (see especially Matthew 1:1-16 or Luke 3:23ff) if students were to be assigned a study of the lives of each of the characters mentioned. Singing, reading and telling the Biblical story will greatly enhance students' knowledge and learning of Scripture. Each time, whether narrative, poetry or prose, students should be exposed to the oral as well as the written message.

## ii. Follow the order of the Canon

At some point in their elementary career, students should have gained an overview of the entire 'Heilsgeschichte.'<sup>409</sup> We do not want to give them snippets and bytes of knowledge about Scripture, but a view of the unity of God's plan throughout history. With this in view, I recommend that the primary grades study

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<sup>408</sup> *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 5*. Frank Gaebelin, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), pp.139-142.

<sup>409</sup> 'Canon' in this thesis refers to the Christian canon as following the Septuagint. The Hebrew canon could be introduced in grades 11 and 12.

the Old Testament highlights in canonical order, along with the major stories about Christ and those told by Christ in the four gospels. I would like to see the intermediate students start to camp around books of the Bible as much as possible, still with a view to its canonical order. As much time should be devoted to the Old or First Testament as to the New, so that students constantly get the big picture. This is what teachers in the various Christian schools stressed as well.

Jesus, when speaking to Luke and Cleophas on the way to Emmaus, categorized the Old Testament as the Torah, the prophets and the writings. (Luke 24:44) Each grouping has different methodologies of presenting the truths of God's Word: the thundering of the law, the reminders of the prophets as to the blessings and the curses, and the winsome instruction of the wisdom literature, which includes the prayers and praises of the Psalms, the proverbs, the books of Job, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. For a balanced view of Scripture, a true Scriptural education, it is necessary to "maintain the balance or tension between Torah, Prophets and Writings."<sup>410</sup> With this in mind, high school students might be encouraged to study the Hebrew canon and look at the Torah, the prophets and the writings, in that order.

Students should be left with a sense of God's glory in the created world, His perfections in the written word, and His love in the Incarnate Word, Christ, the Word made flesh. "The biblical message and our biblical method are closely related. But the method is not the message. Rather our biblical methods ought to

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<sup>410</sup> D. Smith, "The Bible and Education: Ways of Construing the Relationship" in *Journal of Education and Christian Belief*. (St. Albans, UK: Association of Christian Teachers, Vol. 5:2/ Autumn 2001), p.130.

be shaped by the biblical message and be expressive of it.”<sup>411</sup> The shape of the canon and the telling of the biblical story are two ways in which teachers can tailor their method to the message of Scripture, thus integrating faith and teaching.

### iii. Group Work and Individual Work

As mentioned above and by gleaning comments from the teachers and web sites, we realize that students learn a great deal by interacting with one another in community. As one 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher put it:

During activities in my classroom, some students learn far more from other members in their group than they do from me. Exceptional students reinforce their own learning by explaining facts and concepts to other group members. Academically challenged students benefit from hearing information described by their peers, who use readily understandable language.<sup>412</sup>

Not only that, but “real life requires effective groups skills . . . these skills are often neglected during a students’ educational career.”<sup>413</sup> Biblical principles (such as love and respecting one’s neighbor, honoring fellow students with our words, encouraging them instead of belittling them or praying for our fellow students instead of gossiping about them) can best be modeled in small groups. The study of God’s Word is enhanced when students share their knowledge in loving ways, explain key concepts to one another, or re-tell the story as accurately as possible according to the text. In this collaborative way of learning,

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<sup>411</sup> Gordon Spykman. “Moralism and the Bible” in *The Story of God and His People* (Langley, BC: Society of Christian Schools in BC, 1995), p.24.

<sup>412</sup> T. Eimer. “Group Work” in *The Christian Teacher*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Schools International, Winter 2005), p.14.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

the gifts of each student come into play; strengths and weaknesses can be combined to bring out one unified whole, thus displaying the body of Christ.

Jesus modeled this group teaching and learning as He trained His disciples. He chose a motley group of twelve, instructed them personally by way of precept, story and example, and then sent them out in small groups to put into practice what they had learned.

Of course, not all study of Scripture should be done communally. Individual learning must also occur, but always with a view to incarnate the truths learned within the community so the classroom becomes a place where students live for one another because they live for their God. Teacher and student become “co-inquirers and co-learners, each with their own crucial expertise contributing to the process.”<sup>414</sup> They become truly *Imago Dei* as they interact as the Trinity, loving one another, serving one another, praying for one another, living for one another. They grow together as they put the truths into practice. This is the integration of faith, teaching and learning.

## 6. Assessment

Bible study should include assessment,<sup>415</sup> but only with a view to correction and presenting more truth so that students learn and grow in grace. Percentages and letter grades are not the best or only way to evaluate students, certainly not in the primary grades. Rather, I would use rubrics, using descriptors of each of the tasks and sub-tasks of assignments given: has the student

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<sup>414</sup> Carola Canle. “An Anatomy of Narrative Curricula” in *Educational Researcher* (Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association: Vol. 32, No. 3, April 2003), p.4.

<sup>415</sup> For examples of Assessment on the book of Jonah, see Appendix A.

mastered these? is improvement needed? are there concepts that need to be clarified? The assessment tools should be as much for the teacher as for the student; the teacher may need to go over certain material to clarify, explain in more detail or illustrate more exactly so that each student will discover in what areas his/her knowledge is deficient or sufficient.

The formation of the child into the image of Christ is the teachers' greatest desire and this cannot be measured by letter grades. The goal of assessment on the part of the teacher ought to be formative: how can this student grow? The purpose of assessment from the students' perspective ought to be, "How does assessment equip me for learning and growing more?" As Richard Edlin, Australian Christian educator asserts:

Formative evaluation occurs often informally during the learning sequence. It allows teachers to devise and revise instructional patterns. It gives teachers checkpoints concerning the effectiveness of their teaching and enables them to re-prioritize teaching processes to better meet the changing learning needs of their students.<sup>416</sup>

If we make the study of Bible a fear-filled activity that will generate some marks for the teacher, the student or the parents, we have defeated our purpose for the study of God's Word. If we make it a drudgery, students will not grow and learn. If we treat the subject as boring or irrelevant, how do we expect our students to have other attitudes?

Assessment for learning, therefore, should always have the formation of the student in view. There should be clear learning goals when each book of the

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<sup>416</sup> Richard Edlin. *The Cause of Christian Education*. (Adelaide, South Australia: Openbook Publishers, 1999), p.178.

Bible is studied. Students need to be well informed of the goals: “Research unquestionably supports the importance of feedback to specific learning goals.”<sup>417</sup> This requires effective communication on the part of the teacher: if the teacher is unclear about goals, the student will gain an even fuzzier idea of what is required. Students should be well aware of the over-arching goal of the teacher, viz. that the student grows in grace and in the knowledge of his/her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Students should also be aware of the unit goals. If students are studying the book of Jonah, for example, a variety of exercises, discussion groups, drama and story telling activities (as well as group and individual learning) should be assessed.

Evaluation should be multi-faceted: “Teachers should use a multitude of measures in order to gather information on what students are understanding, so they can differentiate for re-teaching or enrichment.”<sup>418</sup> The teacher should keep checklists to assess certain skills, including social and emotional growth. The whole child should be addressed. Anecdotal comments are very valuable; discussion with students both in groups and individually can give teachers a good overall picture of the learning that has taken place. Students can complete portfolios on each Bible book studied, so they can assess their own learning and so the teacher, too, can see what progress has been made. Again, if the teacher is not passionate about the study, how will his/her students enjoy their learning? If the teacher is merely after a ranking of the students, or an assessment based

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<sup>417</sup> Robert J. Marzano. *Transforming Classroom Grading* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000), p.23.

<sup>418</sup> Paul D. Casey. “Beyond Tests and Quizzes: Assessments that Matter” in *The Christian School Teacher*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian School International. Vol. 5, No. 2, Winter 2004), pp. 24-26.

on the achievement of the entire class, the purpose of formative assessment has been defeated.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the classroom can also be quenched if students are in Bible class merely to achieve a grade, or even focused only on getting a good mark. Jesus taught us this in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30): it was not about how much each person earned when given the talents, but about how much effort s/he put out. Discovering how much knowledge and depth of insight students have gained from their study of the Bible can be gauged only “when we desist from transferring secular evaluation patterns into our schools and when we help our students, their families and society to value the worth of a job well done that recognizes the biblical pattern of assessing how well each of our students has used the talents that God has given to him or her individually.”<sup>419</sup>

It is also clear that “assessment for learning must actively involve students.”<sup>420</sup> If we view our students as *Imago Dei*, they should have a part in assessing their own learning as well. Typically, students are not adequately informed of their own learning. That information usually goes to parents, teachers and other professionals. However, if student and teacher alike are in community and learn together—sharing gifts for the benefit of all—students themselves are actively involved in their learning. Similarly, they should be involved in the assessment of the learning, both in community and individually. This can be done at the end of projects when students and teacher discuss and review what they

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<sup>419</sup>R. Edlin. *The Cause of Christian Education*, p.179.

<sup>420</sup> Stephen Chappuis, Richard Stiggins, Judith Arter, and Jan Chappuis. *Assessment For Learning* (Portland, OR: Assessment Training Institute, 2004), p.35.

have learned together from the Bible; it can be done by individual journaling, where students write down their own thoughts and reactions to the text. It can be done anecdotally, as teachers quietly watch students interact. Evaluation should be conducted for group work and individual progress. After group projects, the students themselves will debrief, indicating what they thought went well, commenting on what areas needed improvement, and thanking one another for a job well done.

I have seen parents, teacher and student meeting together in student-led conferences for assessment purposes, all three working as one team, trying to learn more about one another, praising one another, expressing appreciation and love for one another and also admonishing one another in love if that is necessary, so that assessment and feedback also take place in community. In this way, we see students benefiting from balancing assessment of learning with assessment for learning.

To sum up then, “the evaluation procedures promote student and teacher growth. As such, there is a wide range involving formative assessment by the teacher, self-and peer-evaluation, and reflection on the degree to which teachers and students attain pre-set teaching and learning goals.”<sup>421</sup> As we teach Bible, we will be evaluating our students not principally to assess their intellectual progress, but to see if they have grown spiritually, emotionally, socially, and physically as well. We saw this emphasis especially on the Zion Lutheran website, even though all schools stressed the development of the whole child.

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<sup>421</sup> Harro VanBrummelen. *Steppingstones to Curriculum*, p.52.

The integration of faith and learning will thus be enhanced through the assessment process as well.

## **II. Blending Faith Beliefs to Improve Integration of Faith and Learning**

In the following sections,<sup>422</sup> I plan to distil what I see to be the best practice in faith beliefs from each of the four streams of Bible teaching in these Christian Schools of British Columbia (the Calvinistic or Reformed, the Mennonite, the Lutheran, and the Pentecostal) with attention to the history and present practice of each so that the hermeneutic of interpreting God's Word can be incarnational, Trinitarian, communal and Spirit driven—combining the strengths of all four groups. From each of these streams I wish to extract several hermeneutical frameworks or keys to aid teacher and student alike in unlocking the power of the Scriptures. By distilling the best practices of faith beliefs from each stream, I want to demonstrate not only how faith and learning interact in the teaching of Bible, but how faith actually grows and matures when the principles of God's Word are actively learned and taught as the Bible is studied in the communities of our classrooms. I will again examine four of the interview questions: the Bible itself and how it is perceived or used in the classroom, whether the Bible is interpreted in community, how the teachers view the students (this 'viewing' will be interspersed throughout each section) and finally, what each of these streams deemed to be the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Bible. In these next sections, I would like to bring some of these hermeneutical emphases together, so that as teachers we can learn from each stream and thus enhance our

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<sup>422</sup> All faith beliefs of each of the four groups will be discussed within the parameters of their confessions, textbooks and teacher comments discussed in the previous two chapters.

understanding of God's Word in order to ameliorate the integration of our faith and learning in our daily teaching and living. By "faith" I mean a life of faith (as opposed to a body of doctrines) and by "learning" I mean a process of learning (as opposed to a body of knowledge).<sup>423</sup> By integration, I mean an interpenetration, intertwining and interweaving of faith and learning so that the warp and woof of faith and learning become part of the daily fabric of living, teaching and learning.

## 1. Blending Faith Beliefs about the Bible

The Bible is God's most powerful missionary: it never goes on furlough and it never needs a rest.<sup>424</sup>

### i. Introductory Comments

This section will deal with how each of the four streams actually views the Bible. All the teachers I interviewed, without exception, saw the Bible as the inerrant, inspired and infallible word of God. (These were the words used in all the doctrinal statements of each of the four groups. The Lutherans do not have an actual article devoted to this topic, but go by Luther's statements and the Book of Concord.)<sup>425</sup> Each of the four interpreted and treated the Word somewhat differently, but all based their life, faith and practice on the Spirit-breathed

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<sup>423</sup> Clarence Joldersma. "Faith/Learning Integration: A Substantive Example That Transcends Sloganeering" in *Journal of Research on Christian Education* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, Vol. 5, No. 1, Spring 1996), p.67

<sup>424</sup> Cameron Townsend, founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators

<sup>425</sup> G.P. Duffield & N.M. Van Cleave. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. p.11; *The Dordt Confession of Faith*, Articles III-VII; *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, Article 4; Preface to the *Book of Concord*, Kolb & Wengert, p.10.)

Scriptures. I did not quiz them about individual passages; when poetry is read (such as the Psalms) it is taken as poetry; when history is studied, it is taken as historical truth; when symbolism is part of a passage, it is understood as symbol (e.g. The Lord is my shepherd). In the broad picture of things teachers would take each statement or passage in its normal linguistic sense, coupled with “at least a measure of that most important of hermeneutical skills—common sense.”<sup>426</sup> (I found no attempt to demythologize the Bible or to distil the events of Jesus’ life that purportedly happened in history from the accounts in the gospels, for example.) Each teacher appeared to believe the Bible as the Word of God and experienced it as being absolutely necessary for faith and practice. One teacher stressed that “the Bible is alive; in this school we just try not to kill it.” Others, especially in the Pentecostal stream, were very passionate about God’s Word; they clearly demonstrated their love for the Bible and their desire that each student would love it because it is God’s Word. Still others (found especially in the Calvinistic stream) viewed the Bible more as history that needed to be learned: “You can’t build a house without bricks” as teacher PT stressed. Consequently, it was deemed that students need to memorize, study, and imbibe the objective truths of the Bible.

Each stream has different emphases when studying the Bible. Generally speaking, the Reformed teachers study the Scriptures from a historical redemptive perspective. These Calvinistic teachers, especially those of the Christian Reformed persuasion, brought out the cultural mandate and the creation story very strongly: each student has gifts that need to be developed for

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<sup>426</sup> G. Fee and D. Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for all It’s Worth*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Zondervan Publishing House, 2003), p.115.

the glory of God and all of creation must be redeemed for God, as Abraham Kuyper stressed about one hundred years earlier. The Mennonites place greater emphasis on the redemptive, communal aspect, trying to lead students to Christ through the Bible or stressing the moral aspect of Scripture so that students would lead good Christian lives. The Pentecostal branch strongly brought out the power of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the spiritual gifts in both students and teachers. The Lutheran teachers elicited the Christ-centeredness of Scripture, seeing Christ in the entire Old Testament narrative and placing Him at the centre of the Word. Each group has factors which influence their interpretation of Scripture: faith commitments, historical backgrounds, frameworks of understanding, worldview and how knowledge is perceived within specific cultural-historical frameworks. Each group has strengths and weaknesses as it interprets and learns the Word.

## ii. Some Interpretative Frameworks to Enhance Integration

### a. Viewing the Scriptures through the Lens of Christ

In studying the Scriptures, it seems to me that gaining a more holistic picture of the Word by showing Christ as the centre piece would enhance the students' ability to see the big picture. This Christ-centered hermeneutical key was stressed especially by Martin Luther. He wrote many commentaries (sermons) going through entire books or letters, but always with a Christo-centric perspective. Here are a few quotes Luther took from the Psalms to illustrate that they speak of Christ:

In Ps. 40:12 we read: 'My iniquities have overtaken Me.' In Ps. 41:4: I said: 'O Lord be gracious to Me; heal Me for I have sinned against Thee!' and in Ps. 69:5: 'O God, Thou knowest My folly; the wrongs I

have done are not hidden from Thee.’ In these Psalms, the Holy Spirit is speaking in the person of Christ and testifying in clear words that He has sinned or has sins. These testimonies of the Psalms are not the words of an innocent one; they are the words of the suffering Christ.<sup>427</sup>

Luther saw the entire Scripture pointing to Christ alone: “Holy Scripture has more to say about the Son than about the Father because the entire Scripture exists for the sake of the Son. In the Old Testament, too, there are more testimonies to the Son than to the Father.”<sup>428</sup>

Luther viewed reading Moses and the prophets “for the sake of the promises about Christ,”<sup>429</sup> and “for the beautiful examples of faith of love, and of the cross, as shown in the fathers, Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and all the rest. From them we should learn to trust in God and love him.”<sup>430</sup> In his *Preface to the Old Testament*, Luther emphasized this once again: “What is the New Testament but a public preaching and proclamation of Christ, set forth through the sayings of the Old Testament and fulfilled through Christ?”<sup>431</sup> This perspective is well illustrated in a grade five Lutheran Bible textbook entitled *God’s Chosen People*: “When we have finished reading the Old Testament, we know a great deal about Jesus.”<sup>432</sup> When describing the Bible this textbook states, “Jesus Christ is in every piece of the Bible . . . from beginning to

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<sup>427</sup> M. Luther. *Lectures on Galatians*, Chapters 1-4. Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. (Saint Louis, MI: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p.279.

<sup>428</sup> E. M. Plass. *What Luther Says: An Anthology* (Saint Louis, MI: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), pp.69, 70.

<sup>429</sup> Martin Luther. *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings* Timothy F. Lull, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1989), p.147.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147.

<sup>431</sup> Martin Luther. “Preface to the Old Testament” in *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings* T. F. Lull, ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1989), p.119.

<sup>432</sup> Olaf and Fernanda Malmin. *God’s Chosen People* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1939), p.1.

end we can find Jesus in the Old Testament.”<sup>433</sup> As we look through this textbook, it is indeed true: the messianic line is traced from Adam to Ezra. The final page concludes with a prayer: “We thank Thee, our Father, that Thou hast kept Thy promise and hast sent a Savior into the world. We thank Thee, Lord Jesus, that Thou art our Savior.”<sup>434</sup>

For Luther, God reveals Himself most clearly in the incarnation: “Since the beginning this Word (John 1:1) has always spoken through the mouths of the patriarchs and prophets down to the time of John the Baptist.”<sup>435</sup> Luther saw the Word becoming flesh as the centre piece of Scripture: the Old Testament foretold this Christ event and the New Testament explains how it was fulfilled. In the Genesis account, God is presented as speaking the creation into existence; in John’s gospel account God speaks salvation into existence through His Son, who brings life and immortality to light. Jaroslav Pelikan writes: “Luther lived by the Word of God; he lived for the Word of God. It is no mistake then, that interpreters of Luther take his doctrine of the Word of God as one of the most important single keys to his theology.”<sup>436</sup> From the Lutheran stream, then, teachers can incorporate a framework that when interpreting the Scriptures to children, they can point them to Christ in every book of the Bible; this will aid students in receiving a more holistic approach in their studying of the Scriptures.

This Christ-centered approach is also evident in the Mennonite teachings, as found in the Mennonite Confession of Faith: “Because Jesus Christ is the

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<sup>433</sup> Olaf and Fernanda Malmin. *God’s Chosen People*, p.26.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, p.138.

<sup>435</sup> *Luther’s Works: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*, Chapters 1-4, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. (Saint Louis, MI: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), p.37

<sup>436</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan. “Luther, the Expositor” in *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics* by Jens Zimmerman. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2004), p.51.

Word of God become flesh, Scripture as a whole has as its centre and fulfillment in Him.”<sup>437</sup> The Mennonite confession goes on to say that “the interpretation of Scripture is in harmony with Jesus Christ, in the sense that his life, teachings, death and resurrection are essential to understanding the Bible as a whole.”<sup>438</sup> In other words, “Christ is the key to understanding the Bible.”<sup>439</sup> I did not find this emphasis in the three forms of unity of the Calvinistic schools, though as I understand it, they would assent to this perspective. Their doctrine of Scripture was concerned with inspiration, authority, canonicity and sufficiency of the Scriptures.<sup>440</sup> (In *The Story of God and His People*, Rachelle Wiersma and her team showed how Old Testament passages pointed to Christ—see p. 68.) Using this hermeneutical key, teachers can point their students to Jesus Christ as fulfilling the Scriptures and thus give them a better understanding of God in Christ. This will enhance their reading and studying of the Bible and give them a more holistic picture of the Word. This key can ameliorate their ability to integrate their faith with what they have learned about Christ so as to put it into practice, as we will see in the following section.

#### b. An Incarnational and Transformational Approach

As teachers guide their students into the truths of the Bible, they encounter the divine Person, Jesus Christ, who incarnates the Word of God. “Christ gives

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<sup>437</sup> Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1995), p.21.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>439</sup> *Yearbook: Minutes of the 54<sup>th</sup> Session General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches* (Hillsboro, KN: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1978), p.26.

<sup>440</sup> The Psalter. *Confession of Faith*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1927), pp.25, 26.

us personhood; He gives us Himself.”<sup>441</sup> In the same way as Christ incarnated truth, He asks teachers and students to live out, flesh out, and embody His truth. Thus truth becomes a relationship with the living God. As imagers of God, students and teachers alike are called to live out God’s truth in Jesus Christ.

Truth becomes personal and “moves the educational process to a deeper level where we can engage others incarnationally and not just intellectually.”<sup>442</sup> And so faith and learning are integrated in the person of Christ in whom everything has meaning. Knowledge about the Word does not help if it is not put into practice, just as the book of James stresses that faith in Christ is dead if it is without the works wrought by Christ in heart and life. I see it as the teacher’s task to incarnate Christ before the students so that they see how it is done. Then the task of biblical exegesis will be complete; truth becomes transformational, it changes lives: “There is no biblical dichotomy between the word spoken and the word made visible in the lives of God’s people.”<sup>443</sup> Word and incarnation of the Word go hand in hand. God’s word can be “incarnated, fleshed out in actual ways of life”<sup>444</sup> and living. When this Word of Christ dwells richly in students and teachers alike, it changes lives totally. They become servants instead of masters, they exhibit the fruits of the Spirit and are enabled to put to death the sinful nature showing that they are a new creation in Christ. I found this emphasis especially strong in the *Educating with Heart and Mind*<sup>445</sup> handbook of the SCSBC schools.

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<sup>441</sup> Parker Palmer in *Faithful Learning and the Christian Scholarly Vocation*. Douglas V. Henry and Bob R. Agee, editors. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), p.82.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid., p.82.

<sup>443</sup> “A Response to Lausanne” in *Transforming Mission* by David J. Bosch (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), p.406.

<sup>444</sup> Brian Walsh and J. Richard Middleton. *The Transforming Vision*, p.17.

<sup>445</sup> R. Koole. *Educating with Heart and Mind*. (See p. 95 of this thesis.)

Listening to the comments from the teachers, we understand that this is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit: Spirit and incarnation belong together in the believer. When such teachers walk in the classroom, imagine what learning takes place! There is an atmosphere of shalom, a total wholeness of person as there was in the garden of Eden; students and teachers are at peace. Sin does enter but can be confronted, repented of, and forgiven so the atmosphere of shalom flowing from the Prince of Peace can be restored. Every truth is seen as God's truth; faith and learning are integrated. "La manière de vivre du sujet croyant, sa façon d'exprimer sa relation à Dieu et aux autres doivent trouver place dans le corpus théologique à étudier, à analyser, à interpréter."<sup>446</sup> (The believer's way of life, his way of expressing his relationship to God and others, must be fleshed out in the theological corpus that is being studied, analyzed and interpreted.) Teachers let their lives speak, as the old Quaker saying goes.

### c. Blending faith beliefs about God

A faith belief from the Calvinistic stream of viewing God's Word is Calvin's "hermeneutical circle."<sup>447</sup> We see this immediately upon reading Calvin's Institutes. We begin by knowing God, our Creator and only then can we truly know ourselves: "... knowledge of God and of ourselves is mutually connected.

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<sup>446</sup> Micheline Lague. "La Spiritualité Chrétienne: sa raison d'être dans une faculté de théologie" in *Theoforum of the Faculty of Theology, Saint Paul University* (Ottawa, ON: Saint Paul University Press, 33:2002, janvier), p.66. Translation mine.

<sup>447</sup> Jens Zimmerman. *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2003), p.30.

Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”<sup>448</sup>

Even though God reveals Himself to man through His creation, as its divine author/designer/governor/sustainer, God “supplemented these common proofs (of His Being) by the addition of His Word, as a surer and more direct means of discovering himself.”<sup>449</sup> Therefore, “[w]e must go, I say, to the Word, where the character of God, drawn from His works, is described accurately.”<sup>450</sup> It is through the Word of God, according to Calvin, that we can learn about our Creator and how we have been made in His image. God’s awesome creation is to inspire in us a fervent desire to know the Creator more, to adore Him and to come into relationship with Him.<sup>451</sup> This Word will also reveal to us who we are as sinners in Adam. We learn to see our own sinfulness in the light of God’s glory and perfection. This Calvin sees as he reads Psalm 40: “Many, O LORD my God are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us no one can recount to you (Psalm 40:5).” The Psalm goes on to say: “My sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head and my heart fails within me.” (v. 12)<sup>452</sup> In Calvin, a right view of God gives an accurate picture of man. This is the hermeneutical circle that Zimmerman talks about too: “Self knowledge mean[s] the interpretation of humanity in terms of God’s sovereignty and holiness with all [its] consequences for sinful man.”<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1972), p. 37.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.

<sup>452</sup> John Calvin. *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vol.2. J. Anderson, translator. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 108

<sup>453</sup> J. Zimmerman. *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics*, p.86.

According to Calvin, this knowledge of God and of ourselves will drive our relationship to God: the more we know God, the more we will hunger and thirst to learn more and drink more of His will. The more we see of our own sin, the more we are driven to God's forgiving fountain. If teachers and students view God's Word as the means to get to know their Fountainhead better, they will have great passion to study it, to search it, and to meditate on it. So we see then, in Calvin, that students of God's Word can fill the God-created vacuum in their lives by knowing God; they will have a right view of themselves at the same time. Knowledge of the triune God becomes incarnational and transformational because of a relationship to God in Christ. In this way, teachers and students in these schools will be confirmed in their faith belief that one of the aims of Bible teaching is transformation. Students will become active, vibrant disciples of Christ, as the web sites state. Students and teachers, through study of God and His Word, will become more mature, living transformed lives, becoming new creations in Christ Jesus.<sup>454</sup> Thus, again, their faith in God will be integrated with their learning about Him.

In using Calvin's hermeneutical circle, it is important that students see their sinful nature. Each of the four faith beliefs expressed a desire that their students come to Christ. They will only see their need of Christ if they become aware of their own sin nature and prideful independence which affects every area of their being, including their religious affections; they are not living up to their purpose of glorifying God with their lives and they do not even know it. "Calvin uses [the

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<sup>454</sup> The title of the CSI Bible textbooks series is: *The Story of God and His People*. The Reformed Creeds begin with God and then describe man's condition. See Canons of Dordt, Articles I to XVII.

term] 'sin' primarily to describe humanity's deviation from its original purpose of reflecting God's glory and communing with him. Calvin's conception of sin is thus not so much moralistic as ontological."<sup>455</sup> Students and teachers alike fail to live up to the purposes for which God has created them and they will realize this through a study of God by means of His Word and His creation, according to Calvin.

So how can a teacher or a student be transformed and become a new creation? Each of the four faith beliefs would affirm that this is possible only by a relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ. A renewed mind takes even every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. The proper study of God is God, to borrow from Alexander Pope: "The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father." This is how Charles H. Spurgeon opened his morning sermon on January 7, 1855.<sup>456</sup>

It is then incumbent upon teachers, to portray the Godhead in all its facets so that their students can grow in the knowledge of Him and themselves in order to live out that knowledge in their lives. Therefore, forcing students into moralistic patterns of behavior to become more godly, through workbooks and exercises that pull out of God's Word only what they should or should not do in terms of 'right' behavior, will not help students to become more like God because they are not pointed to the greatness and glory of God during those exercises.

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<sup>455</sup> J. Zimmerman. *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics*, p. 31.

<sup>456</sup> C.H. Spurgeon in *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 13.

From Luther, teachers can suggest a lens that sees Christ in every book of the Bible. Calvin intimates a hermeneutical circle, showing the need to know God first; only then can men and women receive a true picture of who they are, how they need a Savior and how they can be in a right relationship with their Creator. By combining these various lenses, these frameworks can broaden students' and teachers' approach to the Word, giving them greater scope to integrate faith and learning.

#### d. The Dual Origin of the Scriptures

When talking to the teachers in the Pentecostal schools, I see a wonderful passion about God's Word; they love the Bible and see its power precisely because it is "God's letter of love to us" (a phrase from one of the teachers). Even though they had textbooks that highlighted moralism, good behavior, and signing on a dotted line to show one is a Christian, the teachers I interviewed clearly had a strong passion for God's Word precisely because God is its author. This leads me to another hermeneutical key that both Luther and Calvin lived out as well: "The Bible is alive because it is God's Word," as one principal stated. The Bible is at the same time human and divine: "The Christian community at its best throughout history has always had a deep feeling and understanding for this integrated dual origin of the Scriptures."<sup>457</sup>

The Bible itself states that it not an ordinary textbook to be studied but is to be handled and heeded as the very words of God Himself. As such, "we receive it

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<sup>457</sup> Brian D. McLaren. *A Generous Orthodoxy*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), p.162.

reverently, and according to its dignity,"<sup>458</sup> as Calvin reminds us. The Holy Spirit is its interpreter. God's children have a love for God's Word: they love God's statutes, judgments, precepts, commandments, decrees, laws and ordinances; that love should clearly part of the teachers' own lives as well. They see God's Word as the bread of life that must be eaten and appreciated daily.

One teacher I interviewed at Pacific Academy glowed with joy at the privilege of being able to teach God's word to her students. I encountered some of that in the Mennonite camp as well, as evidenced by their confession: "We commit ourselves to persist and delight in reading, studying, and meditating on the Scriptures."<sup>459</sup> Generally speaking, the Reformed teachers were more rationalistic in their approach to the Word, even though they would consent to the need to delight in it.

Teachers lose this powerful hermeneutical key when they remove their students from actually digging into the Word of God and instead give them blanks to fill in or endless paper work exercises to finish: Bible lessons become drudgery. A middle school teacher alluded to this recently: "There is so much material to cover when we use our textbooks that Bible has become a boring exercise." Other teachers try to avoid this drudgery by making each Bible story into a drama, thus giving the students the impression that it is all drama.

This brings me to a question: if God's Word itself is so powerful, then why are we constantly creating exercises for our students that take their focus away from the Word itself? We miss the power of the Word by forcing students into answering so many questions, by making the Bible lesson a reading

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<sup>458</sup> John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p.75.

<sup>459</sup> *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, p.22.

comprehension exercise, by forcing them to look for only certain aspects of a passage (i.e. the character aspects, good behavior issues, or applications of right and wrong). We miss the unity of the Word by jumping from one character to another, roaming from one book to another, or by distilling our own themes from hither and yon in God's Word. The Scripture should not be broken up like that. We forfeit the power of the Word itself, accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, by reducing the Bible lessons to a writing exercise.

Happily, many teachers have seen this and have deleted such exercises and have substituted their own curriculum and methodology when teaching Bible lessons. Teachers who are passionate about God's Word, and incarnate that passion in their lives, will be able to instill a desire into their students to search the Scriptures: they testify of Christ. Faith and learning will again be integrated.

#### e. The Bible As Canon

One more key that aids us in the unlocking of Scripture is the viewing of the Bible as canon; the Lutheran and Reformed streams were strong in this area. Because of the fragmentary manner in which some of the textbooks in Christian schools present the Bible (see especially the ACSI or Lifeway curricula), students lose sight of the entire biblical story. Too much Bible study today is taken from random Scripture, causing students to lose sight of the meta-narrative or overarching story of God. Even theological scholars each have their own 'territory'. According to theologian Don Carson, even "systematic theology is so

independent of biblical theology.”<sup>460</sup> This can lead to fragmentation and imbalance. Without the biblical story of creation, fall, redemption and restoration (in other words, God’s revelation from Genesis to the book of Revelation, creation to the new creation), students will lack some helpful keys to unlock the Bible’s meaning for their daily lives.

When we look closely at Israel’s history as described in the Pentateuch, we see that Moses had great concern in the passing on of the sacred story, of the laws and of the testimonies of God. Likewise, great care was given to pass on the sacred rituals and laws. These are not just haphazard stories and feasts thrown together to be passed on from generation to generation; they are ordered in specific ways, and the care given to the ordering of these materials

“reflects an involvement which actively shaped both the oral and written traditions. A major hermeneutical move was effected in the process for forming an original law, prophetic oracles or ancient narrative into a collection of scripture through which every subsequent generation was to be addressed.”<sup>461</sup>

If we ignore the ‘canonical shape’, as Childs calls it, we are missing a major hermeneutical key to unlocking Scripture:

Where the canonical model makes a more distinctive contribution is in its appeal to overall canonical shape, yielding the suggestion that a truly biblical education will maintain the balance or tension between Torah, Prophets and Writings, or between what we might fairly loosely think of as traditional, critical and experiential approaches.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> D. A. Carson. *The Gagging of God*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), p. 543.

<sup>461</sup> B. S. Childs. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1979), p.78.

<sup>462</sup> David Smith. “The Bible and Education: Ways of Construing the Relationship” in *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* Vol. 5, No. 2 (2001), pp.29-42.

In other words, when teachers spend a whole year on the Pentateuch, students may get the idea that God spoke only laws that they must obey. He also sent prophets to admonish God's people and call them back with tender love. God's people not only were to hear and obey, but sing of God's love, His faithfulness and His glory in creation. They poured out their hearts to Him in laments, they reveled in His power, they shouted about His glory. Teachers run less chance of being imbalanced in their interpretations when they teach students the entire 'Heilsgeschichte' in its canonical placement.

Students will then learn that each book is placed in the canon for a reason; each book is placed in a certain position in the canon for a reason. That is why I would advocate for a more holistic study of the Bible, looking at individual books or groupings (e.g. The Pentateuch) rather than snippets of stories here and there. Students need to get a picture of the entire canonical placement of the books so they can see how God works in history and understand how "the various books of the Bible function as entities on their own of how each fits into God's story."<sup>463</sup>

Teachers need "to guard against reading each text in isolation from the whole, which is an open door to idiosyncratic misuse of the Bible."<sup>464</sup> For this reason, I would suggest taking the entire book of Jonah and camping around it for several weeks. Maybe its position or 'sitz im Kanon' has special significance. It is a prophetic book contained in *The Twelve* in the Hebrew canon: that tells me that I as a teacher must teach it as such, discover what God's purpose was in the lives of the Twelve and try to convey that to my students. As they study the Bible,

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<sup>463</sup> Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002), p.9.

<sup>464</sup> Paul C. McGlasson. *Canon & Proclamation*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), p.5.

honoring its canonical shape, the students become **much better readers** of the Bible as well.<sup>465</sup> Teachers will be able to give their students the whole Word of God, rather than presenting it piece meal, using it for proof texting only, or to buttress certain doctrinal systems. Even though scholars throughout the ages have endeavored to discover the over arching theme or centre of Scripture, students will at least receive a better picture of that central purpose of God by looking at the Bible in its canonical form, rather than studying it in a piece meal fashion. Truth when taken out of its context becomes distorted at best, and at worst, devoid of meaning.

#### e. The Relevance of the Word

Not only is God's Word powerful in and of itself because God is the Author, these teachers also believe it is relevant to daily lives even though it was written thousands of years ago. Luther believed that because God's Word is eternal, it should be applied to people of all ages. This is known as the 'principle of contemporaneity'. Let us look at an example from Luther's commentary on the book of Galatians.

When discussing the last verse in the book of Galatians, Luther quotes from Isaiah 63 and 64 and concludes: "In this prayer, Isaiah has depicted the appearance of the church today in such a way that it cannot be depicted more aptly."<sup>466</sup> In other words, what Isaiah wrote about the nation of Israel in his day could be directly applied to the church of Luther's day: "This hermeneutics of

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<sup>465</sup> Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, p.9.

<sup>466</sup> Martin Luther. "Lectures on Galatians 1519," in *Luther's Works 27*, trans. by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 410.

contemporaneity is evident in many of his [Luther's] other commentaries or lectures.”<sup>467</sup> Similarly, I think teachers in these four schools today can approach the Scriptures for the twenty-first century to discover their relevance to the lives of today's students.

Thus, “we have two tasks: first, our task is to find out what the text originally meant; this is called *exegesis*. Second, we must learn to hear that same meaning in the variety of new or different contexts of our own day; we call this second task *hermeneutics*.”<sup>468</sup> Under the guidance of skilful teachers, using the principle of contemporaneity, students will learn to contextualize the gospel in their own lives and communities, thus integrating their faith and learning.

Teachers in each of the four Christian schools shared this conviction about the Bible: it is relevant for daily life. Most tried not to just give students the ‘facts’ of the Bible so that they could make their own choices. “Nothing can be so dry and lifeless for the [student] as making biblical study purely an academic exercise in historical investigation.”<sup>469</sup>

And so we see that drawing certain faith beliefs about the Bible from each of these streams will help teachers to open up the Scriptures in a more holistic way, learning new perspectives and emphases from one another all the while demonstrating to their students a passion for studying them. I see God's Word as an organic, living whole that must be studied holistically, in total dependence on the work of God's Spirit Who will apply the truths to lives of individuals living as social beings “who can never be severed from the network of relationships in

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<sup>467</sup> Thomas Maschke. “Contemporaneity: A Hermeneutical Perspective in Luther” in *Ad Fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther*, p.176.

<sup>468</sup> Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*, p.15.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

which they exist.”<sup>470</sup> Christianity can only be lived out in community. This brings me to the next section, where we will discuss how teachers and students form a body of believers discovering God’s truth in community.

## **2. Blending Faith Beliefs About God’s Community**

### **i. Making Decisions in Community**

A hermeneutical framework to unlocking Scripture that I found in the Mennonite and Pentecostal streams and in the teaching of Bible in the Reformed stream in the 1990s, was to study the Word communally.<sup>471</sup> Teacher GK, who teaches Bible in the Mennonite High School, asked his senior students what they would like to study in Bible class and built his curriculum on their input and interests. The Mennonite community views the church as a community of saints. It is a visible body whose members live public lives of obedience to Christ.<sup>472</sup> This is in contradistinction to the Protestant reformers who talked of an invisible and visible church.<sup>473</sup> The Reformers saw man more as an individual in relationship with God. Luther’s main focus was how a person could be justified before God. The Anabaptists, on the other hand, saw God in relationship to a

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<sup>470</sup> David J. Bosch. *Transforming Mission*, p.417.

<sup>471</sup> The ACSI and Lifeway Bible curricula did not lend themselves to communal interpretation of the Word. However, the teachers of PA stressed working in community. The CSI curriculum allowed for some interaction and discussion; their curriculum of the 1990’s stressed learning in community (pp.95-99 of this thesis); teaching the Bible as doctrines (see pp. 111-124 of this thesis) did not allow for communal interpretation.

<sup>472</sup> *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources*, W. Klaassen, ed. (Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1981), p.115.

<sup>473</sup> L. Berkhof. *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1933), p.281.

group of fellow believers or brothers/sisters, hence the name Mennonite

Brethren:<sup>474</sup>

Where reformer Martin Luther had said that the church existed where God's Word was proclaimed, Anabaptists and Mennonites were more inclined to say that it existed only where Christians formed a community who discerned and obeyed God's Word.<sup>475</sup>

Going back to the Mennonite confession of faith, we read: "The congregation of believers is the place where individual understanding and interpretations of Scripture are to be tested."<sup>476</sup> In other words, believers test their understanding of the Word in community. The body of Christ, with its believers of many and varying gifts, helps each of the members interpret and test the meaning of the Scriptures. Even in its decision making, the body of Christ is to honor the Holy Spirit as He works in the lives of each member. The Mennonite confession states:

Decision making by consensus is a way of coming to unity in the church (see Acts 15:22). Consensus means that the church has together sought for the unity of the Spirit. The church listens carefully to all voices, majority and minority. Consensus is reached when the church has come to one mind on the matter, or when those who dissent have indicated that they do not wish to stand in the way of a group decision. Consensus does not necessarily mean complete unanimity.<sup>477</sup>

It is interesting to note that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, brought to light once again by Luther, emphasized the individual and his/her individual relationship to God and not the relationship of the believer to the body of believers. Luther could say, "Here I Stand", knowing that God was his personal

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<sup>474</sup> R. Friedmann. *Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1973a), p.81.

<sup>475</sup> Theron F. Schlabach. *Peace, Faith, Nation*. (Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1988), p.95.

<sup>476</sup> *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1995), p.24.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, p.63.

God because of his faith in this God. He was obedient and stood up alone to champion the cause of justification by faith: "To talk about the priesthood of all believers was to reintroduce the idea of every Christian having a calling and a responsibility to serve God, to be actively involved in God's work in the world, and thus to break with the concept of 'ordinary' believers being mere 'minors' or immature 'objects' of the church's ministry."<sup>478</sup>

The flip side of this teaching is, of course, in direct contrast to the concept of the community of believers who wrestle with the truths of Scripture as a body, using their individual gifting and calling in trying to discover God's good and perfect will. In 1Peter 2:5, 9 where these descriptors are used, we see that the phrases, "a chosen people", "a royal priesthood", and "a holy nation" all indicate a group of believers, which together make up the living stones of God's spiritual temple, shining as lights in the world for Christ. "From Luther's emphasis, we get individualism; from the Scriptural description in the Mennonite perspective, we see interdependence and unity (as was practiced by the Anabaptists of his day)."<sup>479</sup> In Menno Simons' view, personal interpretations were to be submitted to the scrutiny of all believers in the church community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>480</sup>

Just by way of illustration, my husband was a member of a Mennonite church in the 1960s and early 1970s. The Mennonites of that body were discussing an issue (my husband has even forgotten what it was) and brother Nickel had spoken forcefully against this certain issue. Then it was brought to a

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<sup>478</sup> David J. Bosch. *Transforming Mission*, p.243.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, p.242.

<sup>480</sup> Jacob A. Loewen & Wesley J. Prieb. *Only the Sword of the Spirit*. (Winnipeg, MN: Kindred Productions, 1997), p.16.

vote and brother Nickel's perspective was defeated. He asked if there could be another vote, so that he would be sure the decision was unanimous. Another vote was taken and sure enough, the brethren voted unanimously for the issue. Brother Nickel stood up and said that even though he was against the issue on the basis of Scripture, he would abide by the decision of the brethren.

According to Adolf Ens, former Mennonite pastor, missionary and Bible teacher, this "studying and interpreting Scripture together by the community, especially on points where the church lacked clarity because of the new context in which it lived, was a feature of the first centuries after the New Testament era."<sup>481</sup> This was known as the "corporate exposition of Scripture by the band of believers".<sup>482</sup> We see a framework here where "truth in the gospel tradition is to be spoken and lived in community, and tested in a continuing communal process of dissent and consent."<sup>483</sup> Teachers in these schools have already used this tool extensively in teaching Bible.

## ii. The Trinitarian Model

Interpreting God's truth in community will have great implications for the classroom as we have already seen. Each school emphasized communal learning and even though the Lutherans did not mention the word on their website, the students were still required to share what they had learned with their

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<sup>481</sup> Adolf Ens. "Call to Faithfulness: Essays in Canadian Mennonite Studies." H. Poettcker and R. Regehr, editors. (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1972), p.75.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., p.75

<sup>483</sup> Parker Palmer. "Toward a Spirituality of Higher Education", in *Faithful Learning and the Scholarly Vocation*, p.82.

parents, another community of learners. Since teachers in these schools believe that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, embodied in a person both human and divine, they practice that belief by treating their students as those who are in a relationship with Christ, and as such, a body of believers. This belief must again be worked out incarnationally among believers (e.g. he who says he belongs to Christ will love his neighbor and show that love daily): “Truth is to emerge in dialogue and encounter and in wrestling with relationships.”<sup>484</sup> As psychologist, author, and counselor, Larry Crabb states:

Community matters. That’s about like saying oxygen matters. As our lungs require air, so our souls require what only community provides. We were designed by our Trinitarian God (who is himself a group of three persons in profound relationship with each other) to live in relationship. Without it, we die. It’s that simple. Without a community where we know, explore, discover, and touch one another, we experience isolation and despair that drive us in wrong directions, that corrupt our efforts to live meaningfully and to love well.<sup>485</sup>

Teachers can model this community way of living from the Godhead. The Trinity is also in community; God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit live in a relationship of pure love. As believers grow into the image of God, they are called to love one another, bear one another’s burdens, pray for one another, fellowship with one another, and admonish one another. This ‘one anothering’ is mentioned more than fifty times in the New Testament alone. Our supreme model for this unity in community is the Trinity: “God Himself is the perfect example of sacrificial love, humble other-centeredness and perfect harmony.”<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>484</sup>Parker Palmer. “Toward a Spirituality of Higher Education” in *Faithful Learning and the Scholarly Vocation*, p.82.

<sup>485</sup> Larry Crabb. “Foreword” in *The Connecting Church* by Randy Frazee. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 2001), p.13.

<sup>486</sup> R. Warren. *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), p.160.

This has tremendous implications for the teaching of Bible in the classroom. As image bearers of their Creator, teachers and students will be learning and working in community, thus being imitators of the Godhead. Life in such a communal fellowship “demands a patient process of listening, studying and acting together and challenging one another, seeking unity and truth and valuing the contributions of all, irrespective of culture, ethnic background, gender or social situation.”<sup>487</sup> Our relationships with one another become crucial. In this community:

we must find ways to talk about our intimate relationships, acknowledging God’s presence and involvement in those relationships. In these intimate relationships we need to acknowledge God’s grace, God’s acceptance of our fallenness and tendency toward idolatry and forgetfulness, God’s forgiving love, and God’s promise that we can approach that love in our own life of relationship.<sup>488</sup>

So students are not to interact primarily with their Bible textbooks, but with their leader and one another in interpreting the divine Word within the parameters of the Word and the Christian community. Truth will be fleshed out in community. Teaching the Scriptures becomes a way of living that is incarnated in communal interaction. “Through a well informed assessment of the factors involved, through consultation with trusted Christian advisors, through prayer and searching the Scriptures, we seek God’s will.”<sup>489</sup> So truth is communal and reciprocal. The community receives this truth from one another and then goes ahead to put it into

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<sup>487</sup> Andrew Kirk. “Reenvisioning the Theological Curriculum as if the *Missio Dei* Mattered”, an unpublished paper, 2005 (Andrew@kirks.org.uk).

<sup>488</sup> Dwayne Huebner. “Religious Education: Practicing the presence of God”, in *The Lure of the Transcendent: collected essays by Dwayne E. Huebner*. Vikki Hillis and Wm. Pinar, editors. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999), p.393.

<sup>489</sup> Albert M. Wolters. *Creation Regained*, p. 30.

practice. Truth becomes incarnational. By each believer in the classroom fleshing out the truths of God's Word, truth also becomes reciprocal.

If a student sees the teacher embody the words of Christ (to love, to serve, to be at peace with one's neighbor), that student will want to model that teacher in similar ways. In this way, virtues and ethics do not become an educational add-on, as in some of the Bible curricula studied above; instead teachers will teach virtues by first of all exemplifying them; they will order life in the classroom so that the exercise of these virtues becomes an integral part of the inquiry process. Virtues such as humility are not just talked about, but modeled by the teacher as s/he walks in the classroom with a teachable spirit him or herself, thus showing students how to learn truth in humility. This is the way Jesus taught as well: He modeled servanthood by washing his disciples' feet; He prayed to His Father in perfect unity with Him; He illustrated principles by telling stories. If we want our students to learn to walk with God in the classroom, we, as teachers, must incarnate the truths in the pattern of the Trinitarian relationship. And so truth and learning will be integrated in tangible ways.

### iii. 'One Anothering'

In this 'great community' of learning, the weak and the strong, the intelligent, the creative, the learning disabled all work together to discover the truths of God's word. One is an eye, the other is an ear; one is a foot while yet another is a hand. All work together for the good of the community, as 1 Corinthians 12 demonstrates. In this way, the Bible curriculum "will use content

and learning approaches that help students be responsive disciples of Christ wherever God places them.”<sup>490</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a twentieth century martyr for the cause of Christ, saw this community working in his church when he wrote, “In a Christian community everything depends upon whether each individual is an indispensable link in a chain...the strong cannot exist without the weak. The elimination of the weak is the death of the fellowship.”<sup>491</sup> Together, then, the class has as its purpose to live for God, by His Word and through the power of His Spirit. Students will be taught *interdependence* rather than *independence*. God has created us social beings; if one log is taken out of the fire, it quickly loses heat and the fire in it is quenched. Teachers and students need one another in the body of Christ.

Truth is not only conveyed by incarnational example in community, it is also imbibed as student and teacher together ‘camp’ around the word of God. They submit to the authority of God’s word and together discover the truths God has for them. Parker Palmer calls this subject-centered education, “The Third Thing”<sup>492</sup>: the teacher and the student being the first and second ‘powers’ that interact in the classroom. The focusing of teacher and student around the subject being studied is part of creating an educational community. The learning then becomes truly subject-centered, whether the subject is Science, Literature, Music, or Bible, etc. As Palmer states:

The subject-centered classroom is characterized by the fact that the third thing has a presence so real, so vivid, so vocal, that it can hold teacher and students alike accountable for what they say and do. In such a classroom there are no inert facts. The great thing is so alive

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<sup>490</sup> H. VanBrummelen. *Stepping Stones to Curriculum*, p.44.

<sup>491</sup> D. Bonhoeffer. *Life Together* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1954), p.94.

<sup>492</sup> P. Palmer. *The Courage to Teach*. (San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), p.115.

that teacher can turn to student or student to teacher, and either can make a claim on the other in the name of that great thing. Here, teacher and students have a power beyond themselves to contend with—the power of a subject that transcends our self-absorption and refuses to be reduced to our claims about it.<sup>493</sup>

This third learning power in the classroom then is the subject (in this case, God's Word) itself. Imagine these three 'minor powers' (students, teacher and subject) coupled with the working of the major power of God's Spirit! This process truly becomes an integration of faith and learning.

Richard Foster urges us to examine God's work in our lives in interpreting His Word within the body of believers:

Regularly test your leadings and experiences in the Spirit with those you trust. Allow their spiritual discernment to encourage, correct and refine you. And you them. In this way we will fulfill the words of the great Apostle of the Spirit: 'Since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church' (1 Corinthians 14:13).<sup>494</sup>

Another aspect of living together in community as the body of Christ is searching and studying how the body of believers throughout the ages has interpreted God's Word. In order to seek out a balance in this area, our high school students should have a chance to study their respective heritages as well as the heritages of others (a strength of the Mennonite, Reformed and Lutheran streams). This way they will learn that each community does come to God's Word with certain preconceptions, traditions, faith commitments, emphases and interpretations. In this way, they learn to wrestle with the text, searching the Scriptures as the Bereans did, to see whether this or that interpretation or emphasis is in accordance with the Holy Spirit's will.

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<sup>493</sup> Parker Palmer. *The Courage to Teach*, p.117.

<sup>494</sup> Richard Foster. *Streams of Living Water*, p.132.

#### iv. An Example: Studying the Bible in Community

I would like to use the book of Jonah (again) as an example of camping around the Word in community. In the words of Biblical scholar Gordon Fee: “. . . the aim of good interpretation is simple: to get at ‘the plain meaning of the text’.”<sup>495</sup> After the introductory lesson described on pp. 243-244, the teacher would continue subsequent lessons of discussion and story telling of the various parts by way of continuing art projects, dramatization, oral question/answer interaction, discussion groups or research projects.<sup>496</sup> The group work would flow from the story: one group would look up the history/geography of the cities of Tarshish and Nineveh, while another group would find information about the gods of the sailors. Another group would look up the Psalms quoted in chapter two; another group would find out about the great fish. Still another group would draw a sequential collage or series of drawings about the events in the story. Students would be immersed in the story; they would camp around the book.

After all this study, having used textbooks and library support materials, the teacher would read the book with them again, or allow them to read it. Then the students would be asked what they learned about God from the book of Jonah, paying special heed to Jonah’s confessions (1:9, 2:9, and 4:2). Together the class would see that God is sovereign over people and over nature: over men, women, cattle and plants, as well as over the wind and waves. Yet He is also a “gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a

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<sup>495</sup> Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*, p.20.

<sup>496</sup> For Jonah I have used commentaries from each of the four streams: Calvin’s commentary on Jonah, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* by contemporary Pentecostal theologians Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, Luther’s Commentary on Jonah and a Mennonite-approved commentary. See Appendix B for a critical interaction with the text.

God who relents from sending calamity.” (4:2) Then together students and teacher would look up other sections of Scripture that show God as a merciful and compassionate God Who relents (e.g. Psalm 103:8-14; Psalm 99:7; Psalm 145:8, 10, 13, 17; Exodus 34:6; Exodus 33:13, etc.) They would check out Scriptures that illustrate God’s control over nature (Luke 8:22-25; Psalm 107:29; Psalm 148:15-18, Isaiah 43:16-21, Job 38-41, etc.) From this view of God, the teacher would contrast Jonah’s actions: his plain disobedience, his anger, his wish to die all the while knowing the power of his God (1:9, 12; 2: 9; 4:1, 2). The class would then be encouraged to look at their own lives, seeing how they are similar to Jonah and how they need to be in submission to the sovereign God. So the students would come to see God as creator, sustainer and redeemer; they would discover His compassion and concern for the Gentiles, and learn from His dealings with recalcitrant Jonah. God will be seen as the main character in the book of Jonah. The readers of this story are implicitly invited to answer God’s question to Jonah as well—do we have any right to be angry if God has compassion on our enemies? What is our reaction and attitude to the neighbor we dislike/hate?

The hermeneutical circle of knowing God and knowing man thus completed, the teacher would read how Christ viewed this prophet. Matthew 12:38-41 and Luke 11:29-30, 32 would be checked out: Jesus Himself obviously saw this book as historical, comparing His own three days of burial to Jonah’s three days in the belly of the fish. He also regarded Nineveh and the repentance

of its people as historical.<sup>497</sup> Jonah typified Christ while he was in the belly of the fish, quoting such messianic Psalms as 69:1-2, 30, 120:1, as well as seventeen other quotes from the Psalms; he knew God's Word well and applied it in his life. Here we see the Christo-centric and incarnational keys coming to the fore: once Jonah has been brought to submission, God changes him to do His will. God continues to work with Jonah even after he has preached the message of repentance to the Ninevites. In a similar way, the teacher could demonstrate that see God continues to work with each of His creatures until they are one with His will and submit to His lordship over their lives.

In this way, students and teacher have searched the book of Jonah communally, watching and discovering what God wants to teach them about Himself and about themselves, all the while waiting upon the Holy Spirit to illumine, knowing that each participant in this study is an interpreter of the text, whether they are aware of it or not.

Even when teaching senior high schools students this book of the Bible, the teacher could also start by telling the Biblical story (all four chapters) without using notes. Then the students would read it aloud, trying to find hermeneutical keys. The teacher could suggest that Chapter 4:2 is pivotal in understanding this Bible book. Students would look at this book as to its place in the canon with *The Twelve*, its place in Israel's history, and the geographical location of its events. This would all be group work. The teacher could also discuss with them why some scholars, especially those of the nineteenth centuries and following, have

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<sup>497</sup> F.E. Gaebelien. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7. (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 1985), p.362.

viewed the book as an allegory or parable.<sup>498</sup> The class could look at Jesus' view of the book (Matthew 12:38-42), as well as 2 Kings 14:25, to determine how the Lord Himself saw the book of Jonah. Students would be encouraged to memorize at least Jonah 2 and Jonah's confessions (1:9, 2:9 and 4:2), as well as learn the book well enough to tell it without using notes. That way, too, the students would immerse themselves in the book and learn to trust the Holy Spirit to illumine it for them and to them.

Students should discover the literary pattern of the book of Jonah also: they should discover the aspects of Hebrew narrative and maybe try to write a short story of their own in such a simple, yet exact literary form. Students could make comparisons/contrasts of the characters: the sailors revere God, while Jonah, who knows who God is, disobeys; the Ninevites repent, while Jonah is angry and has no compassion, etc. The teacher's job would be to instill in his/her students a love for this book as part of God's Word, to pray for grace to incarnate the truths of this book before the students' eyes, and perhaps share a personal story of how God had to bring him/her to do His will by using some hard ways. How has the teacher experienced that 'salvation is of the Lord'?

Throughout the lessons, there would be sharing: communal group work to be shared with the entire class and prayer before the lessons, whether in secret or public, asking God to open up His Word. In this way, students and teacher alike are in submission to the Word, and learn from one another's insights. Faith and learning would be integrated individually and communally in the classrooms of these Christian schools.

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<sup>498</sup> Ian Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III. *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), pp.3-35.

The literary shape of the book of Jonah needs to be honored as well. How and when is this narrative written? Is there a specific pattern? If so, can students find out what it is and how it affects the meaning of the book? How did the Hebrews tell their stories? Using the book of Jonah as an example, students will discover that structural symmetry is used very effectively in this Hebrew narrative: two chapters and then two more. Two parallel cycles are presented, each with contrasting and comparable sections: Jonah disobeys God, the sailors want to sacrifice to him; Jonah preaches repentance, the Gentiles respond immediately and Jonah is angry. There is beautiful symmetry, contrast, parallelism, and even irony in the book. All the while God is orchestrating His purposes, catching all of us off guard with His final question. The basic story is framed by Jonah's flight from God and why he did it—all the while knowing that God was gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and a God faithful to His covenant. So the story is about God; Jonah is only secondary to God revealing Himself in all His mercy.

All this would be missed if students individually only spent one lesson on the book looking for Jonah's good or bad character traits, discussing whether the fish could be a whale, or if it is possible to live in the belly of a great fish and survive. All this interaction and communal sharing, discussion, and listening to the Spirit would be lost if our students sit in their desks and individually answer some questions about the book of Jonah.

As Goheen and Bartholomew sum it up:

We must resist the temptation to read the Scriptures as though they were a religious flea market, with a basket of history and old doctrines here, a shelf full of pious stories there, promises and commands spread from one end to the other. Some readers of the Bible turn it into little more than an anthology of proof texts

assembled to support a system of theology. Others seek only ethical guidance, ransacking the Old Testament for stories of moral instruction. Still others look just for inspirational or devotional messages, for comforting promises and lessons for daily living. The result may be that we lose sight of the Bible's essential unity and instead find only those theological, moral, devotional, or historical fragments we are looking for.<sup>499</sup>

Even "scholars in Old Testament and New Testament studies rarely enter each other's domain."<sup>500</sup> Studying God's Word in such a fragmentary and individualistic manner, teachers and students lose sight of the role of whole body of Christ and the whole counsel of God if they do not interpret the Word communally and holistically. If the Bible is not viewed as a living Word, an organic whole, given to us to learn who God is and who we are in relation to Him, students may become like the 'bite-sized' culture of this age: taking a 'byte' of this, a snippet of that, a clip of this and a segment of that, losing sight of God's big picture and plan, in their own lives and in the lives of their community. Worse yet, they may miss what God is doing globally.

The goal in building this community of learning is that teacher and students "support each other in loving interaction, functioning as unique but interdependent members of the body of Christ. Members exercise their gifts in humility, gentleness and patience, striving for the unity that the Spirit provides."<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> C. Bartholomew and M. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, p.196.

<sup>500</sup> Richard N. Soulen. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1981), p.9.

<sup>501</sup> *A Vision with a Task*. Gloria Goris Stronks and Doug Blomberg, editors. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), p.108.

### 3. Blending Faith Beliefs about the Role of the Holy Spirit

All that we spiritually know of ourselves, all that we know of God and of Jesus, and His Word, we owe to the teaching of the Holy Spirit; and all the real light, sanctification, strength and comfort we are made to possess on our way to glory, we must ascribe to Him.<sup>502</sup>

As we look back at question #1, we notice that all teachers interviewed assented to the fact that the Holy Spirit needed to illumine hearts and minds so that the truths of Scripture be understood. Comments such as: “absolutely essential”, “the Holy Spirit must change hard hearts”, “we cannot prepare our lessons without the Holy Spirit” and “the Holy Spirit is vibrant, alive and active in every classroom”, were made with great conviction. In the ACSI textbooks (used in the Pentecostal and some Mennonite schools) Scriptural teachings about the third person in the Holy Trinity were most evident. In Reformed schools, the role of the Holy Spirit was underplayed since, according to principal PT, the Holy Spirit was mentioned in only one question and answer of the Heidelberg catechism: “We take for granted that the Holy Spirit is working since God’s word does not return unto Him void according to Isaiah 55:11,” that principal stated. The Lutheran Bible textbooks talked of students discovering the truths of Scripture “by the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the Word.” So we have a great spectrum of emphasis again. Knowing that the work of the Holy Spirit is unfathomable and cannot be pinned down, and also realizing that now we are dealing with ‘experiential faith’ we will be dealing with faith beliefs about Scripture passages on which each of these streams have based their views on the role of

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<sup>502</sup> Octavius Winslow. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. (London, UK: Banner of Truth Trust edition, 1961), p.5.

the Holy Spirit. Learning from our Pentecostal brothers and sisters in particular, let us see what the role of the Holy Spirit can be in the teaching of Bible in the classrooms of our schools.

i. Faith Beliefs about how the Holy Spirit Works

How does the Spirit work? Just like the wind, as Jesus told Nicodemus: we can see it blow upon the branches, uproot the trees, or lift the waves, yet we cannot catch it or touch it. So God blows with His Spirit: we cannot see Him, but we know He is working. As the Pentecostal teachers and also those of the other streams would affirm, without the work of the Holy Spirit, we could not have Christians, we could not have a church, we could not come to God, in short, we are helpless to come to Christ without the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. Teachers in each faith belief would assent to these truths: Christian teachers have this treasure in jars of clay, so that everyone will see that the power comes from God and not from them. If all this illumination from the Holy Spirit is available and indeed true, and teachers in each of the schools would affirm this, then what an amazing Teacher comes alongside as Christian teachers walk and talk in their classrooms. The teacher testifies of Christ, and the Holy Spirit illumines the minds and hearts of our students to see the truth of Christ as it is revealed in the Word of God. “As a leader, when you open Scripture, you are face to face with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you not to miss what He has to

say.”<sup>503</sup> This has huge implications for the teaching of Bible in the classroom. As

J.I. Packer reminds us:

Do we honor the Holy Spirit by recognizing and relying on His work? Or do we slight Him by ignoring it, and thereby dishonor, not merely the Spirit, but the Lord who sent Him? In our faith: do we acknowledge the authority of the Bible, the prophetic Old Testament and the apostolic New Testament which He inspired? Do we read and hear it with the reverence and receptiveness that are due to the Word of God? If not, we dishonor the Holy Spirit. In our life: do we apply the authority of the Bible, and live by the Bible, whatever men may say against it, recognizing that God’s Word cannot but be true, and that what God has said He certainly means, and will stand to? If not, we dishonor the Holy Spirit, who gave us the Bible. In our witness: do we remember that the Holy Spirit alone, by His witness, can authenticate our witness, and look to Him to do so, and trust Him to do so, and show the reality of our trust, as Paul did, by eschewing the gimmicks of human cleverness? If not, we dishonor the Holy Spirit.<sup>504</sup>

Teachers in Christian schools must be very careful not to dishonor the Holy Spirit of God, nor to grieve, quench or resist His work in their own lives and the lives of the students God has entrusted to their care: “The risen Christ, who promised to be with us always and God’s gift of the Spirit are divine assurance to any group of Christians that they can know God’s will and that errors, if chosen will eventually be corrected.”<sup>505</sup> Martin Luther wrote: “The true token whereby the message of the Holy Spirit is to be known and tested is also indicated (here) when He says: “the Holy Spirit will testify of Me.” (John 15:26).” This indicates “that the Spirit will preach of nothing except this Christ.”<sup>506</sup> Therefore, “[t]hat the

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<sup>503</sup> H. Blackaby. “The Essence of Spiritual Leadership” in Christianity.ca Available: [<http://www.christianity.ca/church/leadership/2005/02.000.html>]

<sup>504</sup> J. I. Packer. *Knowing God*. (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p.63.

<sup>505</sup> Thomas Groome. *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1980), p. 198.

<sup>506</sup> Ewald M. Plass. *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, p.41.

Spirit interprets the Scriptures to us today means, then, that He brings us to faith in Christ and causes us to believe the Scriptures.”<sup>507</sup>

According to the faith beliefs of each of these four streams, the role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Bible begins with the indwelling of believers. In a Christian school, we would hope that the teachers are walking in the Spirit, keeping in step with the Spirit, living by the Spirit as Paul writes in his epistles. Hopefully the students, too, are walking temples of the Holy Spirit. Not all of them will be; each one comes to know the Lord at different times in his/her life. Some may never come to know God and His salvation in Christ. However,

“If individual children can meaningfully be considered ‘believers’ within the limits of their faith-stage, then we must expect, and teach, that the Spirit will guide them as they come to study the Bible. By the same token, we will need to be open to the possibility that, as we teach children to interpret, the truth into which the Spirit will lead them may sometimes be new to us [as teachers].”<sup>508</sup>

The indwelling of believers by the Spirit of God is a great mystery indeed. “God-within-us is God in His utmost immediacy, intimacy and intensity: Spirit.”<sup>509</sup> As teachers in each of the faith beliefs would assert: It makes prayers for illumination by the Spirit of God in both students and teachers constantly in order. “Without the work of the Holy Spirit in the teaching/learning process, the educational goals of spiritual transformation cannot be accomplished.”<sup>510</sup> That is

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<sup>507</sup> John. W. Montgomery. *Crisis in Lutheran Theology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1976), p.84.

<sup>508</sup> Rosemary Cox. “Using the Bible with Children” in *Journal of Education & Christian Belief* (St. Albans, UK: Association of Christian Teachers., Vol. 5, No. 1 (2001), p.47.

<sup>509</sup> Victor Shephard. “We Believe in the Holy Spirit” in *Faith Today* (Markham, ON: Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Publisher, vol. 23, No. 3, May/June 2005), p.33.

<sup>510</sup> Kenneth O. Gangel & Howard Hendricks. *The Christian Educators’ Handbook on Teaching* (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, 1988), p.37.

why the teacher guidebooks in the Lutheran stream constantly used the phrase: “That by the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the Word, the students will...”

Imagine that power in the classroom, when teachers have five days a week to study the Word of God with their students. How boring Bible classes would be without the Spirit’s enlightening power! How exciting will the lessons be that are taught in dependence upon the work of God’s power. God works through His Spirit living within student and teacher alike so that each member of this godly community “learn[s] to take as their authority the Spirit of Jesus living in themselves.”<sup>511</sup> What better way for these teachers to integrate faith and learning?

#### ii. Special gifts from the Spirit

Pentecostal teachers would insert a word here about the spiritual gifts of teachers themselves; indeed, they would note, teaching itself is a spiritual gift. (The principal and high school teacher I interviewed stated that the gift of speaking in tongues and the baptism of the Spirit were ones that happen in the church setting, although the school would be open to speaking in tongues and prophecy by students and teachers.) While it is not the purpose of this thesis to search out and define the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I think teachers in this stream would concur with Millard J. Erickson who wrote the textbook *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, used at Summit Pacific College (a Pentecostal College

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<sup>511</sup> Jean Vanier. *Community and Growth*. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), p.145.

mentioned earlier): “Being filled with the Spirit is not so much a matter of our getting more of the Spirit as it is a matter of his possessing more of our lives.”<sup>512</sup>

Teachers of every stream should be able to discern the spiritual gift of teaching in their own lives: do they have a natural gift of teaching? As they minister in their local church/school body, have others discerned this gift in them? Is God’s blessing on this gift? Is God enabling them to develop this gift? Can others in the body see this gift in them? These are all questions pre-service teachers should be asking themselves. If they grow in this gift, they will enjoy situations of teaching and be confirmed in their gifts by the Holy Spirit.

Because a teacher has searched his/her own life for the spiritual gifts God has given, the Spirit will also enable that teacher to discover special giftedness in the lives of his/her students. The Bible gives us several examples of this giftedness for specific purposes: in the Old Testament we read of Bezalel, who was “filled with the Spirit of God with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts” (Exodus 31:1-11); we read of Jeremiah, who was set apart from the womb to speak to “nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant” (Jeremiah 1:1-9). Jesus chose the twelve to go and make disciples of all nations; He set apart Paul, from birth, to be an apostle to the gentiles (Galatians 1:15). Imagine being privileged to train these handpicked ones of God. Indeed, every student is an image bearer of the living God, designed to glorify his/her Creator every day. The teacher is merely the enabler who helps bring out these gifts. There may be special gifts of music, prose and poetry; there may be special gifts of wisdom, healings, miracles,

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<sup>512</sup> Millard J. Erickson. *Introducing Christian Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2001), p.284.

tongues, helps, healing, etc. as those listed in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Some students may have special ministry gifts as those listed in Ephesians 4:11-13 or Romans 12:3-8.<sup>513</sup> Teachers must have their eyes and ears open to these giftings so that they may have a part in equipping their students to develop their God-given gifts. We know that “all human talents and abilities can flourish and blossom under the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit to the glory and service of God.”<sup>514</sup> The Holy Spirit “is the gift of God’s empowering presence”<sup>515</sup> in the classroom and everywhere the child of God goes. “There are no non-charismatic Christians.”<sup>516</sup>

God’s living presence is the source of all the Christian’s living in love and relationships. The “fellowship of the Holy Spirit” is to be in us, so that teacher and students alike can live in grace-filled harmony with their fellow man. Thus, in the classroom, both individually and corporately, teachers and students are enabled to live together as God Himself exists in harmony and unity. As Trinitarian Christians, teachers walk with God, serving their Lord Christ through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. They bring forth the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22). True learning “requires three persons working together: the human teacher, the Holy Spirit and the learner.”<sup>517</sup> This is amazing integration of faith and learning!

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<sup>513</sup> For a list of all the gifts, see Millard Erickson. “The Work of the Holy Spirit” in *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, p.280.

<sup>514</sup> Albert M. Wolters. *Creation Regained*, p.88.

<sup>515</sup> Gordon .D. Fee *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), p.31.

<sup>516</sup> Richard J. Foster. *Streams of Living Water*, p.125.

<sup>517</sup> Kenneth O. Gangel & Howard Hendricks. *The Christian Educator’s Handbook on Teaching*, p. 41.

Would every teacher not want to tap into that power source? I have experienced it myself in the teaching of Bible. Not only that, each time I was immersed in a book of the Bible, the same message would be reinforced again and again by others around me, quoting other Scriptures relating to similar themes.

### iii. Varied Emphases on the work of the Spirit

One area of strength in the Calvinistic stream with regard to the work of the Holy Spirit is the emphasis on the Spirit's work in creation: He was the Craftsman who breathed the breath of life. "The Spirit of God possesses the same quality of life that God the Father possesses. When He is referred to as the Spirit of life, it is not only a reference to the fact that He gives life, but that He is life."<sup>518</sup> As student and teacher alike contemplate the work of God's hands, they together adore the Creator and sing about Gods' majestic power. The book of creation becomes another tool in knowing God. As the classroom community studies this "third thing" together (that is, the subject of creation), they must break out in doxology:

Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!  
Who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has been his counselor? (Romans 8:34-36)

Teachers do not want their students to miss reading the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator as displayed by the works of His hands; they will try to lead them to a love of God's creating power as displayed in the universe to all

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<sup>518</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost. *The Divine Comforter* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1963), p. 17.

creatures. This renewing work of God's Spirit is not only evident in making new creations in Christ but also in the created world, when the Spirit renews and refreshes the face of the earth. If teachers focus only on God's work as Redeemer, they miss His work in creation. They also miss their mandate of being agents of reconciliation in the world, by God's grace trying to restore what people have ruined and being good stewards of God's beautiful creation.

It is also interesting to note that the Lutheran stream focused so much on the work of the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Word to the students, and hardly mentioned the fruits or gifts of the Spirit at all. The Mennonites saw the work of the Holy Spirit in community and empowered living while the Pentecostal stream emphasized the gifts and fruits for empowerment and leadership, but did not holistically study the Word (at least not in their textbooks) or see the work of God in creation as being that important. As Richard Foster reminds us: "We must always remember [the] threefold function of the charisms of the Spirit: leadership, ecstatic empowerment, and community-building."<sup>519</sup>

After looking at all these faith beliefs in how they view God's Word, how they discover the meaning of God's Word in community and how they all stressed the need of relying on the work of the Holy Spirit, teachers from each of the streams can learn from one another in order to live out an incarnational, transformational and Spirit driven life that will translate into the classroom. In this way they will be able to stimulate one another to integrate their faith, teaching and learning to a higher degree as they walk with God in their classrooms. "This is a way of [spiritual] understanding and communicating that is constrained by the

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<sup>519</sup> Richard J. Foster. *Streams of Living Water*, p.126.

reality represented by these interdependent symbols: Christ, the Christian community, the canon, and the confession.”<sup>520</sup>

Finally, we will never be able to come to a perfect knowledge, not even of the Bible; we all see through a glass darkly. There can be no arrogance here, only a daily asking for God’s light to illumine the darkness of our minds: “To wield the sword of the Spirit—which is more powerful than any physical sword—is to brandish a blade that cuts both ways; it heals us at the same time it cuts away our divine pretensions and human arrogance.”<sup>521</sup>

### **III. The Christian Teacher: Putting Faith Beliefs and Process into Practice**

In light of the above faith beliefs, what kind of teachers should teach Bible in these Christian schools since it is the teacher’s role to incarnate the Word just as Christ did when He walked on earth. First of all, this teacher must have a relationship with the living God, being justified by Christ and indwelt by His Spirit (be Spirit-led’, as the website comment for PA states). Second, as a result of this relationship, the Bible teacher should be passionate about God’s Word. Not only should there be passion about and hunger for the Word, there should also be a knowledge of the power of the Word itself. Lastly, as a result of this relationship with God and His Word, the Christian teacher of Bible should love his/her students as Christ loves His body. In living out this love in the classroom, the teacher will be able to create an atmosphere of love and respect where students

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<sup>520</sup> James L. Mays. “On a Christian Reading of the Bible” in *Reading the Bible in Faith*, William H. Lazareth, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), p.29.

<sup>521</sup> L. Sweet. *Soul Salsa*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002), p.66.

study God's Word (and all subjects for that matter) without fear of rejection or being demeaned, without fear of giving wrong answers, and without fear of being put down. When this community of shalom is created in the classroom, students will learn from the teacher and one another. All will submit themselves to the authority of the Word of God and the God of the Word, learning communally how to incarnate the Word: loving God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, and doing all to the best of their ability, since they serve the Lord Christ together.

Teachers walk in their classrooms as sinners who have been redeemed. They, too, are prophets, priests and kings before God. As a prophet, "the teacher must search out the will of God in what they teach and how they teach it and plan a curriculum that testifies to the truth and declares the praises of God."<sup>522</sup> As a priest, the teacher brings the sacrifice of praise and prayer to God both for him/herself and for his/her students. The teacher is called to heal broken relationships in the classroom, to bind up the broken hearted, to practice justice, being Christ's ambassador in the classroom. As a king, the teacher has authority to speak, lead and guide by example; not in an authoritarian way, but as a servant leader, as Christ modeled for us.

We exercise godly authority (in loco parentis) 'worthy of our calling' only to the extent, however, that we possess and continue to deepen our pedagogical insight. Such insight grows as a result of our study of Scripture, reading about and discussing educational issues and, especially, teaching in perceptive and reflective ways.<sup>523</sup>

Students and teacher alike are created in God's image, each with unique learning capabilities and God-given tendencies and experiences. Each of these

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<sup>522</sup> R. Koole. *Educating with Heart and Mind*, p.7.

<sup>523</sup> H. VanBrummelen. *Walking with God in the Classroom*, p.35.

image-bearers has special gifts; each also has strengths and weaknesses. As all work and learn together, the strong are to help the weak; the ones with more knowledge and insight are to share their insights with those less endowed. All is done with a view to honoring Christ in their learning, and all with the purpose of serving one another with the gifts they have received. Since all learn at different rates, it is incumbent upon the teacher to search out these learning styles and create groups of students that can help and complement one another in their learning: “Learning is enhanced when students are rigorously involved in meaningful activities using their gifts and abilities in the context of community, sharing their discoveries and their learning with others.”<sup>524</sup> There will be sin: broken relationships, jealousy, anger—all the sins it is possible for mankind to commit. But there is hope; it is incumbent upon the teacher to facilitate healing, encourage confession and forgiveness, and urge students to persevere with one another just as Christ did for His people.

As teachers learn to love and accept their students, they will be wise classroom community builders: knowing how to handle each of their pupils, knowing what roles they can play in group assignments, perceiving when to set them to work individually and understanding when the time has come to share their knowledge with the rest of the classroom community. This wise classroom building process requires self-examination on the part of the teacher and the students; “How are we doing?”; “Are we still on target?”; “Are we a healthy classroom community?” are questions that should constantly be asked and answered both individually by the teacher and communally by the both teachers

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<sup>524</sup> H. Van Brummelen. *Walking with God in the Classroom*, p.88

and students. For “[t]he spirit of community, once achieved is not then something forever obtained. It is not something that can be bottled . . .”<sup>525</sup> Teachers must be constantly in prayer for this fragile community of shalom to spread its umbrella of acceptance in their classrooms day by day.

Not only should educators wisely build their classroom communities, they must also foster collegial interchange. Isolated classrooms in which there is a community of shalom cannot exist apart from the entire school community, where principals and teachers have also built a body that interacts for the glory of God. If this body incarnates the Word of Christ before the eyes of the students, they, too, will learn how it’s done from the larger school community: “Building a school’s capacity to learn is a collective rather than an individual task.”<sup>526</sup> Strong professional learning communities will bring quality teaching to students. That is why it so exciting to see groups of teachers meeting in the various schools to improve the curricula, hone their teaching skills, and together seek to provide excellent teaching and learning for their students. The power of collective intelligence, mentoring, caring and love is an amazing tool to bring about transformational learning:

Good teaching grows from within when principals, teachers and students work together in ways that result in the school becoming a learning community. Good schools are those in which learning arises from and feeds back into teaching, where learning more about teaching is considered to be a natural part of teaching.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> M. Scott Peck. *The Different Drum* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1987), p.66.

<sup>526</sup> Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, Gayle Karhanek. *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don’t Learn* (Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service, 2004), p.3.

<sup>527</sup> Robert Koole. *Good Teaching Comes From Within*. (Langley, BC: Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia, 2001), p.1.

Teachers are not perfect, so they also must model what it is to ask for forgiveness, to be forgiven, and to be restored to community. As teachers are guided by God's Spirit in these areas, students will have powerful role models to follow: what does it mean to make daily and momentary decisions that are pleasing to God? As leaders in their learning community, teachers have

. . . a double mission: they must keep their eyes and those of the community fixed on what is essential, on the fundamental aims of the community. They must give direction, so that the community doesn't get lost in small wrangles, which are secondary and incidental. They must also create an atmosphere of mutual love, confidence, sharing, peace and joy among the community's members. Through their relationship with individuals, through the trust shown in them, they will lead each member to trust the others. Human beings grow best in a relaxed environment built on mutual confidence. When there is rivalry, jealousy, and suspicion, and where people are blocked against each other, there can be no community, no growth, and no life of witness.<sup>528</sup>

Teachers who embody Christ create these communities of shalom.

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<sup>528</sup> Jean Vanier. *Community and Growth*. (Mahwah, NJ.: Paulist Press, 1989), p.213.

#### IV. Recommendations and Conclusion

##### 1. Recommendations

What has been the result of all this study and investigation? Will the comparison of the way four denominational schools teach Bible yield any results? Is it necessary to see any results? Again, from my perspective, by blending the strengths of all these streams, it is my hope that by the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God and in community, the integration of faith and learning could be enhanced and improved if we combine goals, curriculum, pedagogy, methodology, faith beliefs and teaching/learning strengths of Christian schools in British Columbia. My recommendation is that teachers in these schools get together in community to share their expertise and gifts to this end. This bringing together in unity and community is my biggest hope and prayer.

This dream has already been somewhat realized. On October 5 and 6, 2005, teachers of many denominational schools met together for a joint convention. This is how it came about: Over the years, I was able to develop friendships and relationships with the principals and leaders of these various school communities. The teachers of the schools associated with the Society of Christian Schools in BC (mostly teachers of 'Reformed' background and persuasion from BC and northern Washington in the USA), hold an annual convention to promote and improve the professional and spiritual growth of their teachers. In the fall of 2004, the convention planning committees of the SCSBC schools as well as those of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) met together for the first time to plan a joint convention. ACSI schools are

those of other Protestant denominations and include, among others, the Mennonite, and the Pentecostals and the Lutheran schools (although the Lutheran schools have their own teachers' organization). After several meetings, many phone calls and numerous emails, a joint convention was realized in October of 2005. My knowledge of the faith background of these schools, their religious positions, and their varied emphases in teaching of Bible aided in bringing these 1700 teachers together. The keynote speakers, feature speakers and workshop leaders brought together expertise, worldview perspective and faith beliefs from each of the four different streams. The convention finale was the singing of Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*: all faith beliefs joined together in praising their one God. This was truly an amazing fruit of my study, a gift given to me by God. I recommend that this blending of expertise, these joint learning activities and the merging of these faith communities continue to occur. In this context too, the power of collective intelligence, mentoring, caring and love is an amazing tool to bring about transformational learning and spirited teaching.

## 2. Conclusion

We live in a golden age of Christian publishing. The down side of all to us. this is that I think many people have shied away from Scripture itself. There is so much out there and much of it seems awfully interesting to Christians. So it has become easier to read the latest popular book on God, the church or the family than it is to read the Bible. Now the Bible is the only book that is God's direct message to us.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> Bruce Waltke. *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), p.63.

The same goes for Bible curriculum: there is so much out there. However, much of it takes our attention away from studying the Bible. Instead our students are often riveted to studying *about* the Bible and they miss the beauty, relevance and orderliness of the Word itself. In my examination of each of these four faith groups, I have tried to distil, by looking at their origins and their current practice, mission statements, textbooks, goals, teacher comments and faith beliefs, a way to enhance the integration of their faith with their actual learning of the Bible. By blending faith beliefs and practice, hopefully students and teachers will come to the Word of God “in humility and openness, letting the promises which are explicit and implicit in the revelation of Jesus Christ guide [their] way into the future.”<sup>530</sup> As the Holy Spirit enlightens the eyes of these faith communities while they hear, read, study, and meditate upon the Word, they test their findings in the authentic Christian community around them, whose members also recognize the Scriptures as their divinely inspired authority for faith and practice.

God is God, both transcendent and immanent. I see this to mean that “the truth we pursue lies beyond the outermost limits of human thought; that our particular conception of what the work of the Kingdom entails in our day is always open to further insight.”<sup>531</sup> As Paul DeVries, ethics professor at the King’s College in New York asserts: “Humility of mind must characterize our most enthusiastic professions of faith. The power of God’s Word does not depend on our personal

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<sup>530</sup> Hermut Harder in “Call to Faithfulness: Essays in Canadian Mennonite Studies” H. Poettcker and R. Regehr, editors. (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1972), p.30.

<sup>531</sup> Helmut Harder. *Call to Faithfulness: Essay in Mennonite Studies*, p.30.

assertions. Let us act and speak both in the humility of self and in the authority of God's presence."<sup>532</sup>

In the twenty-first century, post modern man has come to realize that on his own power he cannot come to "the truth"; everyone comes to a text with a bias. Hence there are no facts. We can try to deconstruct texts until we get to the bottom or real meaning of things, but even that activity is futile because "we do not see things as they are, we see them as we are," as Anais Nin once said. "Postmodernism would argue that you can't divorce yourself from the interpretative process of knowing; therefore, your own perceptions, understandings, bias, and presuppositions will always taint your conclusions about what's true."<sup>533</sup> It seems the twentieth century has ended with a whimper, according to the late Stanley Grenz, "with the deconstruction of the systematic theological enterprise as a whole."<sup>534</sup> Hence there is no meaning; all is just what you make of it. As J. F. Lyotard put it, post modern men and women have "an incredulity toward meta narratives";<sup>535</sup> postmodernity no longer accepts any overarching story to explain the purpose of the universe. Thus there is no openness to the gospel story. There is only despair. There is a groping for spirituality without the Holy Spirit; there is a yearning to be part of a "lifestyle enclave" to use Stan Grenz's phrase, but a missing of the true communal life in the body of Christ. This groping in despair displays itself in grim statistics pointing to the fact

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<sup>532</sup> Paul DeVries. "The Deadly Sin" in *Exploring Faith and Discipleship*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Christian Schools International Publisher, 1992), p.79.

<sup>533</sup> Graham Johnston. *Preaching to a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), p. 29.

<sup>534</sup> S. Grenz and R. Olson. *20<sup>th</sup> Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992), p.311.

<sup>535</sup> J. F. Lyotard in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation*, A.K.M. Adam, ed. (St. Louis, MO.: Chalice Press, 2000), p. 162.

that “suicide continues to be a leading cause of death among young people”<sup>536</sup> in British Columbia. Pre-service teachers all receive training to be alert to the warning signs. Many Canadian teenagers look upon existence as, at best, an exercise in frustration or, at worst, as an absurd cosmic joke.

Into this hopeless despair, the Christian teacher can bring the good news of Jesus Christ, the hope of individuals, communities and nations. Christian teachers must insist that “the sovereign/personal God is a talking God; that he has left a record of his words in Scripture; that we can understand those words truly . . . ”<sup>537</sup>

As students develop physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially and intellectually in their Christian schools, they learn to test their findings from the Word in community: how do others interpret this word; how does my teacher view this pericope; how has the church of all ages interpreted it; how do I interpret it and put it into practice today? And so the body is at work, each part doing his/her ‘thing’ as they incarnate the Word in community. As the Word is honored for what it is, namely a word from God their Creator and Redeemer, students and teachers will be able to examine each book in the canon and find God’s message for them. They will discover who God is and who they are as they interact with the stories, the wisdom literature, the history, the poetry, the prose, the gospels, the letters, and the apocalypse. They will be transformed as they incarnate the truths of the Word. As a result of this learning, and the application of the learning by the Spirit, teachers and students in these Christian schools will learn to live

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<sup>536</sup> BC Council for Families. *Suicide: What you Need to Know*. (Victoria, BC.: BC Ministry of Education, 1999), p.2.

<sup>537</sup> D.A. Carson. *The Gagging of God*, p. 545.

wisely and with skill toward greater harmony within God's created and revealed design in the twenty-first century. They will put into practice a Trinitarian approach to their study of the Bible knowing not only that God gave the Word, Jesus incarnated the Word, and the Holy Spirit applies the Word to the hearts of men and women, but also that they are to model the loving interaction of the Trinity as they live in their classroom community. Faith and learning are integrated to the highest degree because teachers can rely on the Spirit's work.

Christian schools have a very crucial role to fulfill in this process of transformation in making every resource available to serve their *Imago Dei* students. Christian teachers now more than ever need to train their students to serve in the marketplace of life: we need Christian scientists, doctors, environmentalists, economists, coaches, in short, Christians in every profession to model the truths of God's Word so as to infuse hope, direction and purpose in this post modern age. To use Abraham Kuyper's example of the Aeolian harp: put the harp on the window sill and wait for the wind to blow upon it. The harp must be ready, well tuned and in top form. And so our students will be made ready by godly Bible teachers, passionate about the Word of God, awaiting the wind of the Spirit to bring forth harmonious and pleasing sounds, honoring their Maker in all areas of life.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>538</sup> A Kuyper. *Zes Stone-Lezingen*. (Kampen, Holland: J.H. Kok, N.V., 1959), p.168

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- D:2 August 11, 2004. Ms. B (Grade 8 teacher at Abbotsford Christian Middle School) Abbotsford, B.C.
- D:3 June 1, 2004. Ms. MP (Grade 12 teacher at Abbotsford Christian Secondary) Abbotsford, B.C.
- D:4 April 14, 2004. Mr. JS (Principal, William of Orange School), Cloverdale, B.C.
- D:5 October 28, 2004. Mr. GS (Grade 7 teacher at Credo Christian Elementary) Langley, B.C.
- D:6 May 26, 2004. Mr. PT (Principal, John Calvin Christian School, K-12) Yarrow, B.C.
- D:7 October 28, 2004. Ms. MM and Mr. JR (Grade 1 teacher/principal at Credo Christian Elementary) Langley, B.C.
- D:8 May 31, 2004. Ms. EP (Grade 1 teacher at Timothy Christian School) Rosedale, B.C.
- D:9 May 31, 2004. Mr. PL (Grade 5 teacher at Timothy Christian School) Rosedale, B.C.
- D:10 May 31, 2004. Mr. DM (Senior Bible teacher at Timothy Christian School) Rosedale, B.C.
- D:11 October 18, 2004. Mr. AS (Principal at Mt. Cheam Christian School) Chilliwack, B.C.
- D:12 October 25, 2004. Ms. DM (Grade 4 teacher at Mennonite Educational Institute) Abbotsford, B.C.
- D:13 November 7, 2004. Ms. LH (Grade 2 teacher at Mennonite Educational I Institute) Abbotsford, B.C..
- D:14 September 28, 2004. Mr. GK (Grade 12 teacher at Mennonite Educational Institute) Abbotsford, B.C.
- D:15 October 17, 2004. Mr. PH (Grade 7, 8, 9 teacher/principal at Mennonite Educational Institute) Chilliwack, B.C.

- D:16 November 17, 2004. Mr. DS (Head Bible teacher at Cornerstone Christian School) Abbotsford, B.C.
- D:17 December 6, 2004. Ms. BT (Grade 5 teacher/principal at Pacific Academy) Surrey, B.C.
- D:18 December 6, 2004. Ms. JH (Grade 2 teacher at Pacific Academy) Surrey, B.C.
- D:19 February 2, 2005. Ms. DD. (Principal, Zion Lutheran School) Cloverdale, B.C.

## **Transcripts of Interviews Conducted During Field Study**

D:I August 19, 2004. Ms. H. (Grade 2 teacher at Abbotsford Christian Elementary) Abbotsford, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

How can we possibly be led to teach what is important if we don't have the Holy Spirit? My day is to be directed by the Holy Spirit.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

The Bible is a letter from my Lord. It is his Word to his people to show his love and faithfulness; it's infallible. Many Bible stories in the CSI curriculum are not age appropriate. There seems to be a conspiracy to keep Jesus out of the curriculum. There is too much focus on the Old Testament. I have specific Bible lessons, but I take teachable moments throughout the day. I find spontaneity is lost for the sake of the curriculum; there is too much material to cover in the CSI curriculum. I impart the Word to my students. Maybe God will give me a harvest. I may have the privilege of leading one of my students to Christ.

**2 (b):** Do you use storytelling as a means of teaching Bible?

One of the main ways I teach Bible is by story telling. Then the students dramatize the story with costumes and props. I do not read the Bible stories. I make the Bible come alive throughout the day, especially with music, song and drama. My students know so much Scripture by singing it.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are conceived and born in sin; they are sinners who need a Savior. I think in a Christian school, it is the teachers' role to bring the students to Christ. Teachers plant seeds and water them, but sometimes God gives an opportunity to harvest as well and I do want to miss that.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

I do have communal discussions in my Bible lessons, along with prayer time.

I make the Bible come alive for them by asking students if they can see patterns, let's say in the lives of the Israelites, and then we discuss whether or not we see those same patterns in our lives. I ask them if God speaks to us today. How did the people in this story feel about the events, etc. That way my students respond from their hearts and tell me their feelings, fears and attitudes. That way I foster community.

**Other comments:** In the CSI curriculum there seems to be a conspiracy to keep Jesus out of the curriculum. I teach lots of songs about Jesus and follow the church calendar on the life of Jesus. I talk about grace. I use less paper and pencil and lots of dramatization.

D:2 August 11, 2004. Ms. B. (Grade 8 teacher at Abbotsford Christian Middle School) Abbotsford, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

The Holy Spirit works through me and in each individual student to make their learning in Bible not only head knowledge but also “heart knowledge.”

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

It is the inerrant Word of God, not to be followed legalistically, but as the story of salvation: creation/fall/redemption.

I try to integrate the Bible with other subjects as well: e.g. using a timeline to show Biblical events and historical events (e.g. Ancient China compared to the time of King David).

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Yes, I often read over the story in a children’s Bible story book before telling to the students. I tell the Bible stories sometimes, ask students to re-enact them and sometimes I show videos of Bible stories such as “The Ten Commandments” or “The Exodus”.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are made in God’s image, entrusted to me by their parents and valued as individuals with God given abilities and gifts.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

Yes. I often use group discussion, group brainstorming, or jigsaw activities to build community and cooperative learning. I have them reflect, journal, and write how they feel if this or that happened to them. I discuss trust, faith, etc. in today’s terms.

**Other comments:** Thanks for giving me the opportunity to reflect on my Bible teaching.

D:3 June 1, 2004. Ms. MP. (Grade 12 teacher at Abbotsford Christian Secondary) Abbotsford, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

The Holy Spirit has to convict them, that's the bottom line.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

My students do not know the Bible; they scorn it. They suffer from religious overkill.

Familiarity breeds contempt. Students are immune to the beauty of God's Word. The Bible is God's story. I want my students to examine those heroes of the faith as well as those who have been driven away from the Christian faith, so we can respond to those who are cynical about faith. Students have the attitude that Bible must be fun.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

I do use some stories, such as the lives of the prophets we study: Amos, Isaiah and the Judges, as well as New Testament stories. I study the letters of Peter, James and Jude with my students.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are at different levels of commitment in their Christian faith. I see many of them as angry kids; I always have to pull them along. They think Bible is being stuffed down their throats. I have such varied levels of ability in my classes. They are all from different denominations. That's an asset when it comes to discussions. My students are not aware of how much they are part of today's culture. Many of the students do have faith. I do address them as Christians since this is a Christian school. The students believe I have to earn their respect. The parents have also bought into that. They do not understand the Bible program either. Both students and parents are totally convinced that they make autonomous choices. My students look to their peers for leadership. I still address my students as Christians; the word covenant does not come up very often, since not all, maybe not even half, of the students have been baptized as infants.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

I love discussions. They foster community. Since students are from about sixty different churches in the area, we have many different perspectives and lots of room for discussions and group work. I use many open ended assignments and much student interaction with the Bible, as well as teacher-student discussions, thus creating an atmosphere of community and reciprocity in the classroom.

**Other comments:** Even though my students may know the Bible to be true, that still will not stop them from pursuing their own pleasure. They rebel, but still in their heart of hearts, they know what God expects of them; however, since their peers drive their choices, they often flounder and do not choose to follow God. See also Ms. MP's curriculum, pp. 91 and 92.

D:4 April 14, 2004. Mr. JS. (Principal, William of Orange Christian School)  
Cloverdale, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible? The Holy Spirit has been busy with these kids long before I got on the scene.

This keeps me humble, because I know it is God's work in their lives. I often ask: What is the Holy Spirit doing in the lives of each student? This is differentiated learning. They are at differing levels of spiritual growth.

**Question #2(a):** How do you view the Bible?

It is God's story of salvation. It is His love letter to us. I use metaphors because they describe God's Word more clearly. God has included us in the tapestry of His story.

We teach Bible for two distinct reasons. First, Bible is taught so that the student can better know his God and, second, so that the student can better know his neighbor. In other words, the student is trained to reflect his Maker and is equipped for every good work. These studies are designed to enable the student to explore the Biblical motifs of creation, fall, exodus, redemption and consummation. We teach Bible from the perspective of redemptive history.

**Question #2(b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Yes, I do. I go through entire books at a time and if there is a story, I tell it and we study it as a class. I love teaching these kids Bible.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are God's children and God continues to work with them. They are all 'in process'.

I see them as 'already' and as 'not yet'.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

My classroom is, yes. We study one book together. For example we just studied the book of Lamentations. The students immerse themselves in the book, talk about how it applies to their lives today and we link it with the commemoration of Good Friday and Easter. I sent them home for spring break, asking them to meditate on the book and then come back after the break to report to all of us on how the book spoke to them individually.

**Other comments:** See: "Teaching Bible History at William of Orange Christian School", a rationale for teaching Bible for teachers by JS, pp. 102-105.

D:5 October 28, 2004. Mr. GS (Grade 7 teacher at Credo Christian Elementary) Langley, B.C.\*

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

I need the Holy Spirit. I pray for that every day. The Spirit will enable us.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

It is God's infallible Word. We have to sign the *Three Forms of Unity* as part of our contract and I believe what it says there about the Bible.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

I try!

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are covenant children. Covenant is a way of life for us. Our children are born into the covenant through their parents. We need to educate these children by means of the home, school and church. We commit them to God at baptism. They are relational beings made in God's image. Kids are sinners and they are all in need of regeneration, daily regeneration.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

I try to have sharing in my class. I pair them up. I give them each a question and then they add to the answer, group by group. I think the CSI curriculum does a good job of relating the questions to the students' lives. My students are very open.

**Other comments:** We have one church history period and four Bible periods every week. In the church history curriculum I encourage my students to tell the stories they have read.

I enjoy those activities with my students.

\*This interview was not used in the text.

D:6 May 26, 2004. Mr. PT (Principal, John Calvin Christian School, K-12)  
Yarrow, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

The moment the Word of God is opened, the Spirit begins to work for blessing or for cursing (as mentioned in Isaiah 55). There is no neutrality. God's Word does not return to him void. Even if I have a non-committed teacher in my school, the Spirit can still work in the hearts of my students. The Spirit does not work apart from the word. There is only one question and answer about the subject of the Holy Spirit in the Heidelberg Catechism; that is why we don't discuss the subject very often. Pentecostalism can be a mile wide, but only an inch deep.

**Question #2 (a):** How do you view the Bible?

As Reformed people, we have got to know our Bibles. We don't believe in a smorgasbord where we pick and choose what to learn from the Bible. Each grade level in this school covers the Old and New Testament a number of times. The emphasis is on cognitive recall. You can't build a house without bricks. The Christian has to know his Bible. That's why we assign Bible memory work for every grade level.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Story telling is the most important vehicle for teaching Bible. They also learn one song a week from the *Book of Praise* the psalm book used by the Canadian Reformed Church.

We also teach Church History in grades four and up. They may have three weeks of Bible and one of Church History. In my book "The Flame of the Word" I use story telling and 'pointalism', that is, teaching the flash points of history, as the main vehicle for telling the history of the church. Teachers develop their own Bible seatwork.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are covenant children; baptism is a sign and seal of what God has promised to them. He will be their God. As they become self-willed, they have a responsibility before God. God has set his mark of faith in a family context. We do not equate election and the covenant because there are those that reject the faith. They are called "reprobates" in the Canons of Dordt. You can be a covenant breaker.

We recognize the infant baptism of other churches.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

We sometimes use cooperative learning in our classrooms, but the emphasis is on cognitive recall. Children of our time are more open to discussion than our parents were. We do have some class discussion.

**Other comments:** We teach Church History to help our children understand their neighbors.

D:7 October 28, 2004. Ms. MM (Grade 1 teacher at Credo Christian Elementary School) Langley, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible lessons?

It is His story. In the preparation of the Bible lesson, I pray for the Spirit. His role is very important. I say a quiet prayer before the lessons. The Spirit and the Bible work together.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

It is God's Word to us, His inerrant, infallible and inspired Word.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Yes, I tell the story. I don't read it from the text. We use the CSI Bible curriculum. I often think about the question: How do my students hear God's voice? I think telling the story helps my students to hear his voice.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

My students are children of the Lord. They are His kids. They have a child like faith.

They are all baptized and all come from Christian homes. It is the parents' role to lead their children to Christ. When they are adults, they do public profession of faith.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

I try to foster community allowing students to sit in a circle and discuss issues. Sometimes they decide together on a problem that I give them related to the Bible.

We have devotions every morning. We also have devotions with the entire school in the gymnasium.

**Other comments:** I don't moralize the Bible stories, but when things come up I ask questions such as: what could they have done differently? What would Jesus do?

My students learn a Bible verse every week; we also memorize songs from the *Book of Praise*.

D:8 May 31, 2004. Ms. EP (Grade 1 teacher at Timothy Christian School)  
Rosedale, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

I pray for the Holy Spirit. I bring the Bible to the students' ears; the Holy Spirit applies it to their hearts. I cannot teach Bible without the Holy Spirit and prayer. It is very easy to resist or quench the Holy Spirit.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

It is God's Word from the beginning to the end.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Yes. I use story telling, pictures, dramatizing and visual aids to teach my grade 1 students. I try to teach the story right from the Bible.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

I teach them as children who have been brought up in Christian homes. They are privileged children, not necessarily born again. They need a new heart and I tell them to pray for one.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

I try to create community by having prayer requests and allowing students to pray for each other. I teach by example.

**Other comments:** I try to relate the Bible to other subjects as well as my discipline. I often ask students: Is this pleasing to the Lord? In Science, I apply what we have learned to their lives. I love teaching them about creation. In this school we must say 'thee' and 'thou' when referring to God. We are not allowed any pictures of Jesus or angels. Bible reading is very solemn. Ninety-eight percent of the male teachers do devotions. Some high school students are fatalistic since they do not know whether they are elect or not.

D:9 August 18, 2004. Mr. PL (Grade 5 teacher at Timothy Christian School)  
Rosedale, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

The Holy Spirit works through the teacher. The word has its own power. We plant the seeds of the gospel.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

I agree with what the *Three Forms of Unity* say about the Bible.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Not in grade 5. In the lower grades, grades 1, 2, and 3, story telling is used all the time as a method for teaching Bible. I use mainly question and answers. I use the old CSI books that still use the King James Version of the Bible. This series goes through the Bible chronologically and uses memorization and fill in the blank exercises. I have also made my own Bible exercises for the students. We study mainly David to the book of Malachi in grade 5.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are children of the covenant and judged not to be Christians as yet in this school. They are within the family of God. As to whether they are converted, I may not judge.

Those outside of the covenant have to come into the covenant. They are all baptized as infants and that puts them in the covenant. They still must enter the kingdom of God through conversion. It is never too late to come to Christ.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

In this school, the Bible curriculum is mainly teacher centered. The teacher also does the praying. I very seldom, if ever, have cooperative learning in my class. The students sit in straight rows and do not talk to one another during class when they are supposed to be doing their work.

**Other comments:** In this school, only teachers from the Netherlands Reformed Church are allowed to teach Bible. However, they made an exception for me since I am Free Reformed and I have studied Bible at Regent College. \*

\*This teacher no longer teaches at Timothy Christian because he has changed his views and has become a Baptist.

D:10 May 31, 2004. Mr. DM (Senior Bible teacher at Timothy Christian School)  
Rosedale, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

We have to pray a lot for our students. We teach a unit about the Holy Spirit.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

We view the Bible according to the *Three Forms of Unity*, especially "The Confession of Faith" articles II to VII. In this school, we go through the whole Bible with our student four times during the K-12 years. In the high school years we teach Bible and Bible doctrine, using the books written by our former principal, Mr. Jim Beeke.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

No, but we do use stories of real life examples to illustrate what it is to be a Christian.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They have a special relation to God's providence. That means they have a spiritual obligation to read and study the Bible. We don't presume our students are Christians.

We tell them to examine themselves. They are under no pressure to say that they are saved.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

I do allow some group work where the students sit in groups and support one another.

**Other comments:** We have two sets of study Bibles in our classroom. Students learn the skills of using study Bibles. I believe the *Three Forms of Unity* are underutilized. My students have Bible journals. Students are asked to make an application of certain passages studied.

D:11 October 18, 2004. Mr. AS (Principal at Mt. Cheam Christian School)  
Chilliwack, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

Do you mean: Are we converted or not?

We see a general role of the Holy Spirit; does the Holy Spirit work in a saving sense?

We don't see a lot of that here. We teach the students to ask: What should I do to be saved? They need to see their sin, know how to be delivered and then hopefully live a life of thankfulness. We sow the seeds here. Some are very serious about eternal life.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

We have a Bible in the front of every classroom. It is God's inerrant Word. We believe the King James Version is translated according to the original autographs.

We believe the Bible is alive. We just try not to kill it. We go through the entire Bible three times by the time our students reach grade 8.

We don't have a Bible curriculum as such. We steer away from workbooks; we just use the Bible. Each year we increase the levels of complexity. In the primary grades we only tell the highlights.

In grades 9-12 we introduce the dogmatic truths of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Confession of Faith. We rarely talk about the *Canons of Dordt*.

I teach the Bible to grades 10-12 students. I teach a unit on the use of the electronic media. Students are taught on the basis of Scripture why television is sinful, how to use the Internet and how to discern. We use Charles Colson's book: *How Then Shall We Live?*

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

The teachers prepare the Bible stories and tell them without using notes.

Some do this more expressively than others.

Children will understand the history. They learn rules for life.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are fallen creatures. They are unsaved people.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners? Not answered.

**Other comments:** We encourage our students to read books about the lives of real Christians such as: John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "The Holy War", Huntingdon's "The Kingdom of Heaven Taken by Prayer" and John Warburton's "The Mercies of a Covenant God".

D:12 October 25, 2004. Ms. DM (Grade 7 teacher at the Mennonite Educational Institute) Abbotsford, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

I cannot prepare Bible lessons without the Holy Spirit.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

We have a devotional every day and we integrate the Bible with the devotional. We have at least one school-wide chapel every week where we pray together, sing together and read the Bible together. We have one Bible lesson every week. There is a set of Bibles on the shelf of each intermediate classroom. The Scripture Press materials constantly make applications from the Bible lesson to the lives of the students. We do the same with out students.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Yes. I also use flannel graphs to tell the Bible stories, I use videos to teach about certain Bible characters. We study Elijah, Esther Nehemiah and Peter in grade 4. I also have comic books about Peter and Elijah which the students use. I rarely cover each of these four characters in one year. Nehemiah is often left out. The Scripture Press Books allow for a lot of application. We try to apply the lives of these Bible characters to the lives of our students. We have some dramatization.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

We have a huge variety of students. Nine out of the twenty-nine students in my class are not Caucasian. We have Sikhs, Chinese and East Indian students and each has their own religion. Some students come from Christian homes, but many have not yet made a decision for Christ. Some go to the temple to worship their Guru Nanak. I have to remember that they all come from varied backgrounds.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

I do some group work in Bible. In reading Scripture, I have a group approach.

**Other comments:**

Every day our teachers use the Bible as a devotional book, reading age appropriate devotional material that often tells a story and links the events to principles from the Bible. Teachers are free to choose their own devotional materials. We have chapels once a week at least. We always have some sort of service project on the go.

D:13 November 7, 2004. Ms. LH (Grade 2 teacher at the Mennonite Education Institute) Abbotsford, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

The Holy Spirit leads the teacher. My students know about my spiritual life. I sense the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He is my comforter. The Holy Spirit leads teacher and students into the truths of God's word.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

It is God's Word. It is totally true. I believe 2 Timothy 3:16,17. It is the map for my life. I integrate the memory verses from the Bible with my themes as much as possible.

The Bible is our compass. I try to teach them something from the Bible every day.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Yes, quite a lot. I find interesting resources for my students.

I use Chalk Talk as a means of telling Bible stories. I try to make it applicable to their level. My favorite part of the day is the Bible lesson. I teach straight from the Scriptures.

We have a "character of the week" from the Bible, someone who can be their hero.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They need to come into a relationship with God. It's about relationship with God and others. I have had kids come to the Lord in my class. I have prayed with them to make a commitment to the Lord.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

To some degree. We do prayer partner groups, we have skits about Bible stories; we have prayer journals. I try to make them integrate Bible with our devotions.

**Other comments:** I try to integrate the Bible as much as possible throughout the curriculum. I love teaching Bible.

D:14 September 28, 2004. Mr. GK (Grade 12 Bible teacher at the Mennonite Educational Institute) Abbotsford, B.C.

**Question #1:** Question #1: What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

We rely on the Holy Spirit for each lesson. The Holy Spirit gives me illustrations. As I build the curriculum, the Holy Spirit leads to give me the right words, to lead, to build the curriculum. We present the different views of the Holy Spirit in our Apologetics class in grade 12. Students learn about the intellectual, scholastic and charismatic perspectives on the Holy Spirit and we teach them the cautions and blessings of each.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

It is the inerrant Word of God. Our recently updated *Confession of Faith* states that.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

In the elementary grades, yes. In the high school, it depends on the teacher. I relate the Bible to their lives by personal story telling, stories from real life that illustrate Biblical truths. We strongly encourage our teachers to do this as well.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

As a young child, God treats them according to their understanding. They are God's children, his unique creation, but they have a choice. We make no assumptions that they have chosen for God. Many students do not come from Christian homes. We respect them as loved by God. We strongly encourage teachers to invest in students beyond the classroom.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

Yes. For example, when I teach a unit on Radical Christianity, the unit about our Anabaptist forebears, I have them work in groups and then present their findings to the class. We have chapels once a week to foster school community. We ask students to share their own experiences with God. We pray for one another. We have some cooperative learning like that. Students use the computer based Bible Search programs, web pages and library books to make reports and then bring their findings back to class.

**Other Comments:** Before we were all over the map in teaching Bible. The elementary school used Scripture Press materials, but they are largely out of date. Now we are busy making a new and revised Bible curriculum. For the high

school, we have listed the curriculum organizers for the students, that is, which Bible books we will study, which teaching strategies we will use, what the intended learning outcomes will be, how we will assess the students and what resources the teachers can use. We try to dovetail what is learned in Bible class with real life skills. For example, in the grade 10 course planning unit (Career and Personal Planning-CAPP), we study the wisdom literature of Scripture. We actually sat down with our students as a staff and asked them what they would like to see in their Bible programs. Together the staff and students have come up with a comprehensive Bible course that attempts to integrate required government courses such as CAPP (Career and Personal Planning) with the teaching of Bible.

D:15 October 17, 2004. Mr. PH (Grade 7, 8, 9 teacher/principal at the Mennonite Education Institute) Chilliwack, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

His work is totally essential in teaching Bible as well as other subjects. Only the Holy Spirit can transform a child.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

It is viewed in this school as the inerrant, infallible and inspired Word of God. Bible should be the most favorite class in this school. It must connect with students' lives. Without the power of God, students will not be aware of their need. We show students that the Bible is ever new, there are always new mysteries to unfold for us.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

My teachers tell stories all the time. They tell stories that illustrate a proverb, an event or concept related to Scripture, either from the teachers' personal life or from elsewhere. Story telling is also used as a means of telling Bible stories. A story draws you in; the Bible is filled with incredible stories. A story involves the whole person and that is what we want. It is one of the most powerful ways of relating truth to students. You can benefit from the word of God no matter how it is presented, because God uses crooked sticks.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are "in process". They are all in need of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. As teachers we need to focus on the objective truths of Scripture, especially in this day and age where experiential and emotional aspects of conversion are stressed at the expense of truth. We as teachers bring the gospel to them. It is up to the Spirit of God to apply the word. To make the Word of God come alive for students, that is a wrestling process. I never use the same curriculum year after year. I look at my students and their needs. I have a broad canvas and I teach within those parameters. The students have amazing potential. God wants to use them to serve him and others. Most students are not from Mennonite background, even our teachers are not Mennonites. We are mostly mainline evangelical. We challenge them on a weekly basis to respond to the Lord.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

We do give group assignments; the kids share their insights and ask one another questions. We have chapel every week; we pray for the needs of one another.

**Other comments:** We do have the ACSI Bible curriculum. Some teachers use it, other don't. I encourage them to make their own curriculum and their own applications. Let's look directly at the Word. We do define the memory work for each grade.

D:16 November 17, 2004. Mr. DS (Head Bible teacher at Cornerstone Christian School) Abbotsford, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

The Holy Spirit designs the curriculum in this school. We have freedom to teach according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. We are a full gospel church. We tell our students about the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is known as the second blessing, a gift available to each one. After water baptism, the student is saved, but should seek the second blessing for his or her life. Students and teachers go on spiritual retreats where this blessing is encouraged and sought. Teachers look at the needs of students and feed them spiritually accordingly.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

The Bible is the most important book in this school. We try to read through the entire Bible in one year with the students. They learn the books of the Bible. We try to bring out things in the Bible that can be proven. For example, in a National Geographic video, students saw how Lot's cave was real. They find that Mt. Sinai was real. We discussed the recent findings of the Red Sea crossing. Other topics include: "Why did Pharaoh's daughter want Moses?" or "The Fear of the Lord in the Old Testament". I give students a lecture once a week on a topic of my choice (God's choice). Students are to put this in a lecture notebook and illustrate using color and drawings to emphasize certain points made in the lecture.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?  
Not in the higher grades.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

We have a mixture. Some students are open to the gospel. We have East Indian students here. We are evangelistic in focus. Our students want to be here. We accept only high school students who choose to be part of this school

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

We do activities that involve the whole class at the same time.

**Other comments:** We have also had the entire high school involved in a "Scriptorium". The students became scribes, using feather ink pens, candles and a chapter from the Bible. They were to copy it under the same rules the scribes were under in Old Testament days. We were all in one room with light only from the candles and the teachers had on uniforms dressed like monks. Anyway, you see that we kind of stray away from any regular curriculum part of the time. Does this answer your questions?

We don't really have a Bible program that is a curriculum. I use some of the ACSI Bible stuff. I like the *Mastering Bible Study Skills* by Paul Pyle. I am also using *To the Ends of the Earth* by Jay Borkert for the grade 8 and 9 students, both ACSI texts.

We also use the *Understanding the Times* worldview curriculum published by Summit Ministries.

D:17 December 6, 2004. Ms. BT (Grade 5 teacher/elementary principal at Pacific Academy) Surrey, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

The third person of the Trinity is vibrant, alive and active in every classroom. We honor the Spirit's personality, gifting, His healing power and His work in our students' lives. Even though this is a school operated from a Pentecostal perspective, we do not ask students if they are baptized in the Holy Spirit. If the topic comes up, we will discuss it, but we do not teach this doctrine as such. Maybe seventy or eighty percent of teachers in this school have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (though not all staff belong to a Pentecostal church).

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

It is the infallible, irrefutable Word of God, upon which we all base our life and teaching. We don't just want the Bible to be the icing on the cake. We want to integrate it throughout the curriculum. Bible periods happen twice a week, with chapels once every two weeks. Parts of the ACSI Bible curriculum are used in the elementary grades, but most Bible curriculum is teacher generated. Just recently the staff has put out a survey among their teachers to see if the entire Bible is covered. They have discovered some gaps. The story of Esther and the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Job were not discussed, nor were some of the New Testament books. Some books were only mentioned for a memory verse. The New Testament was emphasized far more than the Old. We want to instill a love for God's Word in our students.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Yes, we use story telling probably more than anything else in the teaching of Bible. The stories are not necessarily biblical stories, but stories from the teachers' personal lives, showing how the Bible relates to every detail of a person's life. The school has a time of devotions every day: the principal reads a portion of Scripture every morning over the public address system and then each class has a devotional time.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

They are sinners who need to be redeemed. They need to be justified and then sanctified.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

Yes, we are in favor of communal learning, driven by the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the students and teachers alike. We have a lot of interaction, communal sharing and lots of prayer. We encourage this daily. We want to

strike a balance between the experiential and the intellectual learning of Bible truths.

**Other comments:** Our teachers have a great desire to have students apply Bible truths to their own lives, to have them live it out through the power of the Holy Spirit. As I mentioned before, we are currently revamping our Bible curriculum based on four major themes: Know God, Know His Word, Live His Word and Know His World. Under the 'Know God' section, the following topics are covered: relationship (covenant), God's character, names and personhood, God's plan (creation, the fall, redemption and restoration), the nature of sin, God's plan of salvation, His grace and His sovereignty. Under 'Know His Word', certain Bible passages are chosen for memorization: the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, the fruits of the Spirit, the Ten Commandments, etc. 'Living God's Word' includes living out of the Holy Spirit: baptism, praying, power, filling gifts, fruit. The spiritual disciplines are emphasized: prayer, study, meditation, memorizing Scripture and obedience to it. Character qualities such as truthfulness, integrity, respect and wisdom are crucial to living in the Spirit. We emphasize sanctification, decision making with God, continued growth, worship, outreach and service. 'Know God's World' includes knowing God's plan of creation-fall-redemption and restoration, study of current events, awareness of other cultures, God's grace in the world, how we are shaped by the world and how we can make an impact by our outreach. We are also currently looking at the Bible curriculum called *Building on the Rock*, put out by Summit Ministries.

D:18 December 6, 2004. Ms. JH (Grade 2 teacher at Pacific Academy) Surrey, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

We want to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Bible. We do not officially mention the baptism of the Holy Spirit but when the topic comes up, we use it as a teachable moment.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

We see the Bible as the inspired, infallible Word of God. Many of the stories are new and exciting to the kids. For example, one student whose name is Joshua is very happy to learn about the character and events in the life of the Joshua of the Bible. He only knew that his name meant 'strong warrior'. This is typical of the students that come to our school today; a lot of them have seen 'Prince of Egypt', the video about Joseph, but very few now know that actual biblical story.

We try to relate the Bible curriculum to the themes being studied in the primary grades. For example, in the month of December, classes study everything related to Jesus' birth, even though the main topic for grade 2 is the life of Moses. In grade one, the creation and life of Noah is studied; in grade three we look at the life of Daniel in depth. We study Bible characters to help students make connections in their own life. For example, we learn about Moses' character: his meekness, leadership abilities, his stand for God in the face of opposition. Sometimes this method is too contrived, but each Bible character is supposed to teach the students how to apply God's Word to his or her own life.

**#2 (b)** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

Yes! We act out the Bible story, we do art work related to the story and we try to involve the students as much as possible in the story. But we go through the Bible in terms of the themes we are studying. I think it is very important to look at the Bible curriculum as a whole, so that the entire Scriptures are covered.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

We view our students as sinners in need of redemption. They need to be justified by faith and then sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

Yes. We have lots of communal interaction, lots of sharing, and lots of prayer. Our primary chapels are very intimate times. In my class, we talk about the Bible all day; we are so relational in the primary grades. Since we have such a large number of primary students, we have our own chapels geared to the age level of the students. That is a blessing.

**Other comments:** Many of my students have seen every 'Christian' video there is, but they are still ignorant of the actual teachings of the Bible. They relate to the visual and audio, but they are not good listeners. A simple story must be told very well before a teacher can catch their attention. That is a great challenge for primary teachers today.

D:19 February 2, 2005. Ms. DD (Principal, Zion Lutheran School: K-8)  
Cloverdale, B.C.

**Question #1:** What do you consider the role of the Holy Spirit to be in your teaching of Bible?

Through the Holy Spirit we receive Christ and any good works we do, the Holy Spirit works in us.

**Question #2 (a):** What is your view of the Bible?

The Bible is the inerrant Word of God and it penetrates every lesson in this school. Creation is also God's way of speaking to us. The Bible influences every lesson in this school. In Science as we study the eye, for example, we see God's handiwork in creating such an exquisite body organ. In Social Studies, we emphasize the necessity of being good citizens of the country God has placed us in.

**2 (b):** Do you use story telling as a means of teaching Bible?

We use story telling as a means of teaching Bible in the primary grades.

**Question #3:** How do you view your students?

We have one third of our students from Lutheran background, one third from other Christian denominations and about one third enters the school without knowing Christ.

We Lutherans believe that at the time of infant baptism, the Holy Spirit enters the life of the child and starts his saving work of grace. Children are usually confirmed in the church between the ages of 11 and 13, at which time they receive all the rights and privileges of church membership. We don't lead students to Christ in the classes. We refer them to the pastors.

**Question #4:** Is your classroom a community of learners?

We rarely do group work in Bible lessons. We teach to the whole class. We do have chapels once a week in our school and we build community that way. We also involve the parent community in Bible lessons and programs.

**Other comments:** We do a wonderful Christmas program here: children do role playing, they hear stories about people's lives, the parents and the entire community are involved. We did a dowel movement dance at the Christmas program and now we will be celebrating Lenten season in a similar way. In the classrooms we try to encourage our students to do their very best. We make them aware of the little things in life that we must be thankful for, we ask them to keep prayer diaries to show how God has answered their prayers, we practice Biblical discipline, asking students to forgive one another and to restore them to fellowship to prove genuine forgiveness.

## Appendix A - Assessment

In this appendix, I want to illustrate how I would handle the book of Jonah for each of the three groupings, primary, intermediate and high school years, in terms of assessment of assignments given.

**For primary grades:** Each student would have a portfolio with all the (textbook) exercises, drawings, sequence work or picture commentary, sentence summaries, etc., that were done while studying this book. The teacher should also keep anecdotal comments on the discussions, story telling by the students or insightful comments by each of the students. During the reporting period, this portfolio could be used during student-led conferences when parents come to see their child's progress.

Teachers could then add their own comments to the discussion. Students will be memorizing Jonah 4:2, but only as a group using closure exercises, daily repetition, songs or games to help them learn it. Teachers could use simple categories such as 'very good', 'good', or 'improvement needed' in certain categories.

**For intermediate grades:** Included in the portfolio would be all of the same types of items along with the journal, kept by the student, in which s/he gives personal reaction to the biblical text. Perhaps students will be asked to give written comments on Jonah as a biblical character, descriptions of the sailors or

an eye-witness account of the city of Nineveh as Jonah is proclaiming God's judgment and the people and animals repent. A sequence picture summary of the narrative could be included. Exercises from the textbooks could also be included. Again, the teacher would be taking anecdotal records of how students interact in group exercises, how they re-tell the story and how they have learned about the entire book. Marks would be given, but only as students and teachers have interacted about them; marks should only be given on the basis of excellent work (A), very good (B), good (C) improvement needed (D). In my view, a mark of failure should not be given when studying the Bible.

**For high school grades:** Students should have a portfolio of all their work done on this book, along with a journal, detailing their personal reaction to each chapter. These two items would form the basis for their mark. They would be required to know the entire second chapter from memory, along with an outline of the book. They should be able to tell the story from memory as well, without using notes. Percentages and letter grades should be assigned for high school students, based on a great variety of their work:

\*Students could do a diagrammatic summary of the book, using both words and images, but all this on one 11 x 17" sheet of paper. They would need to summarize the characters, plot themes, action and purpose of the book. They could be as creative as they wish. The summary could include pictures, symbols, key words, verses, and a summary sentence. Along with this summary, students could include a short paragraph on the poster which explains the value of the book of Jonah for its readers: e.g. Why read Jonah?

The following grading scheme could be used:

*Creativity/Appearance	/10
*Content/Understanding	/20
*Interpretation of themes/Value	/20
	Total: /50

This exercise takes into account the various learning styles of students, their creativity, and their interpretations. Before they receive their grades, each student should be asked to evaluate his/her own work (using the same rubric); the teacher could then give his/her assessment and after discussion, together teacher and student could come to agreement on the final marks. (This would be a one on one discussion with the student.)

\*Students could produce a video of their own dramatization of the book.

\*Students could be asked to make a power point presentation of God's power in nature, using not only the book of Jonah, but other Scripture passages as well.

\*Students could also be required to write an essay about Hebrew narrative and how this book is intricately crafted from a literary perspective.

\*Another group of students could report to the class about the different usages of the Hebrew verb "to prepare" or the various usages of the names of God and how that impacts the story.

\*What has the Holy Spirit shown you by studying this book? In order to answer that question, students should be encouraged to journal through the book, so that they have an opportunity to state in written form personal ways in which this Bible

book has impacted them. In fact, the first ten minutes of every lesson could be journaling, so that students interact with different portions of the text. Journal notations should not be marked. The teacher should simply ask to see that they have, in fact, interacted with the biblical text in a thoughtful way and give their students ten percent of the total grade for completing this work.

\*Students could be asked to write a short story of their own with four chapters, modelling the book of Jonah. This could be correlated with a literature project on the short story.<sup>539</sup>

All these exercises and methods of assessment could be superimposed, modified and extended to other Bible books and pericopes. Many of the exercises could be incorporated and integrated into other subject areas such as art, history, social studies, music, literature, geography in a similar way that teacher B did with her middle school students (see p. 73).

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<sup>539</sup> These exercises flow out of my years of teaching experience, starting with primary grades and going through university level. Some are from ideas picked up from “my” teachers.

## Appendix B

### The book of Jonah: Interacting with the Biblical Text

While studying and interacting with the biblical text of the book of Jonah, I have consulted commentaries that would be supported by each of the four faith groups discussed in this thesis. It seems to me that the main controversies surrounding this book are two:

- a. how to view the biblical text
- b. how to view the God of this Bible book

The first question (a): “How to view the biblical text?” should be answered by the four representative commentaries of each of the faith beliefs studied. Luther views the book of Jonah as history as indicated by his comments: “Who would believe this story and not regard it a lie and a fairy tale if it were not recorded in Scripture?”<sup>540</sup> In his mind there is no doubt that Jonah, the son of Amittai, is the prophet who lived during the days of Jeroboam II. Calvin concurs with Luther on this. He too, regards the entire book as God’s Word to be taken as literal history. In fact, he calls those “Infidels” who have “endeavoured to prove that this book is either an historical allegory, or a parable, or a dream or a moral fiction, or something else still more absurd and extravagant.”<sup>541</sup> Ellison (a commentary approved by a Mennonite pastor) in his commentary alludes to the fact that “until

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<sup>540</sup> M. Luther. *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 19. Hilton Oswald, editor. (Saint Louis, MO.: Concordia Publishing House, 1974), p.68.

<sup>541</sup> J. Calvin. *Commentaries on the Minor Prophets*. John Owen, translator. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1979), p. v.

the nineteenth century, Jonah was regarded as history.<sup>542</sup> The Pentecostal theologians, too, concur that “Jonah, the son of Amittai, prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II (see 2 Kings 14:25).”<sup>543</sup>

Each of the four exegetes regards the book of Jonah as happening in history as recorded in the text.

This is in conflict with the view of the father-son Lacocque team who find in the book of Jonah that “there are enough clues for assigning it a fifth century”<sup>544</sup> date of composition. They assert that the Nineveh described in the third chapter of Jonah does not correspond with the measurements proposed by archaeologists. “Nineveh, which was utterly destroyed in the seventh century (612, by Cyaxarus), did not exceed eight miles in circumference.”<sup>545</sup> They turn to arguments of vocabulary and style to determine the book’s post-exilic dating. They consider the book “fictional narrative”<sup>546</sup> which “must be read with the vivid consciousness that the issue is both theological and psychological,” concluding that Jonah must be read “both as a theological pamphlet and as a folk tale bearing upon human psychology in general.”<sup>547</sup>

How would teachers in these four Christian schools view the book of Jonah? Going by the four commentaries quoted, they would see the book of Jonah as God’s inspired Word to be taught as historical truth. They would base this on the statements of Christ, who also took for granted that Jonah was three

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<sup>542</sup> H. L. Ellison. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7. F. Gaebelein, editor. (Grand Rapids, MI.: The Zondervan Corporation, 1985), p.362.

<sup>543</sup> Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing Company, 2002), p.231.

<sup>544</sup> Andre Lacocque & Pierre-Emmanuel Lacocque. *The Jonah Complex*. Atlanta, GA.: John Knox Press, 1981), p.8.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., p.18.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

days and three nights in the belly of the fish, that the Ninevites repented as a result of Jonah's preaching, and by declaring that He is greater than Jonah (Matthew 12: 39-41; Matthew 16:4). They would also base this view of Scripture on their respective confessions and how these interpret the Bible. Teachers within these schools would teach the book of Jonah as God's inspired, infallible Word to themselves and their students. They would maybe mention the contrary views as expressed by the Lacocque team in grades 11 and 12 just to present to those students some different perspectives and views about the Bible and how to deal with them.

The second question (b) that could cause controversy when studying the book of Jonah is the view of God presented in the book. Calvin views Jonah's attitude in chapter 4:2 as one of finding fault with God and still retaining some portion of his own obstinacy, "for he boasted of his flight."<sup>548</sup> Calvin sees this passage as coming directly from Exodus 33:19, 34:6, 7; Jonah knows that God "cannot be unlike Himself; He cannot put off that disposition of which he has testified to Moses. He would otherwise deny His own nature."<sup>549</sup> As to the phrase 'God repents of evil', Calvin has the following to say: "This is God's repentance; he is said to repent when he freely forgives whatever punishment or evil men have deserved, whenever they loathe themselves."<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> J. Calvin. *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, p. 119.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, p.126.

Luther says of this passage: “It is superfluous to enter on the subtle question here of how God can repent, turn from and regret His anger, since He is unchangeable. {People} complicate the matter for themselves unnecessarily.”<sup>551</sup>

Ellison, in his commentary on the book of Jonah, also relates the 4:2 passage to the book of Exodus as well as to other similar Scripture passages: Numbers 14:18, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalms 86:15, 103:8, 145:8 and Joel 2:13.<sup>552</sup>

He continues:

What is clear is that Jonah was finding fault with God as he really is, and not as he imagined him to be. This trait is more common among godly men than we sometimes realize. It explains why those who pride themselves on their loyalty to Scripture hold doctrines that stand in plain contradiction to the revealed character of God.<sup>553</sup>

The Pentecostal theologians whose commentary I have chosen for this examination of Scripture assert the following: “Jonah does not want God to relent and is angry with Yahweh for being true to himself (see Exodus 34:3,4)!”<sup>554</sup> Within the parameters of the teachings of these four faith beliefs, God is seen as true to Himself, unchanging and the fact that He relents/repents is taken within that context.

Perspectives to the contrary are expressed by theologians who challenge this view of God and consider their perspective to also be a biblical view of God. According to Richard Rice, referring to Moses’ intercession on the part of sinful Israel, Abraham’s prayer for the righteous in Sodom and Gomorah and Jonah’s

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<sup>551</sup> M. Luther. *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 19, p.88.

<sup>552</sup> H..L. Ellison. “Commentary on the Book of Jonah” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, p.385.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, p.385.

<sup>554</sup> Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, p.233.

statement about God repenting of the evil He was planning to bring on the Ninevites,

“God’s intentions are not absolute and invariant; he does not unilaterally and irrevocably decide what to do. When God deliberates, he evidently takes a variety of things into account, including human attitudes and response. Once he formulates his plans, they are still open to revision.”<sup>555</sup>

In relation to this ‘relenting’ Rice states:

“God himself experiences change. After God acts, the universe is different and God’s experience of the universe is different. This concept of divine action thus involves divine temporality. Time is real for God.”<sup>556</sup>

Rice sees God’s actions as reactions to the human plans, deeds and actions.

According to him, the future is open to God.

Again, within the parameters of the faith beliefs of these four Christian schools, this view of God would be too man-centered, contrary to the Scriptures as they read them and also contrary to their confessions. Hence, teachers would present God as He reveals Himself in the book, relating the passage in Jonah (4:2) to the other biblical passages mentioned above in Ellison’s commentary. They would also present passages such as Malachi 3:6, James 1:17, Numbers 23:19, 1 Samuel 15:29 to show God’s changelessness, or His ‘everlastingness’ as evidenced in Psalms 9:7, 90:2 or His immortality (1 Timothy 1:17). And finally, they would end by saying that we as human beings cannot understand God, just as Elihu said: “The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power.” Teachers would hold all those truths about God with their hands open, knowing that His ways are unsearchable and His paths past finding out.

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<sup>555</sup> Richard Rice. *The Openness of God*. (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1994), p.29.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36.

