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## Educating in the Spirit: An Examination of the Person and Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian School Education (Part Two)

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### Abstract

This study is the second of a two-part article that examines the Person and role of the Holy Spirit in Christian school education. Part One ([ICCTE Journal, 10\(1\)](#)) was an extensive literature review of the Person and role of the Holy Spirit from the two perspectives. Part Two is a cross-case study of two principals who led schools representing each perspective. The rationale for this study is that since Christian schools submit to the authority of the Bible, and Scripture recognizes the preeminence of the Holy Spirit, these schools would seek to comply with these biblical prescriptions. The employment of semi-structured interviewing in a qualitative, cross-case research design suited the study. We sought to encapsulate the in-depth experience of two principals, one from a Reformed and the other from a Pentecostal/Charismatic Christian school. Through a within-case analysis of each interview, important themes were identified. In the subsequent cross-case comparative analysis, the most important themes included the transmission of truth, staff matters, and goals for learners. Additional discussion raised separately by only one of the principals addresses the themes of compliance with authority and relationship with the Spirit.

## **Educating in the Spirit: An Examination of the Person and Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian School Education (Part Two)**

Thyra Cameron and James Swezey, Liberty University

### **Abstract**

This study is the second of a two-part article that examines the Person and role of the Holy Spirit in Christian school education. Part One (**ICCTE Journal, 10(1)**) was an extensive literature review of the Person and role of the Holy Spirit from the two perspectives. Part Two is a cross-case study of two principals who led schools representing each perspective. The rationale for this study is that since Christian schools submit to the authority of the Bible, and Scripture recognizes the preeminence of the Holy Spirit, these schools would seek to comply with these biblical prescriptions. The employment of semi-structured interviewing in a qualitative, cross-case research design suited the study. We sought to encapsulate the in-depth experience of two principals, one from a Reformed and the other from a Pentecostal/Charismatic Christian school. Through a within-case analysis of each interview, important themes were identified. In the subsequent cross-case comparative analysis, the most important themes included the transmission of truth, staff matters, and goals for learners. Additional discussion raised separately by only one of the principals addresses the themes of compliance with authority and relationship with the Spirit.

### **Study Overview**

A distinctive of Evangelical Christian schools is their commitment to following the precepts and directives of Scripture (Edlin, 1999). Ideally, such schools articulate vision and mission, pursue truth, create curricula, manage school life, evaluate material, conduct assessments, further character development, administer discipline, and address the needs they encounter according to the Bible (Edlin, 1999). Also ideally, the Bible provides the final authority for all discussions of current issues, thus equipping learners to cope with the world (Edlin, 1999). A further ideal is that such schools transform all they teach into an expression of biblical wisdom, causing truth to become meaningful and

experientially real (Bolt, 1993). Kienel, Gibbs, and Berry (1995) believed that the Bible should be the infallible point of reference for the lives of those running a school, and for the lives of learners.

The Bible describes the Person and role of the Holy Spirit as indispensable for conversion and subsequent sanctification (John 3:5-6; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Biblical scholars, such as Barth (1964), Berkhof (1969), Grudem (1994), Murray (1893, 1899, 2003, n.d.a, n.d.b), Packer (1984), Williams (1996), and Willard (2002) understood the Holy Spirit to be indispensable to believers for their conversion and subsequent steady transformation into Christlikeness. While it is possible to become a believer without the Bible, it is not possible to become one without the Holy Spirit. Ideally, Christian schools should pursue the conversion and spiritual development of their learners (Lampton & Yoder, 2006) and be directed by Scripture (Edlin, 1999). Therefore, it follows that, in this pursuit, such schools should seek to apply that biblical description that allows the proper acknowledgement of the role of the Holy Spirit. Since it is the prerogative of Evangelical school principals in South Africa to implement school policy, this task falls to them. This study explored the experience, understanding, theory, and praxis of two principals in South Africa regarding the biblical description of the active participation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of learners and educators.

### **Methods**

The key philosophical assumption of qualitative research is the construction of a reality by individuals interacting with their social worlds (Merriam, 1998). Thus, qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness and the interactions in such situations as part of a particular context (Paton, 1985, as cited in Merriam, 1998). In such studies, the researchers extract the views of participants through engaging their reflection over the phenomenon of interest

(Creswell, 2005). The unique situation this study addressed was the perceived role of the Holy Spirit by principals at two Evangelical Christian schools in South Africa. In studies such as this, researchers begin with a central phenomenon, but do not know what the result of the exploration will be. In this study, such an open-ended stance enabled us to explore how Evangelical Christian school principals implemented biblical descriptions regarding the role of the Holy Spirit.

A case study is a case analysis of a person, event, activity, or process, set within a cultural perspective (Creswell, 2005). It is also an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, in order to provide an intensive, holistic description and analysis (Merriam, 1998). For this study, the cultural perspective was the Evangelical Christian School with its Christian worldview in the South African context; the case or contemporary phenomenon was how Evangelical Christian school principals implemented, in their theory and praxis, the implications of the Person and role of the Holy Spirit as they perceived it.

Literature reveals that, although cross-case study design sacrifices depth for breadth, it has the potential to advance future research, since it often improves and informs practice and results (Merriam, 1998). This design served this study in a number of ways, enabling important practices and themes to emerge regarding the future implementation of biblical descriptions regarding the Person and role of the Holy Spirit. Concretizing and enhancing the validity of results, and increasing information on the phenomenon provided for future theory development to guide principals as to how to implement biblical descriptions regarding the Person and role of the Holy Spirit.

**Research Question.** Since this was an investigation of what is, and not what ought to be, the central question of this study was, “What do principals perceive about the Person and role of the Holy Spirit? We did not attempt to evaluate the performance of such principals, but only to discover what it was that they did about the phenomenon of this study.

**Participants.** The participants selected for this study were drawn from a convenience sample; its cases are defined as both typical and extreme. These cases are typical because the research problem of

this study called for Evangelical school principals, and they are extreme because the principals selected came from theological perspectives that were as different as possible. One school selected was Reformed, while the other was Charismatic. The Reformed school downplayed the role of the Holy Spirit, while the Charismatic school emphasized it. Seidman (2006) described maximum deviation cases as a powerful strategy, since such a selection made provision for the widest range of readers to connect to the content. Merriam (1998) also recognized this feature as a notable asset.

**Setting.** To preserve confidentiality, the two schools represented in the interviews for this study are called School A and School B and the principals are called Principal A and Principal B. School A enrolls a multi-racial population and reflects a middle class to upper middle class culture, is largely Caucasian, and must be regarded as affluent since it has substantial resources and owns excellent buildings. Its enrollment is in the region of 900 students. Its church association is with a large, conservative, Reformed church. School B reflects a multi-racial, low socio-economic culture, and is influenced by many of the social ills associated with poverty. Its enrollment is 80 students and most of its learners are of mixed racial background or African. The school uses borrowed premises which are clean but Spartan and devoid of resources. Its church association is with a large Charismatic church. These two schools have been selected because the one (School A) downplays the role of the Holy Spirit and elevates Scripture, while the other (School B) practices a heightened Pneumatology.

**Data Collection.** Data was accessed through observations, an examination of documents produced by each school, and interviews with the principals. An audio recorder was used to record both interviews which were transcribed immediately afterwards. These transcriptions were read along with the recording in order to avoid transcription errors. Finally, they were sent to the interviewees for their consideration.

Interviewing provides in-depth understanding of the “lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). This method is consistent with the human ability to make meaning through language and affirms the importance of the individual (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Merriam (1998) considered

interviewing a powerful way to gain insight into the experience of individuals. This study employed a semi-structured approach to ensure the exploration of specific aspects of the experience of principals. Opportunity for spontaneity encouraged unique contributions from such interviewees. For this reason too, interviewing served the study well.

**Data Analysis.** In a cross-case research design, researchers record their findings in as highly descriptive a format as possible, linking their results to the literature and seeking a truly enlightened response from readers. Researchers try to reconstruct the realities of interviewees and portray multiple perspectives on the phenomenon. Hence, such researchers prefer a narrative report full of rich holistic description and analysis, and rule out statistical analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Merriam, 1998). Such reports enable the revelation of connections between the experiences of individuals. This outcome is important to researchers and to readers who, in consequence, can connect with the material and be enlightened (Seidman, 2006).

The literature suggests a number of interventions that facilitate recording and evaluation. For example, Merriam (1998) advocated electronic recording of interviews for transcription, to be supplemented by note-taking during interviews, and the recording of the interviewers' reflections immediately afterwards. Johnson and Christensen (2008) emphasized the need to identify themes from the data to reveal holistically the fundamental structure and essence of such data. Creswell (2005) defined the data that needed to be collected as instrumental and suggested the following. First, researchers were to prepare the data for analysis, possibly through the transcription of interviews. Second, investigators were to code these data, identifying the themes present. Third, they were to undertake deeper analysis and a collation of major ideas. In order to succeed, researchers were to read the data many times. Fourth, researchers were to bring their own perspective and interpretation to the data. This is the procedure the researchers followed for this study.

Questions from an interview protocol served to organize the report of the data collected from each interview separately and promoted data that provided a full holistic description. To enrich the interview data, other data was collected through

observation of the setting, the behavior of staff and learners, and an examination of documents collected from both schools. Thereafter, the two interviews were compared, once again guided and directed by the questions and probes in the interview guide. The usage of the same questions, and to a large extent, of the same probes, provided a sound foundation for such comparison. Finally, data was examined to identify common as well as different codes and themes in the interviews.

## **Results**

**Observations.** Both principals showed unquestionable integrity, honesty, and commitment to their realities as they understood them, strengthening the validity of the study. Observation revealed that both willingly worked long hours and during holidays. Character traits for both included obedience, submission to authority, hard work, diligence, and conscientiousness. Both co-operated fully during their interviews. Hence, they shared their truly emic perceptions, provided concrete knowledge and emergent data, and gave in-depth, holistic description that was illuminating. Their schools were busy, positive, and productive places. They both had good relationships with staff, parents, and learners.

School A is aligned with the Reformed tradition. It is 12 years old with an enrolment of approximately 900 K-12 learners and is situated in an upper middle class area and boasts superior facilities and equipment. For example, learners work on laptop computers which they can take home when necessary. Another example of the school's affluence is a large, heated swimming pool. The classrooms are surrounded by well-kept grounds with lawns, benches, and attractive play areas. There are two music rooms and four practice rooms in the music center. The atmosphere is pleasant, busy, and there is an air of dedication and commitment. Interactions with learners seem positive and caring. The church and school buildings share a common entrance reflecting the close association between church and school. Principal A is committed to excellence. His preparation of notes for the interview bore testimony of his conscientiousness. During the interview, his body language and demeanor expressed willingness to cooperate.

Principal B founded School B in 2002. It was originally housed within church buildings, has

relocated twice, and moved into its present location in a disadvantaged residential area in April 2011. This facility was a school run by the Moravian Mission Church, which owns the land. Local residents had embraced the school and were striving to make it possible for their children to attend. Although classrooms had been renovated, more space was needed to meet expected growth and assistance was being sought. School B is situated in a lower income residential area. The school is surrounded by security fencing and the gate is kept locked. Toilets in a separate outbuilding are kept locked since they are potential hiding places for criminals who watched to see what could be stolen. The buildings are freshly painted and adequate but there are no playing fields. Equipment is limited and chalkboards a major feature of every classroom. Principal B has developed good relationships with her staff. She invited a young teacher to share how he was prompted by the Spirit to invite commitment, with the result that five learners surrendered to Christ. The commitment of the principal, teachers, and administrative staff is very evident. The principal's office is functional and obviously a very busy place. She often works long hours and is dedicated to the call on her life. She is enthusiastic about the Principle Approach (e.g., Foundation for American Christian Education) Christian curriculum she introduced to the school. This curriculum is derived from and driven by the precepts of Scripture.

**Documents.** Data derived from written materials revealed that the goals for both schools were the development of learners to their full potential, including servanthood and character. Neither school's core values, mission statements, descriptions of vision, or goals specifically recognized the pre-eminence of the Holy Spirit in education as a core value.

For School A, parent and student handbooks, an advertising brochure, an article within the newsletter of the church to which the school is affiliated, and the school's website were consulted. The core values of the school include tenets that are characteristic of the Reformed persuasion: the centrality of Christ, the authority of the Bible, Christ-likeness, partnership, academic excellence, stewardship, servant leadership, and maximizing individual potential. The purpose of the school is to promote academic excellence, spiritual depth, and

moral integrity. Hence, the school's foundation is overtly Christian. The school also seeks to ensure balance between academic, physical, spiritual, emotional, and social development and to develop the whole child. Another aspect of its mission is to equip learners with knowledge, skills, and confidence so that they can succeed in their future callings. The school's goals include the production of a context for optimal cognitive development. Furthermore, this institution seeks to produce learners who embrace a Christian worldview and biblical values and manifest clearly defined standards of behavior. The national secular curriculum is taught, but teachers seek to bring a Christian worldview perspective to it. The school values the involvement of parents. The fundamental importance of relationship with God through the Holy Spirit as documented in Scripture is not emphasized in the school's core values, mission statement, purpose, and goals.

It was evident from School B's website and emails from Principal B that the school's mission was to provide a holistic learning environment to equip learners for God's Kingdom. Again, there was notable consensus between the interview and these written materials. The vision was to discover and develop the individual gifts of learners to enable them to fulfill God's calling upon their lives, serve, and bring God glory. In response to an email asking for the school's vision and mission statements, Principal B wrote that the school's mission was "to provide a holistic learning environment utilizing God's provision to equip each child for God's Kingdom" (personal communication, June 27, 2011). Its vision was "to discover and develop the individual gifts and talents in every child to fulfill God's calling, in service to others; and to nurture learners to obey and give God maximum glory" (personal communication, June 27, 2011). Apart from emails, written material was also accessed through a website.

**Interviews.** Simple coding and theme identification was applied to enable general description and greater understanding of the data collected. Creswell (2005) described such management of data as a process by which similar codes identified in the text were aggregated together to form a major idea in the data base and constitute a core element or theme. For this study, each interview was coded separately and codes and themes were subsequently

identified. The themes selected for the discussion come not only from the comparison of the two cases but also from each case separately. Merriam (1998) considered the need for the same level of abstraction throughout analysis absolutely crucial.

A total of 14 codes emerged from interviews with Principal A. The most frequent codes were staff management (13x), curriculum (7x), and adherence to the school's statement of faith (6x). These codes enabled the following identification of themes. Major themes included compliance to authority, staff matters, transmission of truth, and goals for learners. A total of 24 codes emerged from interviews with Principal B. The most frequent codes were the Bible (18x), total dependency upon the Spirit (15x,) enlightenment by the Spirit (14x), and truth (12x). Once again, the codes enabled the identification of themes: transmission of truth, relationship with the Spirit, goals for learners, and staff matters. Themes common to both principals included transmission of truth, goals for learners, and staff matters. A theme unique to Principal A was compliance to authority. Unique to Principal B was the theme of relationship to the Spirit.

### **Discussion**

The essential interest for this study is encapsulated in its research question and purpose. The research question asked how two principals of Evangelical Christian schools in South Africa perceived the Person and role of the Holy Spirit. The questions within the interview guide took on the character of research questions and further examined the issue. The argument was that since such principals are committed to the Bible, it follows that they seek to apply those biblical descriptions that affect the philosophy and praxis of their schools. Since such descriptions include numerous explicit references to the Holy Spirit as indispensable to believers including those in Christian schools, the relevant question for such principals must be whether they are applying these descriptions successfully. This they cannot do unless their perception of the Spirit's Person and role is accurate, and they are convicted of the need to accommodate this role in their schools in a manner that accords with Scripture.

The discussion of data begins with the themes that arose from the interviews. The interaction between the questions and probes of the interview guide and the interviewees' responses facilitated the emergence of such themes. Since the themes and

not the particular interview questions are what are of interest for Christian education, we have elected to arrange the discussion that follows thematically.

This first section includes themes emphasized by both principals and addresses transmission of truth, staff matters, and goals for learners. Additional discussion addresses the themes compliance with authority, which was raised by Principal A, and the theme relationship with the Spirit, which was raised by Principal B.

**Transmission of Truth.** Principal A advocated biblical integration on two occasions. The goal behind such integration seemed to be maintenance of that praxis devised by the school to satisfy its foundational beliefs. This praxis involved the teaching of secular curriculum considered conducive of excellent academic results, but tempered through the addition of biblical perspective. The emphasis placed by Principal A upon the school's statement of faith, the Bible, the Christian worldview, and curriculum seems to suggest an orientation towards the transmission of content in order to reach goals. Principal A diligently protected and ensured the transmission of truth as encapsulated by the school's statement of faith. The importance of this statement to him is endorsed by his frequent references to it. For example, he referred to this statement as his answer to the question about particular effort made to address the Spirit's role in the formulation of the school's foundational beliefs. Principal A described this statement as his point of departure from which to apply what the Bible teaches about the Spirit. He took measures to ensure that he remained faithful to the theological persuasion of the school by appointing a chaplain to monitor his performance. Principal A's heart's desire was for learners to be exposed to truth as defined by the school's foundational beliefs and not falsehood. Evidence that the transmission of only truth was important to him is provided by his comment that the school tried to give "as much biblical input as we can" to equip learners to defend themselves against possible theological error taught by visiting speakers. He was careful to eradicate theological deviance, defined by him as Pentecostal/Charismatic beliefs.

Transmission of truth was very important to Principal B. She defined truth as inseparable from the Holy Spirit and described the work of the Spirit to be to bring believers into truth to facilitate their

steady transformation into God's image and likeness. For her, good praxis was to focus on the truth and become saturated in what it was; as a consequence, believers were enabled to discern false doctrine and to grow in truth and in understanding of Christ. Principal B believed the Spirit of Truth imparted a portion of truth to teachers who then imparted it to learners and explained, "You learn something new which then becomes revelation and you need the Holy Spirit to do that so He definitely is our inspiration as teachers." In the preparation of a lesson the Spirit, knowing teacher and learners, provided the best strategy to facilitate personal application by learners. In fact, the Holy Spirit selected the issues which He then addressed in learners' lives at the time when they were important. Principal B cited a number of experiences by which she received truth through specific supernatural revelation. For example, she believed that God gave her the vision for the school and clarified for her that this was her life's calling. Thus, her establishment of the school was as the result of a direct mandate from God. The Lord also specifically directed that the Spirit needed to have pre-eminence in every believer's life and then corporately in the school. The gifting in every child was to be developed so that they could fulfill their calling according to God's purpose for their lives. Principal B claimed that the Spirit, since it was His task to reveal specifics, provided her increasingly with wisdom and guidance through specific revelation for specific instances. The staff and learners benefitted from such revelation and were trained to listen to the Spirit.

Since curriculum is an instrument by which to convey information in an orderly and advantageous manner, it becomes the tool of Christian educators for the transmission of biblical truth. Principal A believed the combination of a good secular curriculum plus the Bible enabled the transmission of truth. His purpose for curriculum was that "at the end of the day, we want our children to come out of our school with a Christian worldview." He explained, "We need to give them a biblical worldview [through curriculum] that they can apply to every situation that they are in." How effectively Principal A's secular curriculum would promote his goals must be considered debatable. He referred to this curriculum seven times and said, "I personally don't think within the curriculum and within the schools we are capable of making that shift [change

of curriculum content]... because our children have to live in a... society where they need a qualification that is recognized." The school used this curriculum to provide the learners with the best educational qualification. This objective was of such importance as to silence other possible concerns. However, this situation left Principal A with a dilemma. While he acknowledged that such a curriculum was certainly not driven by the centrality of the Holy Spirit, he balked at the idea of change but confessed that he was beginning to doubt what his school was doing. He seemed to consider as mitigating factors the staff's attempts to teach the curriculum "in the light of Jesus Christ and the Bible" and the goal that learners see the curriculum "in the light of the Spirit." For him, other mitigating factors seemed to be the goal to provide a Christian worldview and the practice of biblical integration. Also in the school's favor was the initiative taken to freshly explore the biblical description of the Spirit's role.

Principal A's commitment to careful transmission of truth through the means he described did leave him with growing concerns. He identified the need to augment the curriculum in use through integration by staff "of their love for Christ" into their classroom practice. Hence, it seems that for Principal A to simply teach the secular curriculum and no more was not sufficient. He claimed, "you really have ... pricked my conscience and I need to, ... perhaps the Holy Spirit is working on my conscience." With reference to the whole interview he also said, "Certainly that is something I need to delve into within the school and see how we are doing it and as I say to you I haven't got that right and certainly we need to go there now."

In contrast, Principal B operated from a very different point of departure. She believed that the Bible and the biblical worldview represented the content that needed to be taught. She said, "Anything that is not Christian education as far as I'm concerned is not education because the Word says that in Him are found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is the source of all things." Principal B used the biblical Principle Approach curriculum (e.g., Foundation for American Christian Education) in her school which drew from the precepts of the Bible in order to develop its content. Another dimension to what needed to be taught was the special direction given



at times by the Holy Spirit. Said differently, the Spirit created and implemented His own curriculum. Principal B said that periodically the Spirit provided the best strategy to expand or reveal or facilitate personal application by learners. At such times, He addressed real issues known only to Him in learners' lives. Training in listening to the Spirit facilitated specific revelation through the teacher at a given moment in the classroom. Furthermore, Principal B expected issues to surface a second time in the classroom through the Spirit's intervention that had already been addressed at some earlier stage during the day. When this happened the Spirit then used these issues to reinforce God's communications for the day.

**Staff Matters.** The two principals demonstrated the most agreement over staff matters. Principal A identified this issue as the most important theme for him (13x), whereas for Principal B, the issue was next in importance to her emphasis upon the Bible and the Spirit. She referred to staff ten times. Principal A's understanding of his role was primarily staff-related: he believed he was to ensure teaching was taking place, that such teaching complied with the parameters set by the board, and that staff were Christians. He also mentioned mutual accountability between principal and staff. Principal A included the personal growth of staff as one of his goals and specifically required his staff to "integrate their love for the Lord Jesus and many other things into ... curriculum." It was Principal A's task to appoint teachers who were Christians which he found a challenging responsibility. A major concern was the appointment of only those teachers who adhered to the school's statement of faith as their theological position. The problem was the range of Christian persuasions involved since the school's foundation was the Reformed belief system. Principal A needed to ensure that teachers were not, for example, Pentecostal and, therefore, promoting gifts such as tongues speaking and healing. Principal A explained that the school provided a lot of staff training, which suggests the importance to him to ensure that staff meet up to expectations. In fact, he believed that the changes he needed to make in order to bring his school in line with the biblical description of the Spirit's role amounted to such training. He attributed the responsibility to bring the implications of the Spirit's role to bear upon the school's secular curriculum to staff. Principal A cited assessment of

teachers in regard to their biblical integration practices as the way to assess the school's praxis concerning the Holy Spirit's role in terms of the Bible.

Principal B believed that the task for teachers was to train learners in truth, about the identity of God, and in intimacy with the Spirit. In order to do this, such teachers had to be in a virulent relationship with God because "you can't give what you don't have." Training of teachers in listening to the Spirit facilitated the reception of specific revelation at a given moment in the classroom. Principal B emphasized that the Holy Spirit embodied all aspects of teaching and distributed these gifts throughout the body of Christ, making teaching without Him impossible. She explained that teachers provided content through teaching the biblical worldview from the Bible but under the Spirit's inspiration were sensitive to needs and teaching moments to display the glory of God. Such teachers needed to acknowledge that they could not do the work of the Holy Spirit. Principal B concluded, "I just think as teachers we have such an amazing privilege that we have the advantage of the Holy Spirit." Principal B understood part of her task to be to allow teachers freedom to experiment and grow. Therefore, she provided biblical integration lessons, made use of visiting pastors, read books together, and had a set time every week when they waited on the Spirit to move. They linked teachers to partners for prayer, and provided devotional and Bible study books in classrooms, etc. She declared, "We believe that we need wisdom in foundational practice but also in allowing the freedom of the Holy Spirit to work." She was concerned about those teachers whose faith was immature or did not really fit in because they were resistant to personal change. A further complication was the variety of backgrounds from which teachers came.

**Goals for Learners.** The commitment of both principals to the well-being and development of learners was evident. A number of goals for learners are implicit in each interview. The list that follows is not exhaustive but does identify what each principal considered most important. These lists reveal the contrast between the two principals once again. Principal A recognized the following objectives:

- Obedience to and transmission of the Reformed theological belief system as expressed in the school's statement of faith.
- Integration of the Bible into the secular curriculum.
- The provision of a biblical Christian worldview for all learners.
- The provision for academic excellence through a good secular curriculum.
- Integration by the staff of the love of Christ into their teaching.
- Prevention of unacceptable theological influences.
- Perseverance in the Christian worldview by learners after they left school.

Principal B defined the following objectives:

- All-embracing reliance upon the Holy Spirit.
- Preeminence of the Spirit in every believer's life.
- Development of learners' gifting so that they could fulfill God's purpose for their lives.
- Daily illumination and guidance by the Spirit.
- Transformation of learners into God's image and likeness.
- Transmission of the biblical worldview from the Bible.
- Sufficient academic prowess so as to enable efficient service in the world.

**Compliance to Authority.** Principal A's appointment of a chaplain to ensure faithful application of the school's statement of faith by him demonstrates this principal's desire to ensure such fulfillment. His compliance to the dictates of the Board of governors in terms of this statement (4x), reference to its authority over him (6x), and recourse to his chaplain as custodian of the statement (3x) suggests that, for him, adherence to his theological position as expressed through this statement was of primary importance. Since Principal A's reference to such authority structures to which he was committed constituted the most prominent theme identified for him, it seems that he had great respect for expressions of authority and was dependent upon them to function well. Such behavior aligns well with Reformed praxis with its emphasis upon obeying prescriptions (Bolt, 1993). Principal A claimed in his response to the question about the authority of the Holy Spirit apropos school authorities that the school believed they were communally under the authority of the Holy Spirit

which was the reason all meetings were opened in prayer. He mentioned praying twice in the interview which could indicate recourse to the authority of God. However, 13 references to his other authority structures plus a reference to accountability to his staff suggest that for him these authority structures were more immediately real. Principal A mentioned the Bible only twice. His Reformed position implies dependence upon the authority of Scripture. Yet, other forms of authority determined his praxis. Therefore, it seems that other forms of authority were part of his immediate reality whereas Scripture was less so.

Compliance to authority was also a prominent and important part of reality for Principal B. However, such compliance was a feature of her relationship with the Spirit and did not manifest as a theme on its own in the way it did in the interview with Principal A. The theme that did manifest as of considerable importance to her was Relationship with the Spirit. The codes that collapsed into this theme were Total dependency upon the Spirit, Intimate relationship with the Spirit, Obedience to God, Inspiration by the Spirit, Transformation by the Spirit, and Empowerment by the Spirit. These codes indicate her submission and compliance to the Spirit as the authority that was real to her. Indeed, her relationship to the Spirit can, in one sense, be described as one of obeyer-to-Authority.

Jesus modeled surrender and submission when, in the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed, "Father, if it is Your will take this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). Both principals revealed a considerable degree of obedience and integrity in their commitment to the authority which they acknowledged. Therefore, their behavior ruled out a varying degree of obedience as an influence upon outcomes for this study. In any case, since they were both conservative evangelical educators, complete submission to biblical authority was not negotiable for them.

**Relationship with the Spirit.** This theme deals with the relationship between believers in general and the Spirit, and then with the relationship between learners and the Spirit. The Reformed theologian Hodge (1972) spoke of the relationship between believer and the Spirit when he said, "He [the Holy Spirit] brings all the grace of the absent Christ to us, and gives it affect in our person in

every moment of our lives” (p. 175). Also from the Reformed persuasion, Packer (1984) claimed that the Spirit actualized the relationship between God and believers. Romans 8:15-16 clearly reveals the Spirit’s role as the divine partner in the relationship between God and believer:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

While it is clear that Principal A’s theological perspective acknowledged the importance of such relationship, his present reality did not factor in such a dynamic. His preference was the Bible with a good secular curriculum. Yet, Principal A declared earlier that all teaching and educational practice should be aware of the fact that Jesus governs, leads, and guides believers, i.e. implied relationship. Hence, there seems to be a degree of discrepancy between declared theoretical belief and actual praxis.

While Principal A remained true to his emphasis upon the transmission of information, he did not include the Spirit in this process. However, he did welcome input from the Holy Spirit as an independent agent: “I would believe that the Holy Spirit works according to God’s will and certainly it is not us who make ... We would leave that work to Him.” Principal A indicated that the interview guide had caused him to believe that his school had not put enough emphasis on the biblical description of the Spirit’s role. He readily welcomed the suggestion that a fresh examination of the role of the Spirit in terms of Scripture would be beneficial.

Principal B created the school through relationship with God. The Lord was the ultimate authority since “He created the purpose for the school, He created everyone who is in this school and that is definitely to me the most important thing.” Not only had He guided and inspired every step in the establishment of the school but He continued to do so daily. Without the Spirit she believed the mandate upon her impossible and explained, “We [the board] ... get to the place where we say, ‘Does everybody feel that this is the decision that will be in line with the Spirit of God?’ So, to us that is the crucial way, there is no other way.” As her reliance upon God was increasing, His inspiration and daily guidance

were increasing too. Consequently her praxis of depending upon God entirely was proving more and more of an advantage. The relational activity of depending upon the Spirit was the essence of reality for Principal B. The Spirit was her standby, helper, and advocate, making Jesus known, so that Principal B declared, “He’s everything,” and concluded, “There’s no understanding and no teaching and learning without the Holy Spirit.” Principal B testified to on-going personal experience of the blessing of such a relationship. God supplied specific revelation through the Spirit so as to successfully address the challenges of every day. Together with her board, once a week she waited on the Spirit to move until they felt able to agree that a pending decision was in line with the mind of God. She declared, “We believe that we need wisdom in foundational practice but also in allowing the Holy Spirit the freedom to work.”

At this point in the discussion the focus shifts from the relationship between the believer in general and the Holy Spirit. Now the focus falls upon the relationship between the learner and the Holy Spirit. Nowhere in Principal A’s responses did he focus upon the biblically implied need to foster relationship between the believing learner and the Holy Spirit. In contrast, Principal B established her school on the God-given prescription that the Spirit needed to have pre-eminence in every believer’s life and then corporately in the school. This theoretical foundation implies a relational rather than a content-driven dynamic. She maintained that believers and, therefore, believing learners were powerless without the Spirit since He drew them to Jesus and enlightened their spiritual walk. This relationship inspired Christ-like character, provided knowledge and wisdom, promoted service to others, enabled the ingression of truth into learners’ hearts, and transformed learners into God’s image. This relationship also blessed the learner since the Spirit was present as the standby, helper, and advocate making Jesus known. Principal B declared, “There are no understanding and no teaching and learning without the Holy Spirit.”

Not only the Bible but Christian educators indicate the need for relationship between the learner and the Spirit. Gorman (2001) declared, “The essence of teaching is encountering God in Jesus Christ through the manifestation of the Spirit who calls us to God-consciousness” (p. 47). She, together with

Wilhoit and Rozema (2005), understood the Bible as an instrument used by the Spirit. To such writers, Principal A's combination of the Bible and a good secular curriculum as the point of departure is not acceptable.

**Cross-case Comparison.** Included in the discussion is an exercise in cross-case comparison as described by Erikson (as cited in Merriam, 1998) which contrasts the realities of each principal at a core meaning level. According to Erikson (1986, cited in Merriam, 1991), only once the in-depth reality of each case has been revealed can comparison become valid for qualitative research. This is because the rich, thick description of the reality of each principal reveals as much specific detail as possible. Once core meaning has been established for each case in this way, such core meaning makes comparison possible. Therefore, what follows is a description of the reality for the two principals of the role of the Spirit, and then a comparison of these two core meanings.

Principal A's reality. Principal A's actual praxis revealed that his sincere desire was to develop staff and learners so that they would influence society for Christ. He trusted in the provision to learners of a Christian worldview as the most successful way to achieve this goal. Principal A understood his main task to be the faithful transmission and practice of the school's statement of faith. Since the emphasis was on the transmission of very specific information and content, it stands to reason that Principal A would go to great lengths to ensure faithful execution of this process. To this end, he appointed a chaplain to monitor him, readily accepted the suggestion of further research since this was another way to confirm performance, diligently "put the lid" on the appearance of aberrant theology, and organized assessment of the performance of teachers. From this perspective, it was not surprising that as Principal A thought about the usage of a secular curriculum he became more and more uncomfortable since such usage had to be counter-productive to the transmission of that content over which he was so protective.

The strong desire to perform well according to set parameters characterized his reality. There seemed to be no real reliance upon the Holy Spirit in this praxis (in his interview, he described the Spirit's activity as divorced from what the school was doing). Principal A felt the weight of responsibility

keenly. His observed willingness to work during holidays and long hours also endorsed his strong desire for success as defined by the prescriptions upon him. His responses suggested that this responsibility was his and his staff's alone. There seemed to be no companionship with the Holy Spirit. In fact, he revealed accountability among staff members but not accountability that involved the Holy Spirit. Also as a consequence of the penchant to perform well, uncertainty seemed to abide with him. He readily felt a lack of knowledge and contemplated in-depth research. What becomes clear is that Holy Spirit centrality did not drive his theory and hence the praxis that was reality for him. Written material produced by the school also indicates a lack of such emphasis.

Principal B's reality. Understandably, Principal B's actual praxis also revealed much about what was reality. Her sincere desire was to bring learners into relationship with the Spirit. The central focus of all aspects of Principal B's reality was the Holy Spirit and the need for total dependence upon Him since her life's calling, which was the school, was impossible without Him. In response to seven of the interview questions she reiterated this praxis as all-important. Principal B fervently relied upon the Spirit. She did not seem able to countenance an education that did not arise from and make central Christ through His Holy Spirit who used the Bible as a tool. Her vision and mission statements endorsed such an emphasis.

Principal B translated her emphasis upon the role of the Holy Spirit into praxis in a number of ways. She came to Him daily for guidance and direction. It was her belief that she and her staff needed to be in a vibrant relationship with the Spirit and, therefore, she did much to nurture their spiritual growth. She and her teachers sought to be sensitive to needs and God-given teaching moments, and remained alert, listening to the Spirit. Principal B encouraged staff prayer and waiting upon the Lord for His guidance. She also allowed and encouraged allowing freedom for the Spirit to work.

As far as the perceived role of the Holy Spirit was concerned, the reality for Principal A was transmission of his statement of faith into which a perspective on the Holy Spirit was incorporated. For Principal B, the reality was reliance upon the Holy Spirit. While he addressed a paradigm that embraced the transmission of information about the

Spirit among a great deal else which his statement of faith encapsulated, she embraced a relational paradigm with the Spirit. While he addressed his task through fervent and committed performance, she elected to rely upon the Spirit since she believed that without Him the task was impossible. Principal A wanted learners, once they had left school, to impact society for Christ. To enable them to do so he wanted them to embrace a Christian worldview. Principal B wanted learners in firm relationship with Christ. She believed that in order to serve Him they needed to discover their giftings and purpose as ordained by God. While Principal A appointed a chaplain to monitor his performance, Principal B relied upon the Spirit to guide, correct, and to monitor her. Principal A bore the full weight of responsibility for the task while for Principal B the responsibility was that of the Spirit. Her responsibility was to obey what He directed. Principal A relied upon an epistemology that did not, like Principal B's, factor in supernatural revelation from the Person of the Spirit and, therefore, depended upon human understanding and prowess. While Principal A's praxis was actually a manifestation of non-centrality for the role of the Holy Spirit, Principal B's praxis manifested the biblical description of His role in daily application. Principal A's reality was man-made; Principal B's reality was Spirit-inspired.

### **Recommendations**

Discussion of the outcomes of this data analysis suggests a revision of theory and praxis at a radical foundational level for some Christian schools. The emphasis upon the main thing in terms of a common maxim is most important to the implications of this discussion. The main thing for Christian schools is that they transform all they teach to cause truth to become meaningful and experientially real (Bolt, 1993). Truth cannot become what it is meant to be without acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit as described by the Bible and in the right relationship to Scripture.

The discrepancy between the theory and praxis of Christian schools and the biblical description of the Person and role of the Holy Spirit may be due to a number of factors. First, the problem may be ignorance (Farley, as cited in Rogers, 1994; Hess, 1991; Wilhoit & Rozema, 2005). Second, the problem may be due to a theological perspective that downplays the role of the Spirit, emphasizing

the need for a reexamination of the position to establish the biblical position. To read books written about the Spirit from any particular theological perspective can be counter-productive; Scripture itself must be studied. Third, the problem may involve praxis only. While the theory that drives such praxis may be in line with the biblical position, application of it may be deficient.

Recommendations need to address ignorance, theological bias, undeveloped praxis, neglect, and other issues that may arise. The place to begin is an examination of the objectives of a particular school. In order to do this permission from school boards, pastors, parents, and other school authorities will be necessary. The school's vision and mission statement, curricula, management of school life, approach to discipline and counseling, staff management and development, authority structure, and assessment procedures all need to be evaluated in terms of the biblical description of the Spirit's role. An examination of the roles of Scripture and of the Holy Spirit as described in the Bible and of the interaction between them must be developed to determine the foundations from which to identify the aims and objectives of biblical education. Care must be taken to avoid over-emphasis of the Spirit's role as well as under emphasis.

Next, a structure, possibly in the form of a conceptual framework, needs to be created from which to derive goals and objectives. We recommend deriving a list of biblical statements and principles. Such a list will enable identification of what needs to be done and provide prescriptions that will facilitate whatever adjustment is found necessary. It is not possible to predict before such an examination is completed exactly what practical measures will be considered necessary and in what aspects of the school's life.

While the task is difficult, there are areas in which it is perhaps easier to facilitate change, such as discipline, staff interaction and management, and all other codes of conduct within a school. The first step is to describe the biblical norms and values that direct these procedures and then to factor in the role of the Holy Spirit as Master Teacher, ultimate authority, and the purveyor of empowerment and spiritual gifts for the task. Deliberate attention needs to be given to appropriation of the contribution such gifts make into the belief system of the school and its daily praxis. Deliberate attention also needs to be

given to developing the relationship between each member of staff with the Holy Spirit. For example, a word of knowledge can make all the difference to a disciplinary and/or counseling session or difficult staff problem.

Arguably, the most difficult is curriculum change because this implies hours and hours of work, followed by staff training and the gathering of materials. Nevertheless, extensive modification of existing material to avoid an employment of Scripture that is biblically incorrect justifies the effort. First, curriculum must provide for (a) the development of learners in their conformity to Christ, and (b) the provision of knowledge and skills that are prerequisite for employment in the world. In essence, conformity to Christ equates to the formation of Christ-like character. Second, curriculum must transmit Kingdom culture since education is by a kingdom for citizenship in that kingdom. Third, the biblical description of the Spirit's role predicates the teaching of spiritual disciplines in order to enable the learner's relationship with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, biblical curricula need to teach and practice learners in prayer, meditation, solitude, fasting, worship, study, service, and confession. In addition, school time tables need to provide for and guide practice in such disciplines, and staff need to model usage of them. Fourth, Christian educators must conform to the implications of a Master Teacher-assistant relationship and practice the humility of their own subservient position in this relationship to the Holy Spirit. Resources need to be developed that directs how such a dispensation can be ensured. We recognize that these recommendations are limited and by no means exhaustive but may yet be helpful.

### **Conclusion**

The investigation of the identity and role of the Holy Spirit according to Scripture and Christian authors revealed that the Spirit actualizes Jesus' mission now that Christ is physically absent. Indeed, He is the omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent Presence of the Trinity. The absence of material on the Spirit in much of the literature indicates the less than prominent position the role of the Holy Spirit has in spite of the biblical description. From the literature that does address His role, the overwhelming testimony was that Christian education was to be Spirit-centered, directed by the Spirit, and Kingdom-focused. It was

to be transacted Holy Spirit- to-human spirit and tutored by the Spirit as Master Teacher. Such education was to be a vehicle for saturation by grace grounding believers in God. The educational process was to serve as a function of and subservient to the Holy Spirit and express "the necessity of depending upon the inner teacher of the Spirit to do His work in the life of the learner" (Gorman, 2001, p. 40).

The implications of the Person and role of the Spirit for schools, their principals, administrative staff, teachers and parents are vast. Arguably, it can be said that the Spirit is the predominant active agent in Christian education as He is for every Christian institution. Zuck (1988) concluded that learners could not understand Christ's teachings without the Spirit. Therefore, the procedures for learning, decision making, staff management, discipline, counseling, and other educational functions are to embrace the Spirit in His governing and inspiring role. Consequently, roles need to be defined so as to respect the Spirit's role and cooperate with it. The end goal of Kingdom citizenship is never to be neglected. Such citizenship exhibits a faith that is a demonstration of the Spirit's power within the Christian school.

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