

VOLUME 34
NUMBER 4
MAY 1994

The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal

Discipline and special education

A WELS philosophy of reading?

Multicultural education

Summer suggestions

Biased history books

Adiaphora

And more ...

The Lutheran Educator

The education journal
of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
edited by the faculty of Dr. Martin Luther College

ARTICLES

- Discipline and the
Special Needs Child** 100
Wayne L. Fischer
- What's Wrong With It?** 104
Paul L. Willems
- Reading Philosophy in the WELS** 108
Paul Steinbach
- Alan Bitter Replies** 113
Alan A. Bitter
- Teaching God's Kaleidoscope** 115
Carrie F. Pfeifer
- Sweet Fruits** 119
Ramona M. Czer
- Weaknesses in Social Studies
Textbooks** 121
Frederick H. Wulff

DEPARTMENTS

- As We See It** 99
Sowers of the WORD....

VOLUME 34 **NUMBER 4**
MAY 1994

Editor — John R. Isch

Editorial Board —Martin D. Schroeder, Irma
R. McLean, Mark J. Lenz

Editorial correspondence and articles
should be sent to *The Lutheran Educator*, Editor,
Dr. Martin Luther College, 1884 College Heights,
New Ulm, MN 56073. Phone 507/354-8221. Fax
507/354-8225

Subscription service information on a new
subscription, a renewal, a change of address, or
an inquiry should be sent to Northwestern
Publishing House, 1250 N. 113th Street,
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284. Phone 414/475-
6600. Subscription rate for U.S.A. and Canada is
\$5.00 for one year, payable in advance to
Northwestern Publishing House, postage includ-
ed. For all other countries please write for rates.

The Lutheran Educator (ISSN 0458-4988) is
published four times a year in October,
December, February, and May by Northwestern
Publishing House, 1250 N. 113th Street,
Milwaukee, WI 53226. Second Class Postage
paid at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to *The Lutheran
Educator*, c/o Northwestern Publishing House,
Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284.

Copyright © 1994 by Dr. Martin Luther College.
Requests for permission to reproduce more than
brief excerpts are to be addressed to the editor.



Sowers of the WORD....

In Matthew, chapter 13, we have the parable of the sower and the seed. Jesus told this earthly story with its heavenly meaning to the large crowds gathered around him while he sat in a boat. How meaningful this parable is for those of us who serve our Lord by teaching his Word!

Day after day, year after year we tell the youth assembled before us the truths of God's Holy Word. We conduct devotions, teach Bible lessons, explain the doctrines in our catechisms, and give meaning to the hymns we sing. Blessed by the Holy Spirit, these words enter the hearts and minds of those who will listen.

As we look at the youth gathered about us, we see many different kinds of hearers. Some are like the path in the parable where the birds come to eat the scattered seed. Nothing seems to grow. Others are like the rocky places where the seeds spring up quickly, but wither because they have no root. We also see those who are like the field of thorns which choke out the plants that grow. But thanks to our Lord, not all our listeners fall into these groups; for there also are youth in our classes who, by the grace of God, are like the good soil, producing a crop many times larger than what is sown.

How blessed we are to have the privilege of being sowers of the Word! By the power of God the Holy Spirit, that Word does take root in many who hear. And over the days, months, and years the crop grows—a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown. Have you ever pondered upon that crop? You teach God's Word to your class. These hearers tell others as the seed grows—those whom you teach become parents, teachers, pastors, missionaries, Sunday school teachers, and the like. They in turn share God's precious Word...and the crop grows and grows. Have you had the privilege of sharing God's Word with the children of those whom you taught a generation earlier? Or have you had a student proudly say, "You were my grandma's teacher!"? Yes, the seed is sown and the harvest not only extends to many of this time in life; it also continues on like a wave in the ocean, from generation to generation.

As we serve our Lord by teaching his Word to others, we may never witness the blessings it brings. In fact, we may see little or no evidence of that seed taking root. We do not follow our hearers on their pathways through life. We are not present for moments of joy, thanksgiving, sadness, fear, loneliness, and death. Yet, God dwells in the hearts of those who believe.

Faith is the believer's source of strength, comfort, and encouragement. We are assured that all who hear the Word of God and believe it are blessed (Lk 11:28).

Let us always be encouraged to be sowers of the Word. Prepare diligently, share the Word enthusiastically, pray fervently for all upon whom the Seed is sown, and never question whether our labor is in vain; for the harvest is in the hand of our God. Praise God for the harvest!

IRM

Discipline and The Special Needs Child

Expectations are the same but the problem is what we do to meet the needs of individual children.

Wayne L. Fischer



When a student comes into our classroom, there are expectations. As teachers we expect the students to be committed to learning as they develop their God-given talents. As teachers we expect the parents to get involved with the educational process through active and supportive roles. Parents expect us and our school to provide a Christ centered education for each student. Parents expect us to maintain an atmosphere where learning can take place. Parents expect caring treatment of each student. Students expect to be guided in their education. Students expect to be treated fairly. Students expect us as teachers to act like teachers, friendly and caring. All of

us expect that the most important thing is the one thing needful: the message of God's love to us through Jesus Christ. The problem is not in these expectations. The problem is in how we work to meet the needs of each individual student. A difficult situation will arise when we feel that all children are the same and need to be handled in the same way. When five children have different shoe sizes, the fair thing may be for them all to have shoes to wear, but the absurd thing is to make them all wear the same size. So we do wrong to expect that each child should be treated the same regardless of his or her academic or emotional differences.

In the above example, the answer is obvious: buy different shoes. But what

about the students in our classrooms who come to us with special learning or emotional needs? Should we expect the same amount of work, the same behavior, and the same rules for everyone?

You may have heard about differentiated assignments. Some teachers use them on a regular basis. We recognize that our God has gifted everyone, but in different ways. To expect the student with a large measure of one gift and a student with a small measure of the same gift to achieve the same at the same time would be to deny that God made us unique and equally wonderful. For many years teachers have assigned the memory parts for Christmas services based on the gifts that each child has received. Yet none would say that the length of the part the child recites equals the worth of the child. Nor would intellectual gifts be a basis for determining whether or not a particular student is allowed to continue in our school.

Likewise, when a student who has physical limitations comes to our school, we don't expect that student to do the physical things the other students do in class, on the basketball court, or in other settings. Physical ability is also not a basis for determining whether or not a student ought to continue in our school.

However, there is a difference between those students who are not able to do things as other students and those students who won't do what other students are expected to do. The most important thing we have to offer our students and the only basis for our teaching is the counsel of God. We

desire that all our students come to know and appreciate the law and the gospel so they may see their sin and their Savior. Thereby, they grow in their saving faith and celebrate the greatness and goodness of our God. When we are confronted by a student who is disobedient to God, we can serve him or her best by confronting that child or adolescent with the reality of sin and with the assurance of forgiveness.

But the issue which still confronts us is whether or not it is really sin if the behavior is caused by a disease or disorder. One example would be the child who has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Can we hold such a child accountable for his or her behavior? Is it right to condemn this behavior as sinful when it is part of a medical disorder?

When parents come to us and tell us that their child has leukemia, we would quickly ask what we might do to help. We may give that student extra bathroom privileges. We may allow more absences. We may make fewer assignments. The list expands as we deal with that family out of our sincere Christian love. It is true that leukemia is a result of sin since all illness comes as a result of sin. Yet none of us would consider disciplinary action for such a child when unusual behavior is a result of the disease. Other diseases such as mononucleosis or muscular dystrophy would also call for compassion and appropriate allowances in the classroom.

In these cases, there is a noticeable condition which we recognize and to

which we could respond. When a child has a learning disability or ADD or ADHD, there may not be any perceivable medical symptom. Still, they have a valid illness or condition. These children too are carrying with them a consequence of sin. The problem seems to be that they don't seem sick, so why aren't they behaving normally?

Doctors and psychologists may tell us that these children are just responding to stimuli, so parents and teachers should leave them alone or let them act out as long as they don't hurt themselves or someone else. At this we cringe. We must bring all things subject to Christ; this includes how we handle children with diagnosed attention or learning disabilities. Therefore we cannot just ignore them or assume that their behavior is acceptable as long as they don't injure someone. So what do we do?

Part of the problem may be the direction from which we are addressing this issue. If we are only considering when and how to discipline ADD children, we have missed a key element. Although everyone needs to know that there are limits and consequences for not observing those limits, it is also important to be able to make the right choices before the limits have been exceeded. We teach our children that their choice of friends is important because of the influence friends can have. We teach our children that observing the rules of grammar will help them communicate. We teach our children that we can show our love for God by the way we live our lives in grateful thankfulness. These are all positive choices which

children, by God's help, can make.

Yes, we teach our children that we do react to the stimuli around us; that the rules which we find in the world are there to make our lives more pleasant and safe; that there is a proper third use of the law. But it is also important when dealing with special needs children to work proactively as well. We need to set up the positives in advance. We need to set up the appropriate boundaries in advance. God did this in the Garden of Eden when he gave his instructions to Adam and Eve. God still does this for us as he guides us by his word in making decisions about life choices or behaviors.

“

*All of our students
need to know the
consequences of
inappropriate
behavior.*

”

God also gave us the consequences of not following his word. God tells us of the consequences of disobedience in terms of destroyed relationships and unhappiness here on this earth as well as damnation in eternity. We need to do the same with our students—all of our students. They need to know the consequences of inappropriate behav-

ior. Obviously, teachers have to compassionately make allowances which are appropriate for the individual student just as they would for students with other more obvious difficulties such as those mentioned above. These allowances need to be consistent from a Christian viewpoint with what we know from the fields of medicine and psychology.

But once the allowances have been set, the reasonable standards of the classroom need to be enforced lest we teach our students that rules don't mean anything. That would be one step away from implying that God's law doesn't apply either. God forbid that we should ever teach that!

Yes, ADD children also need to follow the rules which have been set for them. And if they don't, they need to expect the appropriate consequences. It is important that consequences be seen not as something someone else is doing to them, but what they are doing to themselves because of their behavior. These consequences also need to be something which will help the child grow as a child of God. To assign a consequence which is not appropriate will neither solve the problem nor help the child avoid it in the future. Special needs children can be just as lazy or ornery as any other child, and when that is the issue, it needs to be condemned by using the law of God, while having the gospel ready to soothe the wounded soul and motivate the child to proper behavior. Especially with ADD children, the teacher needs to be certain that he or she is addressing sinful behavior and not medically induced

reactions. When a child is lying in a coma, none of us would reprimand that child for not paying attention to our lesson. This can also be the case for a child with ADD; they may not be able to pay attention. If the child has a medical problem, we assume the parents will seek help for the child. The same should be true with other students who for medical reasons cannot do what we ask of them. In such cases discipline, no matter how well intended, will not bring about the desired result. In all cases we will pray for that child. In all cases we will be ready to bring that child to the foot of Jesus' cross where he or she will find the one thing needful. Isn't that what we owe each child?

Perhaps the most frustrating thing is that for each child with a particular special need, there must be an individual approach. As the individual's needs are addressed and a plan is worked out which will be in accord with the word of God, the strategies, expectations, and the consequences for home and school need to be clearly stated. Then the school, family, and student will be able to proceed with mutual support and understanding as circumstances arise and decisions are reached.

Pastor Wayne Fischer of West Allis, Wisconsin, is the chairman of the WELS Special Education Committee.

What's Wrong With It?

“Why should we have to remove our caps in the classroom?

What's wrong with wearing caps?”

“Why can't boys wear earrings at school? What's wrong with earrings?”

“Why can't we have a school prom? What's wrong with dancing?”

“What's wrong with wearing shorts to school?”

Do these questions sound familiar? Did you field such a question today? Did you struggle to come up with a gospel-based answer, or did you use the law and read a paragraph from the school handbook or quote the school board's policy? And as you fought to answer these pointed questions for yourself, did you search for the reason earrings, dancing, caps, or the like are intrinsically right or wrong? Did you conclude that many of these issues fall into the realm of adiaphora? Did you even become convinced that “Pomp and Circumstances” could not and should not be banned from your graduation exercise? Did you argue these questions with colleagues at a faculty meeting or raise the issue at a teachers' conference sectional? Did you write an article defending or refuting such questions in *The Lutheran Educator*, the *Northwestern Lutheran*, or the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*? While you may not have personally led such a crusade, I'm sure such topics have occupied your time over a cup of coffee, at faculty meetings, during conferences, or in your classroom. Isn't that sad. What a

What's wrong with...

Paul L. Willems

waste of effort and energy to argue adiaphora to win your point!

Not argue adiaphora? Not give an answer? Look at the almost countless hours the past generation of pastors, teachers, professors, and concerned laypeople have put into wrestling with the topic of dancing. When we see the proliferation of proms at our high schools and dancing at weddings of pastors and teachers, we ask ourselves questions. Is sin differently defined these days? Does morality change with time? Are the children of this age morally more correct than those children of days gone by? That's my point: What, beside hard feelings and time spent in arguing, was accomplished?

When the loaded question, “What's wrong with it?” puts us so completely on the defensive to provide an answer that gives the “correct” viewpoint, we have had the tables turned on us by Satan himself. We notice in Scripture that God does not deal with his saints by asking such pointed questions of them. We also notice that people and Satan often inquire of God in just this manner to justify sinful actions or to tempt God. Satan's question to Eve, “Did God say...” (Ge 3:1) was such a pointed question as were his questions to Jesus when he tempted our Savior in the wilderness. (Mt 4:1-11) Moses's reply to God's command to lead Israel from Egypt, “O Lord, send someone

else” (Ex 4:13) was another question of “What’s wrong with sending someone else instead of me?” Jesus’ invitation to Simon Peter began with the statement, “Do not be afraid” (Lk 5:10). He did not inveigle Peter with a pointed question, such as, “What’s wrong with being a fisher of men?” The Apostle Paul preached Christ crucified. The question, “What’s wrong with life after death?” was not a part of his sermon on Mar’s Hill. I see no place in discipling for such questions. When we accept the defensive position these questions place upon us, we are already defeated no matter what answer we may give. We have missed the point of Christianity. We have chosen to place personal viewpoints ahead of our calling. We have failed to take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, to battle Satan. Discipleship does not involve finding our own way around a troublesome problem.

Discipleship does not involve seeking to justify our actions. Look again how Luther explained the Seventh Commandment. A “show of right” or “dishonest dealing” does not put us in the right. The disciple should always be asking, “How does this action build up the body of Christ?” When we approach pointed questions about adiaphora from a faith-filled heart, we have our focus upon Scripture. Now the action springs from a heart filled with the Holy Spirit. Now the responsibility for the action is placed on the actor. Now we are discipling those in our care. ~~Place the issues in the~~ How do such adornments help the church proclaim the saving message of Jesus? Dancing? How

may proms promote God pleasing behavior among the saints? Shorts or caps in the classroom? How can we use clothing to glorify God? By asking these types of questions we are not challenging what disciples are doing. If we are defensive, we are neither encouraging nor condemning any actions, but we are seeking to promote Christ in all our actions. We give the responsibility back to those who wish to display such behaviors. We light of God’s Word. That is what teaching is all about.

ing us to do when he says, “Go, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). Jesus never asked us to argue or split hairs with individuals. Declare law and gospel, and invite people into the kingdom.

John the Baptist wore a camel’s hair cloak and existed on a peculiar diet. Jesus ate with sinners and counted a Roman soldier among his followers. The Jews accepted neither one. Jesus said, “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to others (Mt 11:16-19). Jesus and God’s messengers never allowed the questions of “What’s wrong with it?” to cloud or confuse their message. We and our students need to get back to what Christianity is all about. Our actions speak volumes to those with whom we live on this earth, to those who may not yet know their Savior. Spending all our efforts on the defensive will prevent offensive strikes on the walls that Satan is building in this world. Recall how Job’s three friends tried to put Job on the defensive over his troubles. Job countered their thrust with his own

question, “How do your attacks comfort me or build up the church?” He properly refused to be drawn into the trap of “What’s wrong with our telling you to repent?” Job knew he was a sinner. He knew he could not stand before God on the basis of his good life. Yet he knew his Savior had forgiven his sins. He confessed this gospel and continued to proclaim the good news even when hard pressed by his friends. He remained faithful to God and to the work of the church. Oh, he lost his temper. Job argued with his wife. He even wished he had never been born, but Job never acknowledged that his friend’s pointed questions should be answered. God loved this man. God never answered Job’s pointed question either. Read the ending of the book of Job. When Jesus was asked by the Jews, “What’s wrong with it?”: paying taxes, punishing adultery, working on the Sabbath, etc., read of his actions. Jesus did not present a paper at a conference in Jerusalem on adiaphora. He did not form a committee of disciples to “look into the matter.” He did not defend his actions. He took the bull by the horns and showed his entrappers how paying taxes to Rome was a way to obey God and build his church. He asked the would-be killers of an adulterous woman how their actions would help bring them and her closer to God. He told the scribes and teachers of the law to go back and again read the Scriptures to learn how he is the fulfillment of all laws and ceremonies.

When we and our students look at all actions through the eyes of faith, we will be able to settle issues of adiaphora

in a God-pleasing manner and get back to the job of proclaiming the gospel. We will ask, “How do our actions increase the spiritual welfare of ourselves and of others?” Focus on the task of discipling. Get yourself and your students back into the Word of God. Instead of sparring over questions of adiaphora, build up the church of Christ. Face the issues head on as mature Christians instead of as children. Then do the work of an evangelist together. That’s team ministry. That’s Christianity in action. Adiaphora are not intrinsically right or wrong. You may never be able to present unanswerable arguments to convince others of your position. So what? Issues are also settled by recognizing the dilemma of an issue not agreed upon. Issues of adiaphora can be settled by compromise or by giving in even when we are positive we are in the right. What is it you wish to prove? Life is not a game where we are either winners or losers. Or if life is a game, we are all winners in Christ. Instead of being caught in Satan’s trap of “What’s wrong with it?”, we will be about our Father’s business of winning souls for Christ. Remember Paul’s advice: “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you” (Php 4:8-9).

Paul Willems teacher at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School, New Ulm, Minnesota.

Wisconsin Lutheran
Quarterly

The
Lutheran
 Educator

The *Educator* and the *Quarterly* are two journals which promote the theological and professional growth of persons preparing for or serving in the public ministry. In the worldly cacophony of philosophies, how-to advice, and jargon, you need the clear voice of Scripture-based guidance. Subscribe to the *Educator* and the *Quarterly*.

Recent *Quarterly* articles: "Ministry in the Minds and Lives of the Confessors," and "Gospel Hymns and Lutheran Worship."

Recent *Educator* articles: "The Ministry of Discipleship," "A Primer on Staff Ministry," "Vouchers."

Quarterly subscription: \$10 per year, \$18 for two years

Educator subscription: \$5.00 per year

Use the enclosed order blank or write to Northwestern Publishing House.

1250 N 113th St
Milwaukee, WI 53226

Reading Philosophy in the WELS

A response to Alan Bitter

Paul Steinbach

As I read Alan Bitter's recent article in *The Lutheran Educator* (1993), I thought of a scene from the movie, *The Karate Kid*. In this particular scene, Mr. Miyagi is instructing Daniel on the necessity of committing himself to his karate practice. He says something to the effect of, "Walk on one side—OK. Walk on other—OK. Walk in middle? Smashed by truck."

The natural tendency when confronted by two strongly opposed positions is want to find some reasonable middle ground. This seems to be Mr. Bitter's position. He dismisses both Flesch and Goodman as "extremist" and implies that the truth is somewhere in the middle. Whether in reading or in religion, however, the middle ground is not necessarily right.

I agree with the author's moderation—to a point. But there are several questions: What do you take from each camp? How much do you take? On what principles do you decide? In short, what philosophy do you use? While I do not have the time or the ability to respond to all the issues raised by this long-overdue article, I would like to address some concerns about reading philosophy in the WELS.

Contributions of whole language

At the very end of his review, Bitter credits whole language with leading to "an emphasis on invented spelling" and an "interest in writing." I believe he

misses the forest for the trees. I remember assigning the same page of nonsense to each student in a class of readers whose reading levels ranged from third grade to eighth grade. I remember crawling my way down a boring list of prescribed comprehension questions. I remember having students who devoured books while hating reading classes. I believe whole language has returned the argument about reading to real reading and a focus on meaning.

"The Great Debate"

I am concerned about the divisive phrase "the great debate" in reading. For us in the WELS I would prefer a term like "the reasoned on-going discussion." While it isn't as dramatic or punchy as Chall's term, it does represent what Bitter quite correctly points out—there is no one, universally correct way to teach reading to all students.

Each school of thought in this struggle has a strongly entrenched position. In the case of whole language I can see why. During the early years, Ken Goodman and Frank Smith were called "unscientific" at best and often much worse. One respected whole language professor at a major university was kept from teaching in the reading department. University politics stuck him in the early childhood department for more than half his tenure. With experiences like this, it is no wonder that early whole language advocates took on

the fervor of a persecuted cult. Now that whole language seems to be ascendant, skills followers are being labeled "unscientific"—and worse.

We in the WELS do not have to take part in this emotional political battle? Each school of thought has something to teach us. Let us use our professional judgment and relevant research to inform our decisions.

Careful language

Because of the emotions surrounding this issue, we must be careful about the language we use. I disagree with the labels Mr. Bitter chose to use. "Open education" is tainted with the failed educational experiments of the 1960s, and I know of no one today who uses open education as a synonym for whole language. This is probably a loaded term in our conservative Synod. Whole language advocates could use the terms "constructivist" for whole language and "behaviorist" for direct instruction. These terms are loaded in the opposite direction. If we are to engage in discussion rather than debate, we must avoid such loaded labels.

Neutral terms are more appropriate. For example the terms "transactional" or "transactive" could be used for whole language approaches and "traditional" for direct instruction. For the rest of this essay I would like to use the labels used by Ken Goodman: "whole language" and "skills-technology."

Misunderstanding of whole language

Whole language has now become a fashionable buzz-word with a vague and

wandering definition. In its narrower (and more accurate) sense, it refers to a set of beliefs about how to teach reading. As a philosophy it is by necessity hard to pin down and define. As Jo Anne Yatvin (1992) puts it, whole language is "...a set of beliefs, not a method." Ken Goodman says, "Whole language is clearly a lot of things to a lot of people; it is not a dogma to be narrowly practiced. It is a way of bringing together a view of language, a view of learning and a view of people..." (Goodman 1986, 5).

I believe many whole language practices were originally advocated by Ken Goodman to describe how a reading program based on his highly regarded reading model might look. Whole language programs have now evolved to where many people believe that any program with elements such as invented spelling, student journals, and thematic units is "whole language."

Actually, whole language has no particular practices. Whole language practices are only those which whole language teachers have developed out of their beliefs about reading. As Goodman states, "...whole language ideas and concepts become reality only at the point where a teacher is alone with a group of learners. Only there does a whole language program really exist." (Goodman 1986, 63).

I believe it is therefore important to see whole language not as a particular program, but rather as a set of beliefs and a spectrum of practices associated with teaching reading. David Wendler (1990) summarized the spectrum idea of whole language. He described a vari-

ety of whole language practitioners with three “anchor points”: the emergent whole language teacher, the mainstream whole language teacher, and the purist whole language teacher. All are whole language teachers, but there are distinct differences between them. This lack of distinction between whole language philosophy and practices associated with whole language, I believe, is often at the root of many philosophical disagreements.

The role of phonics

Another misunderstanding concerns the role of phonics in whole language. Contrary to some, whole language is not anti-phonics (more accurately termed graphophonics). It is anti-PHONICS.

Goodman states that “... the reader needs only to sample [the text]. He has enough meaning and grammar clues available to him to predict what he will see.” Goodman argues that, “A reader always uses his knowledge of the graphics symbols within these twin contexts: syntactic context and semantic context.

Then by using a few key graphic clues, he can confirm or reject his prediction” (Goodman 1982a, 21). The reader uses the graphophonics for what some authorities call the “reduction of uncertainty.” Whole language philosophy argues against the misuse of and overemphasis on phonics. Goodman asks that phonics be given its proper place as only one of the cuing systems for making meaning. Whole language asks teachers to encourage students to read efficiently using only the clues needed to gain meaning. Goodman reminds us that there are language systems such as ancient Hebrew which have only consonant graphophonics. Others, such as Chinese and Japanese, have no graphophonics. Symbols called ideograms represent words and ideas directly. These symbols seem to work for the millions which use them.

Rather than dismiss whole language as “incomplete” for its lack of direct instruction in phonics, one needs only to look at practices of other professionals along the whole language spectrum. Marie Clay (1979) has developed the Reading Recovery Program. This program has been proven effective in several studies for helping students with reading difficulties. It is most impressive because it consistently allows students reading below grade-level to catch up to their classmates and stay at or above grade-level. While Reading Recovery uses direct instruction approaches, these approaches are techniques which flow naturally from that student’s interaction with text. Reading Recovery moves from whole to part, a key tenet of whole language.



Where's the philosophy?

Mr. Bitter used the metaphor of the compass to reflect the varying reading views. He stated that "...the person whose views lie directly in the middle would be classified as north" (1993, 38). I believe that this is not necessarily true. It could be that the person in the middle is just plain lost. Teachers' beliefs—their philosophies of teaching and learning—are an important factor in teaching reading. These beliefs are the internal compasses which determine how they will solve the problems of teaching.

A study at the University of Arizona indicates that teacher beliefs are the "wild card" in reading instruction. The researchers found that "... understanding teachers' beliefs is crucial to the development and implementation of new programs and effective in-service education" (Richardson and Hamilton 1988, 1). A teacher who holds skills-oriented beliefs may use whole language materials according to his or her beliefs and unknowingly hinder the learning which is intended to occur. This is a teacher whose practice does not match his or her philosophy. Similar things may occur when a teacher is forced to use practices with which he or she does not agree or when a teacher uses a practice without understanding why he or she is using it. An example was shown at the Arizona Reading Association Conference a few years ago. A session on using journals had the same old workbook comprehension questions being collected in a notebook for grading. It was then called a "jour-

nal." This practice goes against everything I have learned about the philosophy of using journals as successful learning tools. This teacher also called herself "eclectic." I am sure she believed she was taking the best from both camps. The missing link in choosing and using various reading practices is the philosophy of the teacher. To this point, Ken Goodman has been quoted as saying that he would rather see an effective behaviorist teacher than an eclectic teacher with no reason for doing something.

Conclusion

While I thank Mr. Bitter for his work in clarifying the issues, I'd like to return to the question "Where's the philosophy?" To review the compass metaphor, I believe that the teacher's philosophy is the compass that guides his or her instructional decisions. If the compass is inconsistent or nonexistent, decisions may be based on things not in the best interest of students. Practices and tools may be used without understanding and probably without success. The question is not the degree to which we "balance" approaches, but rather whether we understand our beliefs about reading and whether or not we adopt practices which are consistent with our beliefs.

I do not believe that all aspects of whole language philosophy should be swallowed hook, line, and sinker. There are aspects of the philosophy which should trouble the Christian educator. Primary to me is that whole language philosophy is strongly humanistic (in its

anti-Christian sense). Ken Goodman has been accused of this in print and is proud of his humanism (see Goodman 1982b, 332) Christian teachers know that their students, like all people, are by nature inherently evil. Goodman's whole language has no language for discipline or control or remediation.

I believe whole language philosophy is neither a panacea nor a placebo. It is merely a philosophy of reading that gives us a vocabulary and set of questions for examining our beliefs and our way of teaching reading. I would like the WELS to engage in an on-going discussion of reading philosophy. I believe that a Christian philosophy of reading needs to be discussed and clarified. Here are some questions I would like discussed:

- ☛ How do both whole language and skills approaches fit into the revealed knowledge of the nature of man?
- ☛ How well does whole language work in a multi-grade situation where time is at a premium?
- ☛ How well does whole language work at the various age levels?
- ☛ How can we vary our approaches to meet individual needs within our classrooms?
- ☛ How effective is whole language with minorities or in a multicultural setting in WELS?

Perhaps these and other philosophical questions could be discussed in a round-table seminar at this summer's Literacy Convention. I look forward to what I hope is a "reasoned discussion" of the issues of reading instruction. It is my prayer that each of us who teach

reading can "fine-tune" our compasses so that we can develop literate disciples for the twenty-first century without throwing away the benefits gained during the twentieth.

WORKS CITED

- Bitter, Alan. 1993. "How Should We Teach Reading?" *The Lutheran Educator* 34:36-43.
- Clay, M. 1979. *The Early Diagnosis of Reading Difficulties*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann
- Goodman, K.S. 1982a. "The Search Called Reading." In *Language and Literacy: The Selected Writings of Kenneth S. Goodman*, Vol.2, ed. F.V. Gollasch. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Goodman, K.S. 1982b. "What is Basic About Reading?" In *Language and Literacy: The Selected Writings of Kenneth S. Goodman*, Vol.2, ed. F.V. Gollasch. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Goodman, K.S. 1986. *What's Whole about Whole Language?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Richardson-Koehler, V. and Hamilton, M.L. 1988. "Teachers' Theories of Reading." Unpublished manuscript, presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 1988.
- Wendler, D. 1990. "Searching for the Whole Language Ideal." *Whole Idea Newsletter* 1:1.
- Yatvin, J. 1992. "Developing a Whole Language Program for a Whole School." Newark, NJ: International Reading Association.

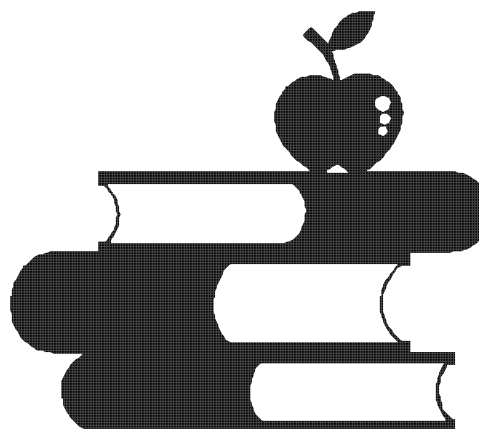
Paul Steinbach teaches at Trinity Lutheran School, EL Paso, Texas.

Alan Bitter Replies

In my article I make two assumptions. The first is that both models of learning which I described misunderstand who the child is because they are not based on what God has revealed in his Word. On one side (direct student instruction) the child is treated as little more than an animal that needs to be trained. On the other (Open Education) he is seen as Rousseau's Noble Savage in need only of an environment in which to develop unhindered. Christians must reject each side as unscriptural. Mr. Steinbach in his response states as much when he acknowledges that we cannot swallow "all aspects of whole language philosophy hook, line and sinker."

From these philosophies flow theories of how children learn. Still as one author noted, "many [such] assumptions and beliefs are benign, they neither oppose or support Christian beliefs, nor are they pervasive in the materials or methods as to make them unusable" (Isch 1991,59). Here there is room for disagreement in theory and divergence in practice among Christian educators.

My second assumption is that most teachers give some thought to the reasons for the methods they use. I am not suggesting that teachers should blindly



use bits and pieces of various theories in the hope of stumbling upon some truth. I am suggesting that teachers who have studied theories of learning may lean more heavily in one direction or the other as they adopt practices in line with their personal Christian philosophy of how children learn. Again, Isch comments: "There are surely areas where we have consensus, but there are also many middle-ground things where decisions of thoughtful and caring Christians diverge. That is not necessarily bad. The cautious restrain the bold, and the bold incite the cautious, both are guided by Scripture and both are primarily concerned with the proper Christian nurture of children" (1991,61).

With these assumptions in mind, I am not sure Mr. Steinbach and I disagree. He states, "Let us use our professional judgment and relevant research to inform our decisions." I closed my article by urging us to leave room for the teacher to make decisions appropriate for her classroom and asserting

that, "For the teacher it is a matter of considering the research, her experience, and the children in her charge" (Bitter 1993, 43). From this point let us fine-tune our compasses with informed discussion so that we are neither "smashed by trucks" or stranded in the ditch because we strayed too far to the right or left.

SUGGESTED READING

For Ken Goodman's perspective:
Goodman, K. "I Didn't Found Whole Language." *The Reading Teacher* (November 1992): 188-199.

Arguments for a balanced approach:
Speigel, D. "Blending Whole Language and Systematic Direct Instruction." *The Reading Teacher* (September

1992): 38-44.

Stanovich, K. "Romance and Reality." *The Reading Teacher* (December 1993/January 1994): 280-290.

WORKS CITED

- Bitter, A. 1993. "How Should We Teach Reading? A Plea for Balance in the Great Debate." *The Lutheran Educator* 34: 36-43.
Isch, John. 1991. "Shopping in the World's Marketplace." *The Lutheran Educator* 32: 58-62.
Steinbach, Paul. 1994. "Reading Philosophy in the WELS: A Response to Bitter." *The Lutheran Educator* 34:108-112.

Alan Bitter teaches at Christ Lutheran School, Grand Island, Nebraska

A WELS Factoid

Graduate Assignments Between 1938 and 1993
The Top 12 Elementary Schools in the Number of Graduates Assigned

<i>School</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Number of assignees</i>
Emanuel	New London	Wisconsin	44
St. Stephens	Beaver Dam	Wisconsin	32
First German	Manitowoc	Wisconsin	32
St. Pauls	Tomah	Wisconsin	30
Peridot	Peridot	Arizona	29
St. Johns	Two Rivers	Wisconsin	29
St. Martins	Watertown	South Dakota	28
Bethlehem	Hortonville	Wisconsin	27
Immanuel	Medford	Wisconsin	27
Centennial	Milwaukee	Wisconsin	27
Friedens	Kenosha	Wisconsin	27
St. Pauls	Norfolk	Nebraska	27

Teaching God's Kaleidoscope

Learning through a multicultural perspective

Carrie F. Pfeifer



As a child I loved playing with kaleidoscopes. Those distinct, colorful shapes would slide and fall into such beautiful patterns. How much less interesting those patterns would have been if all the bits of plastic were the same shape and color. Likewise, God created a human kaleidoscope of cultures and races in this world. The “melting pot” theory of years past is being replaced with a pluralistic perspective: respecting and retaining the uniqueness of groups and individuals within the whole of society.

There is no denying the cultural landscape of the United States is changing. Statistics from the 1990 census show populations of African-American, American Indian, Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific Islander are on the increase (Haub 1991). Whether your current classroom has a student landscape that reflects this growing diversity or has one dominant racial composition, you,

as an educator, have several challenges. The first, to prepare students of all ethnic and racial backgrounds for tomorrow's society, requires a teacher with a multicultural perspective. The second, to effectively reach and teach to the spiritual needs of students and families of all ethnic and racial backgrounds, also requires a teacher with a multicultural perspective. This article hopes to give the reader some assistance in meeting the first of these challenges.

We need, however, first to define “multicultural education” from a biblical viewpoint. The umbrella that some humanistic educators have opened over multicultural education brings to this field some well-deserved criticism. The following two objectives should give some definition and limitations to our discussion:

- ✦ A multicultural education will include accurate and complete information, including past and present history, of all major ethnic / racial groups.
- ✦ A multicultural education will create learning experiences that foster Christian responses toward prejudices and intolerance among racial and ethnic groups.

(Note: Females are often included as a minority group, and I assume this inclusion in the above objectives.)

The first objective will require time and study for most of us. The majority of the history that most of us studied from grade school through college was Euro-centric. One way of balancing this emphasis is to return to school to study non-European history. Such courses fill in some of the “gaps” and may allow you to do a better job of teaching history to your students. History taught from this perspective will cover the contributions of all nations including, but not limited to European events. As we teach our shared United States history, the contributions of women and persons of color should not be treated as side bars but as part of the complete picture (Shaw 1993). Asa Hilliard, a well-known multicultural advocate and a historian of ancient Africa, recently made this statement, “If you’d been telling the truth, I wouldn’t be arguing for a multicultural or culturally plural

”

*Effective
multicultural
education is not a
slick social studies
unit on another
country taught for
four weeks.*

“

curriculum” (Reed 1993). The omission of other cultures in our teaching of history may not be intentional on our part, but it is a mistake that needs correction. The overcompensation for these omissions of the past can be just as incorrect. Some of the “ocentric” curriculums of recent years may swing the pendulum too far the other direction by dedicating their content solely to the featured minority population and by using inaccurate historical information. The primary purpose of these curriculums is to help minority students build self esteem and social affirmation, but a curriculum that will be valid and pragmatic for tomorrow’s society needs to “go beyond self-esteem” (Hilliard 1993). Teaching must help all children find their place in our pluralistic world (Bulliard 1993). As Christian educators we know that self esteem built on accomplishments of this world is based on shifting sand. True value for us comes from the accomplishment of our salvation by Christ. This finds us a place in our eternal home.

Curricular implications

Up to this point, I have been speaking of how a multicultural perspective changes the way we teach social studies, but effective multicultural education is not a slick social studies unit on another country taught for four weeks. Nor is it an isolated study of clothing, foods, and traditions of another culture. Rather, it is a perspective that affects what we do in all our classes. Reading class is often the easiest place to begin.

”

*We must make our
classrooms the
kaleidoscopes for
God’s wonderfully
diverse creation of
mankind.*

“

Bookstore shelves are bulging with literature that covers the kaleidoscope of cultures. A teacher can use folk tales, poetry and stories from other countries, stories and biographies with persons of color as main characters, and fiction and non-fiction novels about struggles with prejudice throughout history. The less direct, but equally effective use of picture books that include a wide variety of people also teaches students about diversity. Last of all, when we use a balance of authors from different minority groups, we will communicate to our students that contributions to our world come from all walks of life. There are many fine anthologies of such multicultural literature.

When teachers use a multicultural perspective, music, art, and physical education become lessons in diversity. Music by composers from other countries is listened to and studied within the existing curriculum. Art examples and artists from other cultures are

explored and crafts from these countries are incorporated in the art curriculum. Games and dances from other countries are taught in physical education class or at recess. Again, because of the popularity (or the “political correctness”) of diversity in education, there are many resources for such topics.

Counting and other types of math-oriented games from other countries could become learning centers or enrichment activities within the math curriculum. When studying the history-making contributions of people in math and science, the teacher needs to include women and persons of color. Much of this information is readily available in an encyclopedia. New textbooks are helping by including these very people in their units of study.

Affecting attitudes

To be effective, multicultural education cannot end here. As Christian educators we will need to teach children to have Christ-like attitudes toward each other. We will need to encourage dialog which provides opportunities for students to discuss experiences with racism, prejudice, and discrimination, past and present, and to examine how we can work to change this in the future. Teachers and students will need to face their own prejudices head on even though this can be uncomfortable. They can use events in literature and history to ease the way into these kinds of discussions. Honest exploration of events of the past and present, such as the segregation of schools in the 50s or the recent violence in Bosnia, can pro-

vide springboards for discussions and can encourage students to brainstorm Christian responses.

For example, when I used Jerry Spinelli's book, *Maniac MaGee*, in my classroom, the students acquired many insights regarding racism. Learning opportunities such as these can occur meaningfully and naturally in any classroom. Several WELS teachers have helped their students develop cross-cultural relationships by setting up pen-pals with students of different races. Letters, videos, and face-to-face activities with these pen-pals have taught the students and their families that there can be differences between us that enrich our relationships and that there are commonalities that unite us. These experiences are imperative at the teacher education level also. I have become aware of this through my work at Dr. Martin Luther College with the Spanish Club and in a Hispanic tutoring program in a local school district. Through these activities and programs pre-service teachers have learned valuable lessons in the similarities and differences among learners in general and how these can be affected by cultural factors.

Yes, a kaleidoscope is an interesting

toy. Every image is given beauty and excitement by each little colored chip. In the same way, we must make our classrooms the kaleidoscopes for God's wonderfully diverse creation of mankind.

WORKS CITED

- Bullard, Sara. 1992. "Sorting Through the Multicultural Rhetoric." *Educational Leadership* 49 (December/January) 4:4-7.
- Haub, Carl. 1991. "The Top 10 Findings from the 1990 Census (So Far...)." *Population Today* (July/August):3-4.
- Hilliard, Asa. 1992. "Why We Must Pluralize the Curriculum." *Educational Leadership* 49 (December/January) 4:12-15.
- Reed, Jacqueline. 1993. "Choice, Race and the Truthful Curriculum." *Multicultural Education* (Winter):12-14.
- Shaw, Carla. 1993. "Multicultural Teacher Education: A Call for Conceptual Change." *Multicultural Education* (Winter):22-24.

Carrie Pfeifer is a 1981 graduate of DMLC and has taught in elementary schools in Illinois and Wisconsin. She is currently an instructor at DMLC where she also serves as an advisor to the Spanish Club.

DMLC Summer School Offering

Edu 1336wk Teaching for Cultural Diversity 1.5 cr, June 13-17. Carrie Pfeifer, instructor.

This workshop is an introduction to current methods for multicultural education and its application to WELS elementary and secondary classrooms. Participants will frame an integrated unit around a cultural/ethnic theme. The use of literature as a cultural bridge will be emphasized. For further information or to register call 800 686 4142.



Dear Teachers,

Summer's sweet languor ambles near. Do you have plans besides lying in a lawn chair sipping lemonade? I know how badly you need to relax your mind and body, but don't discount a strange remedy I've found for weariness: going back to school.

I started last fall and since have taken a class each quarter as I work towards my MA in English. How energizing it's been! How much easier to find the time and money (those two heavy-weight champions of excuses) than I'd dreamed it would be. Sometimes it's been a struggle to understand the academic readings, to get a paper done with kids clamoring to use the computer and wash loads piling up; but from bitter roots do spring sweet fruits. I'd like to share with you some of those surprising joys.

The first fruit hit me on the head, shaking me up a bit. I had considered myself well read in the areas of poetry

Sweet Fruits

Ramona M. Czer

"The roots of education are bitter,
but the fruit is sweet."
Aristotle

and composition studies. But knowledge has a way of marching on while we run in place, mothering babies or correcting papers. It's easy to fall behind, to lose track of current theories, methods, or publishing writers. I did. At first catching up felt overwhelming, but gradually I began to see the wider picture as a jigsaw puzzle I could put the pieces into at my own pace. No one else sees the whole thing at once either—except God—no matter how self-assured he or she seems. The fruit wasn't the confidence at figuring out what I was "supposed" to think but the joy in seeing new vistas, at having my "paradigm shifted," at reading new poets and theorists with perspectives I'd never known existed!

Hand in hand with that fruit is the second one: the deepening of my humility. I believe humility is often a result of education. We begin to see how complex the world is and how paltry our own attempts to figure it all out. Even as Christians, we know so little about God's perspective that the more we learn, the more we see how much is left to learn. I blush at opinions on

poetry or writing I once held forth on so vehemently only to learn that the gray area may have been much wider than I suspected. It's painful to realize how naive or narrow-minded we have been, but until we do, we can't forgive ourselves and move one.

Moving on. That leads me to the third fruit: beginning to see learning as a journey we make with children not as a destination we have already arrived at. "I am not a teacher," wrote Bernard Shaw, "only a fellow-traveller of whom you asked the way. I pointed ahead—ahead of myself as well as of you." As I balked at the problem of writing a paper on a basketball tournament weekend, I wondered if my daughters felt the same way when they have big projects due the day after Choral Fest. As I grew sleepy in class, I remembered the way past students of mine used to nod. As I threw down an article by a pompous author so afraid to sound natural and clear that I couldn't get anything out of his words, I thought: Is this how children feel sometimes at our intellectual meanderings? Just as they have miles to go before they sleep academically, so do I. I hope realizing this makes me a more empathetic fellow-traveler.

Other smaller fruits include expanding my library with required and eventually treasured books, gaining new teaching methods from a great variety of instructors, and adding courses to my resume which say loud and clear, "This person is hungry to learn."

Consider then taking a workshop, going to this year's National Literacy Convention in New Ulm, enrolling in a

summer school class, or even beginning a degree program. No matter how short the class, I'm sure you'll leave stimulated and fresher than when you walked in the door. You went into teaching in part because knowledge fascinated you, the gathering of it and the imparting of it. The two go hand in hand. As Chaucer wrote, "And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach." At the very least, take time to loll in that lawn chair with a good book. Gladly pick the fruit of learning—you deserve it!

A Student-Mother

Ramona Czer continues as a wife, mother, student, and writer living in New Ulm, Minnesota.



Weaknesses In Social Studies Textbooks

Weaknesses that perpetuate myths and misconceptions

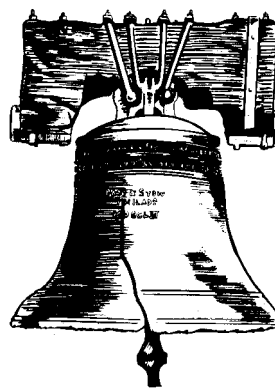
Frederick H. Wulff

I believe that the most important quality of a social studies textbook is that it reflects good historical scholarship—that it is a reliable tool. A recent issue of *The Lutheran Educator* had a book review of a textbook by John Garraty that earned high grades in that respect (Wulff 1993). Historian Paul Gagnon, the principal investigator of the Bradley Commission, once wisely wrote: "History is, above all, a good story and the truth is always the best story to tell ourselves" (Gagnon 1989, 147). Conversely, the worst textbooks, in my opinion, are those textbooks that care little about accurate reporting—those that carelessly perpetuate myths and misconceptions in spite of solid contrary evidence.

Some may argue that grade school texts should avoid complex cause-and-effect situations or controversial interpretations because these students can only handle shallow and superficial treatment of a subject or just bare names and dates. That is a fallacious and demeaning argument. Grade school texts can and should have substance with an upfront and truthful approach. Charlotte Crabtree has well said, "Historical thinking, including causal analysis, takes many years to acquire, but its foundation is rightly laid in the elementary school" (1989, 182). There is no justification for poor

textbooks that lack scholarly quality. There should not be a conflict between the material found in the grade school texts and that which children may see in a well-documented TV special or that which they will encounter in high school or college. Grade school students can handle truthful substance now.

We are not here talking about "political correctness." Professor Diane Ravitch, a member of the Bradley Commission, says that those of all political persuasion should be interested in "seeing history taught honestly, as history" (1989, 89). I think all of us would like to put to rest those ubiquitous half truths that seem never to die. It is essential that our textbooks are not misleading or need correcting—whether we use textbooks for daily assignments, developing units, assigning background reading, or just for reference.



Weaknesses in specific areas

Let us first examine just what erroneous information has intruded into our national past and continues to live on in grade school textbooks. Many may be familiar with Thomas A. Bailey's *Probing America's Past: A Critical Examination of Major Myths and Misconceptions*. Although the book is not the last word, it does have merit for drawing attention to the many myths that still plague us. Of course, some differences Bailey cites may be subjective opinions, but others are much more than that, and may justly be referred to as errors or outdated interpretations.

A good starting point for noting weaknesses are the allegations of Paul Gagnon. Besides serving on the Bradley Commission on History in Schools, Professor Gagnon serves as consultant to the National Center for History in the Schools based at the University of California, Los Angeles. He expresses his concerns about textbook shortcomings rather convincingly in his book (1989). For example, Gagnon chides current textbooks that fail to clarify the early Puritan faith and aspirations in colonial America. For example, Gagnon believes many texts leave a false impression: "By failing to clarify [Puritan] faith and aspirations, the texts leave the impression that they were hypocrites—or more hypocrites than we are—for wanting 'freedom' for themselves but banishing those who question their theology and church authority," nor do the texts explain "why they believed they had compelling reason to abhor unorthodox religious doctrine"

(Gagnon 1989, 37). Furthermore, according to Gagnon, "Modern readers, always ready to mistake their own indifference to religion for the virtue of toleration, could profit from a better perspective" (1989, 38).

Thomas Bailey also discusses this and other misconceptions about the Puritan colonists. Bailey reminds us how Puritan religious leaders "tried hard to exclude from the tender new spiritual vineyard unorthodox foxes that might ruin the grapes." He then goes on to say, "By the standards that existed elsewhere in most of America, and indeed in Europe, colonial Massachusetts enjoyed a refreshing amount of political democracy." As for Puritan attitudes toward science: "To their credit, a number of the New England clergy were among the foremost champions of science" (Bailey 1973, 1: 27-30).

The American Revolution, too, is fertile ground for myths. Theodore Hartwig opened the 1990 New Ulm Social Studies Symposium with an address in which he touched on this problem: "When writing history and telling its story, it must be the truth; and the nearer the story touches us, the more difficult this is. The story of our American War for Independence as told in elementary school texts for many years suffered from much oversanitation" (Hartwig 1990, 5). It is so easy to foster misconceptions under the guise of patriotism. How convenient it is to blame a "tyrant king" than to look at ideological questions that had risen between the colonies and the parliament of their mother country. Thomas Bailey directs much attention to the

many stubborn myths surrounding the American Revolution and the events leading to the confrontation.

For example, you may want to check if your textbook still carries the old Beardian notion that there was not widespread suffrage in the colonies. In this respect Gagnon, as well as most historians, notes that most males owned land and fulfilled that voting requirement. Gagnon goes on to say that suffrage "was still more widespread than elsewhere in the world, and popular-elected legislators represented roughly equal numbers of people" (1987, 46). Charles Beard also left the impression that the oncoming Revolution was a class war. Gagnon warns against this notion, "Ours was a revolution largely free of class hatred. We had not suffered the privileged clergy and aristocracy of the Old Regime, or the manifest injustice of its legal system and taxes. Gaps between rich and poor were less extreme, class relations were less strained" (1989, 49). Some textbooks on American history still do not adequately address the failings of the Frederick Jackson Turner interpretation of the American frontier. Alan Brinkley of Columbia University in a recent review for *The New York Times* notes that central to new Western history is at least "an obligatory, almost ritualistic repudiation" of the Turner thesis for its ethnocentrism and celebration of democratic individualism (Quoted in Sewall 1993, 1). Unfortunately, few texts below the college level concern themselves with the validity of either the Beardian or Turner thesis.

The list of outdated interpretations

could go on and on. The Reconstruction period of history has been revamped since the 1950s, yet many of the old racist interpretations still linger. Twentieth century history, with all of its controversy, also needs to reflect the real issues people faced.

Weaknesses of simple errors

When it comes to finding errors in textbooks, the well-known names of Mel and Norma Gabler of Texas come to mind. The Gablers were kind enough to respond to my letter with a request for their material on social studies textbooks. I learned that Norma Gabler had presented a Texas State Board of Education Committee a list of 512 errors she said were contained in ten history books used in junior high and senior high schools. Most of these errors primarily involved dates. Others included cities, wrong events, and inaccurate numbers (Gabler 1992a). A State Board of Education textbook committee acknowledged that nearly 300 errors remain in U.S. history textbooks shipped in the fall of 1992 to Texas schools. Carolyn Crawford, who head the school board committee, said publishers will be required to pay \$300 per error, or nearly \$90,000 in fines, as well as to provide correction sheets for the books. After looking over some of the errors listed by the Gablers, I believe most of them would have been caught by the publishers if historians had been employed as consultants. For example, the statement in one text, "House votes to impeach Nixon," should have been, "The House Judiciary Committee voted

to recommend articles of impeachment to the full House.” An incorrect capital of Vietnam should also have been caught, as well as a reference to the “Battle” of Valley Forge. Some of the errors caught by the Gablers, however, were a matter of personal interpretation and would stand up to the scrutiny of historians. For example, the Gablers question the prevalence of nationalism during the period of the Articles of Confederation. Recent studies support that “error.” Yet, when it comes to searching out factual errors, the Gablers deserve credit in that respect.

The weaknesses of forced “Christian” history

It is not appropriate to twist or distort history in order to construct a “Christian” history. We need to respect the truth. We should seek the truth. Our students expect that from us. Naturally, as Christians we have a Christian perspective of history—that God controls history and that the destiny of nations are in his hands. This we accept by faith. However, outside the revealed knowledge of biblical history, we continue to search for historical knowledge much as do secular historians. During our lifetime we will not know everything about history or the meaning of every single event. If we claim to know what God means in all of our history lessons, students may equate our “Christian” history content and interpretations with God’s absolute truth. We must remember that history books are always subject to change in the light of new research and scholarly

studies, so we must always make it perfectly clear to our students the difference between God’s absolute truth and the tentative history found in our textbooks.

The Gablers, no doubt, are sincere and well meaning in their efforts to promote “Christian” history, but there are serious flaws in their materials. In a twelve-page duplicated tract on the American Revolution distributed by the Gablers the author intends to “show how traditional rights of Englishmen were allegedly derived from Biblical absolutes” (Frey 1981,1). Bible passages are then used to support the contention that the British later acted against God’s laws by having standing armies, quartering troops, and restricting freedom of trade. Under the explanation for what the author suggests was the “un-Christian” Proclamation Line of 1763 is the statement, “The enactment of the Proclamation had little to do with Indian affairs and nothing to do with Chief Pontiac’s rebellion” (Frey 1981, 5). Historians of the frontier would find that statement outrageous. The tract then assaults the Quebec Act of 1774 as restoring “the old French feudal system so detrimental to the peasant farmers there” (Frey 1981, 10). Actually the Quebec Act was a wise and fair piece of legislation, fulfilling a promise to defeated people of French descent that the British would respect their rights to practice Catholicism and to retain French traditions in regards to land tenure. The only purpose of this tract’s lengthy tirade against the British seems to be to show them as a godless people. Thus when this tract uses Bible

passages to “prove” the need to remove the lawless rulers, the implication is that the rule of the 18th century British Parliament was godless. Those in the colonies who opposed the Loyalists, on the other hand, are assumed to be the agents of God.

The Gablers attempt to justify the American Revolution because the British government was collecting unpopular taxes and they suggest, therefore, that colonials were doing God’s will by rebelling against England. One could better argue that overthrowing a government is in conflict with God’s Word (Ro 13:12).

The material used by the Gablers also describes what they believe to be will of God for civil government. The Bible thus becomes a blueprint for civil government. The weaknesses in this kind of an approach have been discussed by Joel Gerlach, (1982). Pastor Gerlach wrote of those “who want to employ a tool (the Bible) that God gave his church to be a guide for Christian living as a tool of civil government” (1982, 233). Reformed theology tends to force everything into a “Christian” framework to support a preferred civil policy and then to impose that policy at the expense of the church’s real gospel mission. For example, in a tract on biblical principles on economics, the author cites Bible passages which he claims oppose graduated taxes on wealth and which support free trade, (Frey 1990a).

The Gablers use their tract “Biblical Principles in the United States Constitution” (1983) to promote the use of Christian text books. This tract illustrates well the Reformed approach

to claiming absolute knowledge of what God intended in each historical situation. When new scholarship necessitates revamping history and civics books, persons who take this approach will find themselves saddled with outdated interpretations which they have tied to God’s will. For example, the tract seemed especially forced when it refers to Article VI of the Constitution as analogous to Scripture in the moral realm and to hard money in the economic realm” (Gabler 1983, 1) and of the separation of powers as a “direct analogy to the Trinitarian sharing of sovereignty in the Godhead” (Gabler 1983, 2). In another pamphlet distributed by the Gablers this Trinitarian concept is explained further: “Complete individuality (three Persons) coexists with complete unity (God) in the Trinity. Politically, the many particular individual states share sovereignty with the collective federal government—neither the individuals nor the one group being sovereign over the other and both following Biblical political and economic principles” (Frey, 1990b, 2).

One of the objections the Gablers have to secular textbooks has to do with “functional humanism.” It isn’t clear what is meant, but they include a belief in global citizenship as evidence of functional humanism. In their criticism of the United Nations, which they interpret as an ungodly organization, the Gablers warn us of this statement they found in a textbook: “Many people think a stronger U.N. or a new international organization is needed if we and other peoples of the world are to move safely into the 21st century. Only a

stronger world body, they argue, can meet tomorrow's challenges." Immediately following this quote is this highlighted statement: "THESE VIOLATE A BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE: 'So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth...' Genesis 11:8a" (Gabler 1992b, 5). This condemnation does not leave much room for Christians who might think international cooperation for peace through a world body is desirable. At least, this is a legitimate topic for discussion and it stretches the point to object to using a text that examines the role of the United Nations as a peace keeping body. Certainly this is preferable to a locked mind-set that shuts off thinking under the guise of protecting Christian principles.

The weaknesses of omission and fragmentation

Then there is the danger that some major areas are not treated at all—either by the text or the classroom teacher. The danger is cited in "Education for Democracy: A Statement of Principles," which was written in 1987 as a guiding charter for an Education for Democracy project. Some 170 prominent persons from Jimmy Carter to Ann Landers were signatories to the statement of principles. Among the concerns was the following: "The kind of critical thinking we wish to encourage must rest upon a solid base of factual knowledge. In this regard, we reject educational theory that considers any kind of curricular content to be as good as any other, claiming that all students

need to know is 'how to learn'...that in an age of rapid change, all knowledge necessarily becomes 'obsolete'" ("Education ...", in Gagnon 1989, 166).

The content we teach is important and we should avoid textbooks that are bland and shallow in content or simply problem oriented. If we have developed a good curriculum that treats important areas of our historical heritage, then it would be well if we utilized the best resources to that end. If we are tolerant of textbooks that skip over major units for the sake of student interest, we are part of the problem in the social studies crisis. There are also textbooks, which present material in fragments in a misguided attempt to be "inclusive."

Thomas Bender asks the question: "Is the primary task of historical writing to confer legitimacy on every group through representation, or is it to achieve interpretive understanding of the whole society and its past?" (Bender 1989, 189-190). With the legitimate concerns of multiculturalism, we need to give treatment to the varied contributors to the story of history. Professor Bender states that we can relate the different ethnic groups to the whole "by integrating them and not ignoring them or obscuring them" (1989, 189-190). This is not an easy task because of the various rights groups competing for center stage in the narrative. Gary Nash suggests that this integration can still be done without neglecting the traditional figures and institutions in history by showing the interaction of the great political and religious leaders, scientists, captains of industry, and military officers with the mass of ordinary peo-

ple and to show how each group influenced each other (Nash 1989). But in this integration Paul Gagnon reminds us that "It is senseless for historians, whose first lesson is that time limits all possibility, to be fighting for space in a single year so fragmented by demands for multicultural education that our students fail to comprehend the roots and needs of the democratic political vision that best promises to nourish peace and justice in a multicultural society. The focus is on the West in this respect, is not because it is inherently better than other civilizations but because it has produced liberal democracy and many of the moral values that sustain it" (Gagnon 1987, 38-39).

Epilogue

If we use textbooks that require constant clarification about misleading content, the students will be confused. Then, too, poor texts require reteaching later on. Reteaching can be much more difficult than teaching. Teachers should avoid textbooks that do not use professional historians as consultants. In selecting textbooks, faculties need to compare the prospective textbook content with that of a quality college text written by a team of respected historians. This will also provide a refresher exercise in U.S. history. A collaborated college text by Paul Boyer, Clifford Clark Jr., Joseph Kett, Thomas Purvis, Harvard Sitkoff, and Nancy Woloch may serve well as a benchmark for this examination. (Boyer 1990).

I suggest to my history students that they keep their college history text-

books as reference books. Professor Neil Stout offers the same advice: "There is a great temptation to convert textbooks into cash, but are you sure that you'll never have any more questions about American history? You can look things up in the library, but having your text at hand will save time" (Stout 1994, 79). Good advice for teachers who keep abreast of history and expect their textbooks to do the same.

Good teaching methods are important, but just as important is the content of what you teach.

WORKS CITED

- Bailey, Thomas. 1973. *Probing America's Past: A Critical Examination of Major Myths and Misconceptions*. 2 vols. Lexington, MA: Heath.
- Bender, Thomas. 1989. "Public Culture: Inclusion and Synthesis in American History." In *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*, edited by Paul Gagnon. New York: Macmillan.
- Boyer, Paul, C. Clark, Jr., J. Kett, T. Purvis, H. Sitkoff, N. Woloch. 1990. *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People*. Lexington, MA: Heath.
- Crabtree, Charlotte. 1989. "Returning History to the Elementary School." In *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*, edited by Paul Gagnon, New York: Macmillan.
- "Education for Democracy: A Statement of Principles." 1987. In *Democracy's Half Told Story: What American History Textbooks Should Add*, by Paul Gagnon. Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Teachers.
- Frey, Neil. 1981. "Biblical Principles: Rights of Englishmen and Acts of

- Parliament, 1763- 1775." Mimeographed.
- Frey, Neil. 1990a. "Biblical Principles of Economics." Mimeographed.
- Frey, Neil. 1990b. "Biblical Political Principles." Mimeographed.
- Gabler, Mel. 1983. "Biblical Principles in the United States Constitution." Mimeographed.
- Gabler, Mel. 1992a. "Textbook Fiasco Continues." *Newsletter* (December): 1.
- Gabler, Mel. 1992b. "Humanism / Moral Relativism." Longview, TX: The Mel Gablers.
- Gagnon, Paul. 1987. *Democracy's Untold Story: What World History Textbooks Neglect*. Washington, D.C.: The American Federation of Teachers.
- Gagnon, Paul. 1987. *Democracy's Half-Told Story: What American History Textbooks Should Add*. Washington, D.C.: The American Federation of Teachers.
- Gerlach, Joel., 1982. "'Christian' Public Policy." *Northwestern Lutheran* 69:232-233.
- Nash, Gary. 1989. "History for a Democratic Society." In *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education*, edited by Paul Gagnon. New York: Macmillan.
- Ravitch, Diane. 1989. "The Revival of History: A Response." *The Social Studies* (May / June): 8.
- Sewall, Gilbert. 1993. "The American West." *Social Studies Review* (Spring): 1-3.
- Stout, Neil. 1994. *The History Student's Vade Mecum*, 2nd Edition. Lexington, MA: Heath.
- Wulff, Frederick. 1993. "A Good Social Studies Textbook." *The Lutheran Educator* (September): 27-32.

Frederick Wulff teaches in the history department of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.