

# THE AGONY AND ECSTASY OF ... RESEARCH

**What is your worldview?** How has the Bible been formative in its development? Which Bible books have been most influential? Romans? Psalms? John?

**How has the Bible impacted *the way you teach*?** Has it affected *what* you teach each day in your classroom? Which books of the Bible have been most influential? Haggai? Revelation? Deuteronomy? Questions such as these are part of an initial research survey which has been distributed to every CCS and CPCS school in Australia in the last few months.

Some Principals and respondents have been bemused by such questions. Words such as 'onerous', 'difficult' and 'unreasonable' have been used in describing the survey. Some schools have been unable to volunteer even one teacher willing to fill it out. Some have indicated that they are too busy – examinations to write, reports to be completed, teachers already under stress etc. etc.

On the other hand, a number of those who have filled out the survey have indicated thankfulness that they were challenged to think so specifically about the Bible. One respondent wrote: 'I found this questionnaire a difficult (but worthwhile) task ... **I'm inspired to learn more and let the Bible speak to me, and to wrestle with it. Thanks!**'

If it is our claim that the education we offer is 'Bible-based', surely it is important to understand *how* the Bible is functioning as a basis. Not only is it important, it is crucial to the ongoing distinctiveness of Christian education.

I am currently conducting this research into that biblical basis. The research project began in March 2000 under the supervision of Dr. George Cooney through the Faculty of Education at Macquarie University. It is hoped that the research will be completed by the end of 2002. The results, will of course, be made available to the Christian schooling movement.

The survey is the first instrument in seeking data from teachers as to exactly how the Bible influences what is happening in Christian schools. Participant observation, interviews with teachers, and a study of school documentation will subsequently accompany the survey instrument and further help in providing a clear picture as to how, in practice, the Bible is functioning as a basis for Christian education.

The Bible is indeed a library of books. The 66 books which make up the Bible are diverse and yet they contribute to a unified written word of God. **Are the books of the Bible still read and digested as books?** Or have we been raised on a diet of single verses, favourite passages, biblical themes, doctrines and principles, such that we no longer regard the Bible as a canon of books? Indeed, is it the case that we have ceased to even think of the Bible as consisting of many diverse and distinctive books?

**When was the last time you read Zephaniah? The whole book of Job? All 150 Psalms?**

Might I express my deepest thanks to those who have completed the survey thus far. The responses have all been invaluable.

At this stage, 40 Christian schools have responded to the request for teachers to take part in the research. Over 130 Christian schools haven't yet made any response to the request to be involved.

Nevertheless, the research is progressing well and interviews within selected participating schools will commence within the next few weeks.

It will take a minimum of 45 minutes to fill out the survey. Some teachers have spent much longer, even up to 2 hours to make a contribution to research so that we might better understand how the Bible is functioning as the basis for Christian schooling?

If you would like to fill out a survey please drop me a line or send an email to the following addresses.

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