

“The Substance of Things Hoped for”: Peter Gordon White and the New Curriculum of The United Church of Canada

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Volume 6, numéro 2, printemps 2015

Livre et religion
Religion and the Book

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1032711ar>
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1032711ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Groupe de recherches et d'études sur le livre au Québec

ISSN

1920-602X (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Bradley-St-Cyr, R. (2015). “The Substance of Things Hoped for”: Peter Gordon White and the New Curriculum of The United Church of Canada. *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1032711ar>

Résumé de l'article

Pour l'Église Unie du Canada, le « Nouveau Curriculum » a atteint son objectif central, soit de renouveler l'étude de la Bible chez tous les groupes d'âge. Il a en outre conféré une visibilité médiatique accrue à l'Église elle-même. Toutefois, l'imposant projet a nécessité un immense investissement qui n'a pas été adéquatement financé, et il ne s'est pas complètement concrétisé. L'éditeur en chef, Peter Gordon White, s'est imputé la responsabilité des problèmes qu'a connus le projet, alors même que celui-ci avait été géré de main de maître et que sa mise en oeuvre s'était déroulée comme prévu. De plus, les appels au rejet du Nouveau Curriculum en raison des interprétations bibliques ouvertement modernistes qu'il propose ne sont pas en cause dans les déboires financiers qui ont suivi. Au contraire, le programme a été adopté par pratiquement toutes les Églises Unies du pays. Les problèmes sont surtout attribuables à la rupture s'étant opérée entre le monde dans lequel le Nouveau Curriculum a été élaboré (les années 1950) et celui dans lequel il a été lancé (les années 1960). Dans cet article, nous nous penchons sur les succès et les échecs connus par le Nouveau Curriculum, ainsi que sur le rôle qu'il a joué dans le déclin de la maison d'édition la plus importante du Canada, The Ryerson Press.

“THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR”: Peter Gordon White and the New Curriculum of The United Church of Canada¹

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ABSTRACT

For the United Church of Canada, the “New Curriculum” achieved its main objective of renewing bible study for all age groups, with the added bonus of gaining publicity for the church itself. However, the massive project took a huge investment that was neither properly funded nor ultimately realized. The editor-in-chief, Peter Gordon White, unjustly blamed himself for the problems that resulted; however, the project was extremely well managed and produced on schedule. Nor did the calls to burn the New Curriculum due to its overtly modernist biblical interpretations directly cause financial problems. Instead, it was almost universally adopted by United Churches across the country. The problems arose mainly from a disconnect between the world the New Curriculum was conceived in (1950s) and the world it was launched into (1960s). This paper explores the New Curriculum’s successes and failures, and its contribution to the downfall of Canada’s largest publishing house, The Ryerson Press.

RÉSUMÉ

Pour l’Église Unie du Canada, le « Nouveau Curriculum » a atteint son objectif central, soit de renouveler l’étude de la Bible chez tous les groupes d’âge. Il a en outre conféré une visibilité médiatique accrue à l’Église elle-même. Toutefois, l’imposant projet a nécessité un immense investissement qui n’a pas été adéquatement financé, et il ne s’est pas complètement concrétisé. L’éditeur en chef, Peter Gordon White, s’est imputé la responsabilité des problèmes qu’a connus le projet, alors même que celui-ci avait été géré de main de maître et que sa mise en œuvre s’était déroulée comme prévu. De plus, les appels au rejet du Nouveau Curriculum en raison des interprétations bibliques ouvertement modernistes qu’il propose ne sont pas en cause dans les déboires financiers qui ont suivi. Au contraire, le programme a été adopté par pratiquement toutes les Églises

Unies du pays. Les problèmes sont surtout attribuables à la rupture s'étant opérée entre le monde dans lequel le Nouveau Curriculum a été élaboré (les années 1950) et celui dans lequel il a été lancé (les années 1960). Dans cet article, nous nous penchons sur les succès et les échecs connus par le Nouveau Curriculum, ainsi que sur le rôle qu'il a joué dans le déclin de la maison d'édition la plus importante du Canada, The Ryerson Press.

The diffusion of Christianity is the most important subject that can engage the attentions of men.

Egerton Ryerson²

For 141 years, The Ryerson Press (known internally as “the House” from its days as the Methodist Book and Publishing House) was both a cultural engine for and a reflection of Canadian society. Founded in 1829 as the Methodist Book Room, it was Canada’s first English-language book publisher. In 1960, when its long-time editor Lorne Pierce retired, the House began to decline for various, complex reasons, including the purchase of an expensive German printing press³ and the general state of Canadian publishing.⁴ By 1970, it was \$2.5 million in debt and had sunk from the first to the third largest textbook publisher in Canada. When the United Church of Canada (UCC) sold The Ryerson Press to the Canadian branch of the American company McGraw-Hill, protest erupted and many changes in cultural policy followed. The introduction of block grants for publishers from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council’s Half-Back program (where losing Wintario tickets became discount coupons for Canadian books), and tax credits for publishers were all a direct result of Ontario’s Royal Commission on Book Publishing, which was a direct result of the sale.⁵ The church, of course, retained all of its denominational publications, including the New Curriculum (NC).

No publishing project is more important to a church than its own denominational publications: hymnals, church periodicals, and Sunday school publications. The NC of the 1960s—much more so than the new hymnal *Voices United* of the 1990s—was the most ambitious denominational book project ever undertaken by the UCC and the United Church Publishing House (UCPH). While the more recent megaproject, *Voices*

United, was the first entirely UCC hymnal since the *Hymnary* of the 1930s, the NC for Sunday school carried all the hopes and expectations that the UCC was on the brink of huge expansion. Despite its success in achieving its main objective of renewing bible study for all age groups in the church, the massive project took a huge investment that was not properly funded. The lack of financial oversight, in large part, occurred because responsibility for it rested between two church boards, the Board of Publication and the Board of Christian Education. While the Board of Publication was responsible for the finances, several members (mostly ministers, not businessmen) were opposed to setting aside the required funds, preferring to take money year by year, as needed, from the overall profits of the House. Ever mindful of the church's position as a charity, the Board was reluctant to capitalize the project in an obvious way.

The editor-in-chief of the project, Peter Gordon White, in large measure blamed himself for the financial problems, citing major editorial revisions after one particular round of field-testing.⁶ However, the project was extremely well managed, as is obvious from its archives,⁷ and was produced on schedule, with no obvious editorial or production crises that would account for the financial failure that followed. Nor did the calls to burn the NC, due to its overtly modernist biblical interpretations,⁸ cause the financial problems. Instead, the curriculum was almost universally adopted by United Churches across the country. However, late 1960s demographics were clearly working against the project. The NC was released in 1964 and UCC membership reached its peak in 1965; it has been in decline ever since. White had anticipated the church adding another million members by the early 1970s, which certainly would have assured the financial success of the project, but he was sorely disappointed. As well, the decision to produce quality hardcover books rather than throw-away weekly papers may have decreased production and mailing costs but, unanticipated by the editors, churches treated the books as class sets, thereby killing sales of Year 1 of the three-year cycle in the 4th and 7th years: "The assumption was that students would keep their hardcover texts, and that churches would buy new texts every year for the next set of students. That didn't happen. Churches chose to save money by recycling their texts."⁹ Even today, fifty years later, NC books can be found squirreled away in churches across the country.¹⁰

Historically, a true Methodist zeal for education, specifically free education for the masses, provided a strong impetus for publishing activities at the Methodist Book and Publishing House. Contrary to the many Anglican ministers who “argued that it was beneath the dignity of the clergy to instruct the offspring of the lower classes,”¹¹ Methodists were ardent supporters and tireless workers in the Sunday school (“Ragged School”) movement founded by English newspaper editor Robert Raikes.¹² Methodist founder John Wesley also contributed a few improvements; he “introduced singing in these schools, set up classes by ages, shortened the hours of attendance, and made the services more attractive.”¹³ By 1785, an estimated 250,000 children attended these Sunday schools. Publishing and education went naturally hand in hand. A “well-stocked library was part of the essential equipment of the Sunday school; its books circulated among adults and children alike,” according to church historian and former Ryerson Press editor John Webster Grant.¹⁴ Publishing efforts in Sunday school curriculum (learning materials for children’s Bible study) and later secular textbooks evidence this strong support for education.

By 1845, Methodist Book and Publishing House Book Steward Anson Green believed that the market in Canada was sufficient to support an indigenous, denominational Sunday school curriculum. The *Sunday School Guardian*, published from January 26, 1846 to about 1854, was the House’s first attempt at curriculum. Sales, however, were not as high as Green had hoped. Six months after its launch, circulation ran at only 25 percent of what was needed to keep it going.¹⁵ After the first year, the publishers were pleading with church members for support:

We rejoiced when the design was put into execution; and when our eyes fell upon the first number we thought of the number of circuits and missions through which it would circulate—of the number of preachers, of class-leaders, and other official members, spreading over our land, who would joyfully extend its circulation, . . . we thought only of the vast, the incalculable amount of good that this humble messenger was destined to accomplish. We did not allow to enter into our calculations the probability of a cold indifference in the hearts of any—much less the major part of those whom we had in our vision regarded as a host of agents for the *Sabbath School Guardian*;¹⁶ and had any one predicted *that from nearly two-thirds of all our circuits and missions we should not receive any*

subscribers, we would have been disposed to question his sanity.¹⁷

After eight years of trying to appeal to its target market, the House's first attempt at a Sunday school curriculum was considered a failure and abandoned. Starting in 1855, the House circulated the American *Sunday School Advocate* instead. By the 1860s, however, Canadians began to be uncomfortable with some of the "anti-Canadian, and anti-British sentiments"¹⁸ of American publications, an emerging problem during the American Civil War and the Fenian Raids. Rather than produce a wholly Canadian substitute, in 1865 the House began producing a Canadian edition of the American curriculum, meaning that many of the upfront costs of writing, editing, and typesetting would already be covered, but any offensive bits would be removed.¹⁹ In 1868, the House ventured back into publishing its own curriculum and the *Sunday School Banner and Teacher's Assistant* was launched; by 1879, circulation was 5,400, enough to keep it running. *Pleasant Hours* also joined the Sunday school curriculum list; by 1879, its circulation was 11,000. Under Rev. Dr. W. H. Withrow's editorship, the *Banner* and *Pleasant Hours* "endured for many years."²⁰ Withrow, also editor of the *Canadian Methodist Magazine*, was a key figure in the growth in the late 1800s of the Methodist Book and Publishing House, working closely with Book Steward William Briggs and *Christian Guardian* editor E. H. Dewart.

After church union in 1925, the Board of Christian Education, through the distribution network of The Ryerson Press, provided Sunday school curriculum in various formats, mostly periodical. By 1950, the UCC was producing a "horde of literary matter": 20 million copies annually split between 24 different periodicals.²¹ Churches were free, however, to decide for themselves which materials they would buy, and from which source. Many began to choose American materials from David Cook Company (an evangelical publisher) and Westminster Press (a Presbyterian denominational press) at prices five to twenty-five percent less than those of The Ryerson Press; but the desire for a United-Church-specific curriculum was strong. The surge in church membership and the baby boom that followed the Second World War looked like fertile ground for such a project; in 1949, Peter Gordon White was hired to help produce these Sunday school materials.

Peter Gordon White²² was born on November 23, 1919, just outside Glasgow, Scotland. His father, John Gordon White, worked as a printer at Collins book publishers. At age fourteen, after the family had emigrated to Canada, White quit high school, finishing at night, to complete the Typographical Union qualifications as a compositor in a printing shop, finishing with “the highest grade ever achieved in Manitoba.”²³ He then paid his way through university by working as a stringer for the *Winnipeg Free Press*. He held an undergraduate scholarship in English history at United College in Manitoba and won prizes in Greek, current affairs, and public speaking, was president of the student council, and still found time for acting and directing. White had gone to university “with the idea of becoming a writer and perhaps a publisher but came out a minister of The United Church of Canada.”²⁴ Almost immediately after ordination, White went into educational ministry as Field Secretary of Christian Education for Manitoba Conference, where he remained until 1949 when he moved to Toronto to take up the job of Assistant Editor of the department of Sunday school publications, apprenticed to Dr. George Little and Dr. Archer Wallace.



The United Church Publishing House c. 1996. Left to right: Catherine Wilson, Peter Gordon White, Ruth Bradley-St-Cyr.

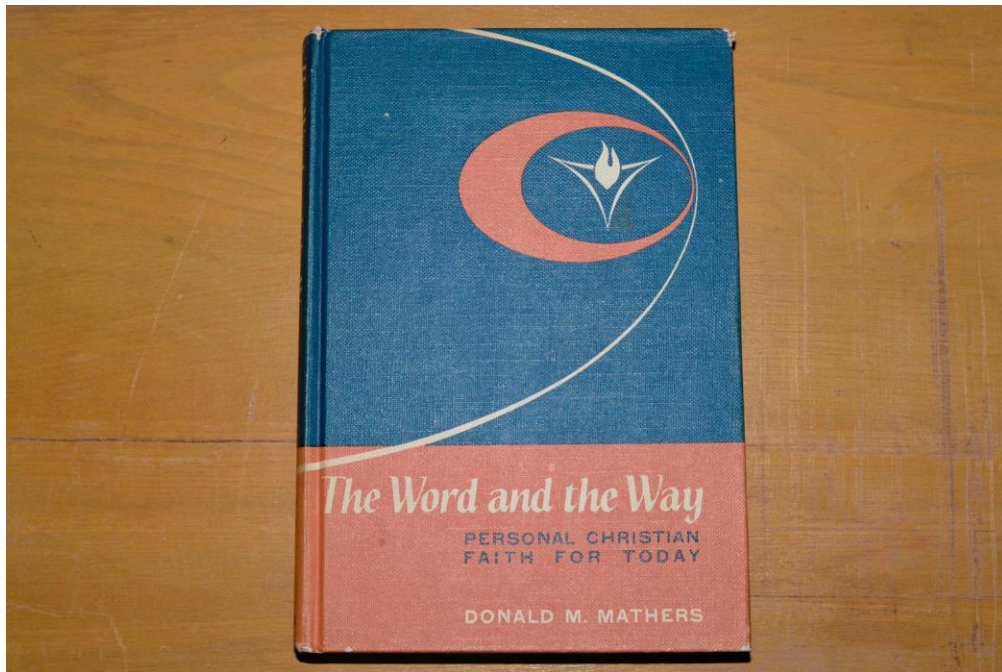
In 1953, White became editor-in-chief of the NC and the youngest member, at 34, of the General Council executive. By then, the UCC had been clamouring for its own curriculum that would meet the specific theological beliefs of the church. Several “larger denominations in the United States were already engaged in developing and publishing their own curriculum. Indeed, it was the ‘trend’ in the late fifties and early sixties.”²⁵ The 1950s, with its baby boom, seemed like the right time to launch such projects, as more children than ever before would be entering Sunday schools. However, from the beginning, the designers of the NC hoped that it would reach beyond the UCC. As White put it,

At a time when 30 million children and young people in North America receive no religious instruction at all, the need for a Sunday school, though a different need from the one Raikes answered, is no less desperate. If a Church such as ours neglects its teaching ministry, it will be a sick Church.²⁶

The NC was the largest publishing project ever undertaken by The Ryerson Press and likely by any Canadian publisher before or since, with the possible exceptions of *The Canadian Encyclopedia* and the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. The massive project began in 1952, when the decision to produce new materials was made at General Council, and would occupy twelve years, full time, of White’s career. The project involved managing the writing of a series of learning materials for everyone in the church, from kindergarten to adult, in a three-year cycle that followed the church lectionary.²⁷ Before a word could be written, detailed field consultations on a national scale and the writing and rewriting of the Presuppositions (theological specifications) to guide the project were required. Ironing out the Presuppositions took several years, with final approval at General Council in 1958.²⁸ The process of curriculum design—with a six-year projection for writing and editing the material, and the involvement of many scholars, pedagogues, teachers, and artists—then began in earnest. White’s job as editor-in-chief involved carefully planning every detail, writing funding proposals, recruiting and training staff, and handling any controversy or crisis that might arise; it also involved accountability for production deadlines, promotion, and interpretation.

Besides the management of his own department, White's job included collaborative work inside the church as a member of the Committee on Christian Faith, the Board of Publication, and the Board of Christian Education, and outside the church on the National Council of Churches' Curriculum Development Council and the joint Baptist–United Church committee. He even found time to teach the junior Sunday school class at Applewood United Church in Mississauga, a form of field-testing his own ideas and material. White was a gifted writer, painter, and expert in photography and the use of visual aids in education, and brought all these talents to the work of the NC. He was also “hard to discourage, impossible to dislike,”²⁹ and an excellent administrator and diplomat, skills that would carry him through the twelve years of the project. Over the years, he wrote many articles, radio scripts, and biblical studies. His book, *The Mystery of the Rock*, was part of the NC, designated as a “reading and research book” for Grades 4, 5, and 6. In terms of the production and distribution, and the “dreams, work, [and] policies” of the NC, the administration involved two of the church boards, the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Publication. The editorial staff belonged to the Department of Sunday School Publications, part of the Board of Publication, and the Board of Christian Education provided direction and oversight.³⁰

By March 1962, a decade of work on the NC was beginning to bear fruit. The first book published—*The Word and the Way* by Donald M. Mathers, professor of systematic theology at Queen's University—was not, as one might have expected, for the youngest Sunday school grades, but rather for the adults. White felt, quite correctly, that there was no point in releasing the NC without first teaching the parents, Sunday school teachers, and any other interested adults how to approach the material. As Mrs. Martin Johns of Hamilton put it, “Children cannot be expected to learn from teachers who have not got a thorough knowledge of what they are teaching.”³¹ Rev. Lindsay G. King went further to say, “It is better to have children without teachers than to have teachers making a sham of religious teachings.”³² Parents were also seen as key players. As United Church historian Phyllis Airhart notes, the NC “focused on the family as integral to Christian education, and produced hardcover illustrated books intended for reading at home during the week” instead of the throwaway periodical format of previous years.³³



The Word and the Way by Donald M. Mathers

The main presupposition of the NC was that it was time for what was being taught in churches to catch up with what was being taught in theological colleges. *The Word and the Way* paved the way for the rest of the curriculum and sold 600,000 copies, “unheard of for a Canadian title.”³⁴ The impetus behind the project was described thusly in 1960:

The new curriculum has risen out of the ferment of the times. It has been part of the new theological stirring. It has been part of the desire for rethinking educational principles. It has been part of the rapid social changes and the new reaching out for creative freedom in countries all around the world. It has been part of a growing unrest and a demand from the grass roots—the local churches—for more and better materials for the Sunday church school. It has been part of a research and study program by national staff and committees.³⁵

By February 1963, White reported that a print run of the first 400,000 books of the NC was on its way, with similar print runs for each of the following eight years “if the planning of the past ten years proves sound.”³⁶ In other words, they were looking to sell over three million copies of the various books in the series. By then the investment in the project had been enormous, with specifications completed for each age group in each of the

three lectionary years; the development of new periodicals, *The Christian Home* (to support the parents), *Focus*, and four others; three writers' conferences; the development of a five-year promotion plan; field testing of materials; and the preparation of layouts, printing specifications, and detailed schedules for writing and production for the books. Eight editors worked directly on the book and periodical components of the project.³⁷ Every year, the Board of Publication set aside funds from the accumulated surplus, totalling \$125,000 for editing, writing, and testing. Although \$56,000 had been "ear-marked for promotion" by the Board of Publication, there were no staff dedicated to curriculum promotion in either UCPH or The Ryerson Press. The business and editorial offices were both responsible for "maintaining and increasing circulation." Most of the promotion budget seems to have been destined for advertising in the *United Church Observer*.

In his February 1963 report, White also outlined some "unexpected" difficulties and "hoped for" successes:

the four new full colour weeklies quickly reached a higher circulation than our former five weeklies. We now distribute some 360,000 each week.

The adult book, THE WORD AND THE WAY, has sold 112,000 to date, and its STUDY GUIDE about half that figure. It is possible that the House may have sales close to a quarter of a million dollars on this one item at the end of its first year in the field (i.e., fall 1963).

At present, two concerns are uppermost: (1) an attempt to speed up schedules so that first-year materials may be ready by January 1964; (2) a plan for long range financing of the New Curriculum so that Sunday Schools will not find high prices a barrier to acceptance of the New Curriculum on its first cycle.³⁸

In April 1963, the Annual General Meeting of the Board of Publication received a special visit from the Moderator himself, the Right Rev. J. R. Mutchmor, who stressed the importance of the NC project to the church by speaking "of the immense responsibility of this Board producing the written word," especially for "the large number of Sunday School children and youth" in the UCC.³⁹ That AGM also heard some less encouraging words about the financial state of those very important church publications. The Sunday School Publication department was facing problems with subscription rates, production costs, and losses, especially for the weekly

story papers, but came to the meeting armed with recommendations for cost-saving measures, efficiency, and future policy.⁴⁰ The weekly story papers were produced for children from age four to teenagers and subscription prices ranged from 85¢ to \$2.60 a year per child. Circulation of the illustrated story papers, distributed through the Sunday schools, reached eighty-three percent of Sunday school attendees in 1953 but had declined to sixty-seven percent in 1960, the year before the new papers were introduced. Heavy losses came in 1963 because of “circulation levels and subscription rates of the papers not being high enough to recover the production and overhead cost.” Summer issues for July, August, and September garnered only sixty percent circulation, losing \$30,000 per summer. Recommendations for reducing losses included cutting the summer issues, but also dealing with the fact that production costs on the Sunday school weeklies had “risen beyond estimates to a point where estimated losses for the present year could be as high as \$130,000.” In light of this, the printing plant should “submit to the editor-in-chief a firm budget price on manufacturing the papers” and use “cost-saving innovations in production techniques,” and the Promotion Department should “make a direct approach to Churches not now using these Weeklies, with a view to gaining the 18% increase in circulation which represents a breakeven point.”⁴¹ Regarding efficiency, the Sunday School Publication department made several recommendations that led to hiring the firm of Woods, Gordon to undertake a massive management study in 1963–1964. They recommended “that functional studies be carried out by independent organizations or experts” in the areas of (a) editorial procedures; (b) costing and estimating; (c) typesetting, proofreading, presswork, and binding, in order to establish quality control in the printed product; (d) circulation and promotion, with special attention to equipment and procedures.⁴² Recommendations for future policy included a reminder that the Board of Publication had “the right to place printing orders with any plant⁴³ [rather than their own unionized Ryerson Press printing department] that can produce to the advantage of the Church, as is presently the case with respect to graded lesson helps printed for us by Providence Lithograph Company.”⁴⁴ These matters clarified, the NC project steamed ahead towards its deadline of making Year 1 materials available early in 1964 for purchase for September 1964 classes.

In August 1963, White wrote to his colleague Art Reynolds at the Victoria University Archives (which housed the UCC archives) to provide a general update on the NC:

Circulations of our current publications have held up surprisingly well. 'With a little bit of luck' we may swing into New Curriculum without the slump some denominations have experienced. We have been at some pains to maintain quality in the present periodicals, even during the pusch [sic] on the bright new books.

Most of our authors are human, and some of our editors almost so; therefore the deadline schedule we set ourselves last year is the substance of things hoped for (and sometimes our only evidence of things unseen). Even so, the materials will be available to churches seven or eight months ahead of date of actual use, as we had planned.

This summer, vacations have been on a catch-them-if-you-can basis. Engraving proofs, galley proofs, page proofs, press proofs have been tumbling from desk to desk here in the editorial department, and from composing room to pressroom at the plant.⁴⁵

Since production must go along seriatim, the first books off the press will be stock-piled until the set for Year One is completed. By February, sample kits will be assembled for distribution to local churches on request.

Some of the books have very large runs, up to 100,000 or more. About 10% of the run will be completed in the fall, then taken off the press to permit other books to be done. Later, the remainder of the big runs will go back on press. . . .

As you can imagine, sizable sums are involved in the production and distributing aspect of the work. In round figures, the materials have a value of some \$700,000 for each year, \$2,100,000 for the first cycle [of three years].

Throughout the church, interest is encouraging. The novel idea of beginning with adults reached almost every congregation. THE WORD AND THE WAY has stimulated Bible study and group discussion for some 125,000 adults to date. The coming season should see this number increase.

FOCUS, the new leadership periodical is off to a flying start with a good healthy circulation. It should do a great deal to alert ministers, superintendents and local C.E.

chairmen to the ideas and practicalities of New Curriculum.

As you know, we expect New Curriculum materials to continue in use for three cycles (nine years) before major revisions are required. By that time, according to census projections, the United Church constituency [membership] may have increased by another million people.⁴⁶

The Woods, Gordon management review's Progress Report No. 3, submitted in October 1963, dealt entirely with the NC, then in the last stages of preparation. The consultants described the project as "the result of years of research, investigation, writing and testing . . . better than anything else ever offered by the United Church." They concluded

There is presently some thought that the introduction of NC material will bring about a resurgence of interest in religion and may even cause an increase in Story Paper circulation. In this regard, Story Papers are being promoted as part of the NC. While it is hoped that a circulation increase will result, the present information available indicates that this is unlikely.

The figures showed that even if market saturation were reached (which required an over thirty percent increase in circulation), the department would still lose about \$25,000 per year. When it came to projected sales figures for the NC, Peter Gordon White was confident in his optimistic figures—around 550,000 units—as he had visited many of the churches across the country during the consultation and field-testing stages. Woods, Gordon's projected sales figure, however, was a very conservative 300,000 per year. "In making these estimates," stated the report, "we must emphasize that we made no detailed study of the matter. The above figures represent no more than an attempt to bring together the opinions of different members of Management in some sort of logical relationship" with the "known facts." They continue

From the fall of 1964 onwards, sales have been estimated with regard to the conditions which will likely exist at that time. The Management of the House offers widely divergent views as to the sales which can be expected on the introduction of NC material. While each opinion expressed will necessarily vary to some extent, it should

be pointed out that there is no official agreed sales forecast available from the Management. Estimated sales (from different members of Management) of graded books in 1964/65 vary from a high of 550,000 to a low of 280,000 units. It appears that the major area of disagreement revolves around the degree to which Sunday Schools will readily accept the new material, particularly as regards its contents and its much increased cost.⁴⁷

The Board of Publication itself had certainly raised this issue in its own meetings but had no structures in place by which to make accurate sales projections. Woods, Gordon was quite harsh in its estimation of the financial planning that went into the massive project:

Considering the large amount of money that will be required to introduce the New Curriculum, we cannot help but remark that a more thorough appraisal of the sales potential should have been made in the first stages of its development. . . .

We have gone into the matter much more thoroughly than was intended under our terms of reference. We had no alternative if we were to attempt to produce a meaningful picture of the outlook for the House over the next few years. At the same time, we want to be the first to raise doubts about the conclusions we have reached with regard to sales, cash requirements, and operating margins. We have been unable to verify many of the figures used or to work out the implications involved by alternative courses of action (such as shorter production runs or different sales estimates). There is also the matter of the margins available after the initial three-year cycle has been completed when certain fixed charges have been absorbed.

We wish to recommend that a separate examination be made of the situation. If this study could be completed before our final report is made, there would be an opportunity for us to correct the tentative estimates we have made.

Woods, Gordon also tried to estimate the cash requirements of the house, particularly for producing the stock of NC materials initially; as the NC was sold, cash would be freed up to pay for more stock.

Part of the cash flow problem was tied to the issue of format: the old curriculum was loose and produced quarterly; the NC was formatted in bound books, containing material for the whole year, meaning that orders would only come once a year and that production could not be spread out over the entire year as it could with the periodical format. As well, the three-year cycle meant that any unsold copies would have to sit in the warehouse for three years before their next selling season. The cost of warehousing unsold inventory would also affect the financial picture. The NC would need \$940,000 over and above its projected income of \$1,630,000 in order to be produced, so \$2,570,000 would be required from 1963 to 1967 in order to pay for production. In other words, based on the Woods, Gordon sales projection of 300,000 copies, the NC would eat up all its own profits plus almost another million dollars just to produce it (development plus production), an alarming figure.

The Woods, Gordon Report was not good news for the Sunday School Publications department, which was blamed—along with the *Observer*—for staggering past and future financial losses. The report also noted that “Most of the early problems of the new printing press,” which had required a particularly steep learning curve for the printers and thus a great deal of wastage and inefficiency, “now seem to be overcome.” The giant German printing press had been bought for the *Observer* and the Sunday school publications—not for the Ryerson Press books, as many people thought—but was charged against the Ryerson Press finances. In March 1964, a few months after Progress Report No. 3 was released, the House had to deal with the continued funding of NC in the face of staggering losses and dismal cash flow. NC sales were budgeted for at 330,000 units totalling \$540,000, or ten percent higher than Woods, Gordon projections. The managers of the Board of Publication wondered how to deal with the situation of “expecting Churches to pay \$615M for lesson materials on which they had spent only \$394M last year—a jump of \$221M.”⁴⁸ There was nothing to do but put their faith in future sales. They concluded, “We will not reach a position of solvency until 1973 in NC.”⁴⁹

But White’s faith in the sales potential of the NC was more than justified; orders for NC shot up to 740,000 units, more than double the Woods, Gordon sales estimate and almost a third more than White’s own most

optimistic estimates. He may not have used “scientific methods” to arrive at his sales projections, but White’s feeling that the United Churches were almost a hundred percent behind the NC proved to be true, at least initially. While the UCC had always been the most progressive of the mainline Protestant denominations in Canada, church members were not always so. In the case of the NC, however, UCC members, at least those making the decisions of what Sunday school curriculum to buy, were solidly behind the project. In conservative circles, though, the NC was widely criticized.

The publicity storm that hit the church in 1964 when the Year 1 children’s books were released was unexpected given the relatively conflict-free development and field-testing stages. White explains that the “pre-publication test programme had not triggered early-warning signs” on either the idea of biblical myth or the virgin birth issue.⁵⁰ Historian Kevin N. Flatt outlines the theological fault lines that emerged in *After Evangelicalism: The Sixties and the United Church of Canada* as being between the evangelicals and the modernists, both represented inside and outside of the United Church. Rev. John Bergen, pastor of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Drumheller, Alberta, for example, charged that the aims of the NC could be “equated with Communism” in “undermining and destroying every bit of Christianity, the foundation on which nations are built.”⁵¹

One might have expected most opposition to come from generally conservative Alberta, but instead, the protest was largely Toronto-based. Overall, Calgarians were said to favour the NC, even more so than Canadians did overall. After a news-agency-sponsored poll, one Calgary paper reported, “despite previous controversy, only 13.5 per cent [of Canadians] opposed the United Church’s changes, following the explanation that the Biblical stories under discussion have not been dismissed as fairy tales, but are being considered as symbolic, rather than literal and scientific fact. Only 12.3 per cent of Calgarians were opposed.”⁵² Rev. David Cline of Calgary, Alberta, wrote that the “Study books are being written by the wisest theologians of our church. In these books our Christianity is held up to the light of the vast amount of critical scientific study of the past 200 years and emerges more powerful than ever.”⁵³

Allen Spraggett, religion writer for the *Toronto Star*, began the storm of press with a fairly even-handed front-page article and an inside review, calling the

NC a “new, startling, stimulating and controversial Sunday school curriculum” that “aims to provide a balanced, understandable, rounded, outspokenly modern and liberal presentation of the Christian faith.”⁵⁴ Spraggett quoted White’s assessment of the project as

the most ambitious, the most comprehensive and up-to-date curriculum of its kind yet launched in Canada. . . . It has involved the mind of the whole United Church. In fact, few if any projects since church union in 1925 have been so widely based in the life of the church as this one is. . . . [The purpose being to] make the Christian faith relevant in the jet age . . . [and] above all else, to be open, frank and utterly honest.

The second half of the review dealt with the issue of biblical myth, and the new, rational interpretations of the first eleven books of Genesis, including White’s own version, from *The Mystery of the Rock*, of the parting of the Red Sea as being caused by a steady wind that made the waters shallower than usual at low tide. Spraggett left readers to come to their own conclusions by neglecting to provide one of his own. The title over the review—“New Child Text at Odds with Bible”—practically assured that there would be fireworks ahead.

Some members of the Evangelical United Brethren were opposed to the NC but that did not stop the denomination from joining the UCC in 1966. More criticism came from members of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. There were even calls to ban it, despite the fact that the Baptists had co-published the NC with the UCC. However, a group of Baptist ministers from Ottawa wrote that banning the NC went against “the Baptist concept of spiritual liberty.” They concluded that “experience warns that no curriculum can be expected to gain universal acceptance among us . . . [but] it is easier to unite in rejecting what is offered than to agree on what should be accepted.”⁵⁵ The editor of Baptist Sunday school publications, Rev. Frederick Helps, also defended it, saying, “If this material is accepted in our Baptist churches it will be a very great step forward. It will strengthen the faith of young people.”⁵⁶

Rev. John Koulouras, a Greek Orthodox priest who had not even read the material,⁵⁷ was quoted as saying that “Instead of purifying the Bible they are corrupting it. And rather than preserving a Christian religion they are

transforming it into a humanitarian religion with the truths of the church fathers eradicated. . . . They are teaching that Christ was a fraud.” He accused United Church people of being “modern, lazy Christians . . . being led astray by their leaders” and “wondered when the United Church would have a book burning of all their old texts.”⁵⁸ The Catholic Church, however, was more conciliatory, with columnist Father Roberts agreeing with the UCC’s use of the word “myth” while predictably disagreeing with the idea that Mary was not a virgin but rather a young girl, “virgin” being a mistranslation of the original text.⁵⁹

An editorial in the *Peterborough Examiner*, at the time published by Robertson Davies, asserted that “we have moved to a new understanding of mythology, how it arises, and how it comes to substitute for knowledge” and proposed that “there is something glorious about our ability to relegate yet more myth to heritage and to replace it with true knowledge. . . . To reasonable men it must appear as an act of worship that we are gradually less fettered to the imperfect imaginings of our forbears as our real experience increases. . . . To suppose that we shall remain children in the face of all mystery . . . is to ignore the tangible facts of our experience.”⁶⁰

Jim Fairfield, a columnist for local weeklies in Southwestern Ontario, criticized the UCC in his column of August 8, 1964, saying, “The miraculous element has been all but pruned from their books” because the “‘seeing is believing’ world has overpowered the church”⁶¹ but he recanted a few months later, saying, “I goofed.” He confessed that he had “sounded off” about the curriculum without having done “sufficient research.” His revised position was that “the miracles of the Bible clutter up a clearer view of God . . . by stopping man’s vision short upon the spectacular and the ‘legendary.’ Therefore miracles almost hinder the gospel of the United Church curriculum.”⁶²

The *London Free Press* warned that the “individual who believes [that] no word in the Bible should be questioned, and who holds with the philosophy ‘if you can’t believe it all, you can’t believe anything’” would certainly not “derive any comfort” from the NC.⁶³ The Unitarians, for their part, praised the UCC as “moving as fast, as significantly, and as courageously as anyone could possibly hope.” However, they found their own liberal turf (the “trenches we Unitarians left only two or three or—at most—four decades

ago”) invaded by the NC; they would have to move onto new ground to look for “achingly sensitive questions” such as “foreign policy, automated society, and modern sexual standards.”⁶⁴

Novelist Hugh Garner’s self-serving, misogynistic diatribe against “stupid mothers” and “the unintelligent spinster Sunday School teachers of 40 years ago” made it plain that it was too late to interest him in any updates the UCC might make to curriculum even if they had repudiated the “angels with wings like a dragonfly’s [that] had as much appeal to me as a female executive panel of the WCTU [Women’s Christian Temperance Union].”⁶⁵ On the other hand, Gary Lautens, a humour columnist for the *Toronto Star*, joked, “only atheists seem to have any imagination these days. . . . What’s left is this nice, young Jewish couple having a baby in a barn behind a Bethlehem hotel. Now aren’t you ashamed of yourself for dreaming up all that other stuff?”⁶⁶

Besides all the columns, the newspapers were inundated with hundreds of letters in response to the NC, but White characterized many of these as being from people “who read their newspaper religiously and their Bible intermittently.” While “witty and eloquent” in his defense of the NC, White “coped with death threats by mail.”⁶⁷ Those who supported White credit him with setting the stage for “a mature and intellectually respectable faith” though it took a heavy personal toll on him.⁶⁸ White’s report to General Council in September 1964, entitled “Good News? ... or Bad?” reiterated that “The New Curriculum reflects faithfully the substance of the Christian faith, as commonly held among us . . . [and that through it] we may open our lives to the Living Word of God. No United Church member need be uncertain, nor embarrassed, nor apologetic for the teaching program of our church.”⁶⁹ He also characterized Hugh Garner’s comments as being intended as an attack, but in truth being “a cry for help.” He concluded by saying,

We have an opportunity to demonstrate that this mission-minded church is . . . ready to respond here in Canada to the seemingly strong, outwardly skeptical, and spiritually dispossessed persons of our increasingly complex society. They want to know, “If God speaks, what is he saying now? Not a thousand years ago, but now.”⁷⁰

General Council, of course, endorsed this position, “rejoicing that most of our congregations and Sunday Schools are now using the New Curriculum materials” and that “enthusiastic reports” were coming in of “quicken interest” on the part of children, teenagers, adults, and especially Sunday school teachers.⁷¹ Criticism persisted, however, as

Pentecostal and Evangelistic groups issued statements endorsing the Bible, supporting God, and damning the United Church. Groups which had never seen United Church Publications in the past solemnly declared that they would never look at them in the future. . . . Passionate pleas were issued to United Church members to leave their church.⁷²

That exodus did, in fact, happen, but not because of any fundamentalist flack; rather, it happened because of the demographic “maelstrom”⁷³ of the late 1960s when people began to reject religion as being too confining, not too permissive, as the UCC stood accused. Church membership reached its peak, over a million members, in 1965 and has declined every year ever since.⁷⁴ As one document about education in the church put it,

At the beginning of the 70’s we seem to be suffering from ‘future shock.’ Too many changes are taking place too rapidly for too many people. ‘Plurality’ is the rule in church and society. Some people are angry that what was ‘right’ yesterday is not solving today’s problems. Others look back on the ‘successful’ years with nostalgia, and resent further change.⁷⁵

What no one could have predicted, even by “scientific methods,” were the huge demographic and societal changes sweeping the nation in the late 1960s.⁷⁶ The whole idea behind the NC was to be ahead of the times, something that the UCC had become known for over the years. But even as the NC was going to press, there was a decline in Sunday school attendance that only increased over the subsequent years. White’s editorial staff faced “large problems . . . regarding materials to be published in the 70’s for the Church. This period of change must be taken seriously—how shall we communicate the word to the Church, through what media?”⁷⁷ Although one Sunday school teacher had thought the NC would be the answer to his prayers about dropouts,⁷⁸ ironically, the biggest decline to date came the year it was introduced, 1964–1965.⁷⁹ By 1966, the *Toronto Telegram* reported, 100,000 teenagers had disappeared from the rolls of United Church Sunday

schools. The UCC was not alone in this exodus; the Anglicans had reached their peak enrolment in 1958 and had been declining ever since,⁸⁰ the Presbyterians had been declining since 1962,⁸¹ and one Lutheran minister bemoaned the fact that “the church has practically done handsprings to keep these kids interested” to no avail.⁸²

By 1967, UCC curriculum was facing heavy losses and an ever-declining market, though shifts were made in order to address these problems.⁸³ By October 1967, the second round of sales for Year 1 materials showed a sales drop of \$80,000 with a suggested price increase of thirty percent and printing on a cheaper grade of paper in order to compensate. The Circulation Department reported that “this year there have been almost no additional orders for Curriculum materials after the original orders were received—this was not the case a year ago. Sunday School attendance has dropped considerably since last year.”⁸⁴

One reason for the sharp decline in sales in 1967 was that, instead of giving the curriculum books to Sunday school students to keep, as they did with illustrated story papers and other periodicals, the hardcover curriculum books were being treated as class sets, like school textbooks, which defeated the idea of parents helping with the NC project. Sales in the second selling year (1967) of Year 1 materials therefore were minimal. This meant financial disaster, as the costs of developing the NC had to be amortized over the entire projected nine-year selling cycle; Year 1 materials needed strong sales in 1964, 1967, and 1970, not just in 1964. With churches deciding not to give the books to the students to keep—an understandable decision due to their cost and how sturdily they had been made—churches were unwittingly undermining both the financial viability of the NC and perhaps the spiritual viability of their students. With the NC texts shelved at the church instead of with the student and the family, the dropout rate continued to mount. As Phyllis Airhart notes, the flawed design “disclosed a church operating in denial about the degree of acceptance of theological liberalism shorn of its evangelical roots, and seemingly unaware of the damage already done to the crucial links between church, home, and community life it presupposed. It epitomized the ill-fated efforts to negotiate with modernity. . . .”⁸⁵

White’s former Sunday school department did not fare well during the late 1960s after he had left to take up new posts in the head office of the church.

The declining circulation of their publications was blamed on the fact that “the educational needs of the Church have changed radically and the days of mass circulation may have disappeared.”⁸⁶ Financially this meant that the anticipated deficit for 1970 would “amount to \$80,000, and there has been no provision for funding this deficit.”⁸⁷ Peter Gordon White took too much of the blame upon himself for these financial problems despite the obvious fact that demographics, as well as inflation, which had become severe, were clearly working against the NC. When White became editor-in-chief in 1953, Canadians were predominantly a church-going, baby-producing society; when the NC was ready for sale in the mid-1960s, however, the authority-rejecting, free-loving hippie era had already begun. White had rather hoped that his NC would spark a renewed interest in religion and though there was some flower-power-fuelled resurgence in religion that went along with the drug-fuelled haze of the Age of Aquarius, it was more geared to such ultra-colloquial Bible translations as those found in the books of Carl F. Burke. *God is Beautiful, Man* (1969), for example, entitles the story of the resurrection as “After Jesus Busts out of the Grave.”⁸⁸ The decline in Sunday school enrollment between 1953 and 1967 was staggering, and although the NC more than doubled its sales targets in 1964, the drop in sales that followed could not be overcome.

The great cultural shift of the late 1960s and the beginnings of decline in United Church membership prompted White into rethinking his theological and vocational path. He had expected the church to grow to over two million members so it was a shock when numbers started to decline after 1965. After a period of serious reflection, he came back believing that society was “preparing for a new age of faith which will be quite different than the one we have gone through,” becoming a member of the Karl Barth Society of North America, founded in Toronto in 1972, and ready to tackle even more education. After his Doctorate of Divinity (DD), he did further studies at Syracuse University in New York State, the Toronto School of Theology, Leicester University in England, and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). He received his MTh in 1978. The last paragraph of his CV reads as follows:

I believe my experience and personal exploration, which I find profoundly religious, makes available some gifts that could be of value to my colleagues in a shrinking but vital believing community. I have faced my limitations

with some honesty. I continue my one-hour solitude-meditation each day. At a very deep level, I am aware of a sense of profound gratitude, and a sort of naive delight in living. I have a feeling that these final comments may not quite belong in a resume. I shall leave them in this first draft, with the option of deleting them if this document should be distributed further.

Honest and open to a fault, White even listed “Psychoanalysis, Dr. S. Greben, 1969–1975” on his CV as a significant life experience. However, as his wife was a psychiatrist, he would be far more open to the idea than most men of his generation; this may not be anything more than “personal exploration,” though the decline of the church may well have been a factor.⁸⁹

In 1971, revisions to the NC were already in the works, even though the original plan was to cycle through the material three times (nine years) before changes would be made. As Peter Gordon White explained for the press release announcing some of the new material, “The United Church’s ‘new curriculum’ was one giant leap forward seven years ago. But you don’t stand still after a leap. The momentum carries you forward.” The new material included loose-leaf folders, cassette tapes, and teacher training materials that could be “changed quickly and cheaply in response to newer, more open concepts of learning, and in response to a growing mood of continuous change in the church and in society.” And in a clear attempt to pour new wine into old wineskins, he said, “A curriculum is simply a large plan to help living and learning. So a curriculum is really as ‘new’ as the people who use it.”⁹⁰

In 1974, a decade after the NC had been launched into Sunday schools, Peter Gordon White looked back on the project from the benefit of hindsight: “It was a new style of Christian education—a new point of view about what religion is, and how learning comes about”⁹¹:

One of the big changes, I think, was the point of view that religion . . . was about life issues. It wasn’t something remote, or packaged in a time slot. We challenged the assumption that “on Sunday we’ll be religious. And religion will be taught in the basement between 10 and 11 a.m.”

The other turn-around was the idea that Christian education was for little kids and that you grew up and away from it.

It started by saying, “Christian education is for adults and families and their children.” . . .

There was no use whatever thinking that we were going to educate little children and that they would grow up to be better Christians than the previous generation. Because people who are doing the educating communicate their personal value system. How they act, what they do, is what their children learn from them. Then you discover how vitally important those early years are for life.⁹²

On the “storm” created inside and outside the church by the NC, White said,

There was a lot of turbulence. Before General Council in Newfoundland in 1964 there even was a movement saying, “we’ve got to repudiate this—these people who are talking about the Scriptures in this way are undermining the faith.”

It was attacked by press and TV from outside the United Church. Many people thought, “ah! that shows that the main line [sic] United Church is really not believing in the Bible, doesn’t believe in God.” We were accused of all sorts of evils, private and public.

What happened through the turmoil? More than 90 per [sic] of all the churches in the United Church of Canada introduced the new curriculum to their people. It was as high at one point as 94.5 per cent.

We have to remember that this was by free choice. It was voluntary. They didn’t have to buy it or teach it.⁹³

The new curriculum was a huge editorial triumph in the UCC, exceeding its sales projections in the first year despite the controversy. The church was grateful to White for succeeding with such an enormous project and justifiably promoted him to more responsibility, first to the position of Secretary of the Board of Christian Education, then to Deputy Secretary of Ministry Personnel and Education (MP&E) when the new Divisional system was implemented, and then to Deputy Secretary of General Council itself. The issues he dealt with in these positions ranged from continuing education to theology and faith to ecumenism (dialoguing with the Roman

Catholics, the Jews, and the World Council of Churches). He served General Council from 1979 until his retirement in 1985, which he compared to Prospero's withdrawal from power in *The Tempest*: "it's time to divest of power, influence and responsibility and stop running things."⁹⁴ In his obituary of White, Bruce McLeod, himself a former Moderator of the UCC (1972–1974), called White "the best moderator we never had."⁹⁵

The NC was the UCC's most ambitious project of the 1950s and 1960s, a project that was, paradoxically, both massively successful and enormously crippling to the overall finances of The Ryerson Press. Banking on future sales to fund NC development may have been a reasonable, if not financially prudent strategy in the 1950s with the baby boom in full swing, but it came hard up against the unprecedented and unforeseen decline in church and Sunday school attendance in the 1960s. Ironically, though the church had survived the "consolidation, financial crash, drought, depression, and wartime, into the nuclear era" of its first quarter century, it could not successfully navigate the "prosperity and optimism of mid-century."⁹⁶ Ultimately, the downfall and sale of The Ryerson Press resulted from a complicated tangle of factors, not the least of which was the demographic tsunami of the late 1960s that swept over the New Curriculum.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

Ruth Bradley-St-Cyr holds a PhD in English from the University of Ottawa. She has also worked in Canadian publishing for 25 years, most recently as Director of University of Ottawa Press and Managing Editor of the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*. She teaches essay writing to first-year students; runs her own writing, editing, and translation business; and chairs the Ottawa-Gatineau branch of the Editors' Association of Canada. Her freelance clients include *Archivaria*, the *Journal of Learning Analytics*, and the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT). She is presently at work on a special section on the future of university presses in Canada for the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* and on a book about the effects of the sale of The Ryerson Press on Canadian cultural policy.

Notes

¹ My thanks to the two anonymous reviewers of this paper whose suggestions vastly improved it.

² According to John Robert Colombo, ed., *Colombo's Canadian Quotations* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1974), 517: "The first sentence of Ryerson's to appear in print,' in 1826, according to Robin S. Harris who quotes it in *Our Living Tradition: Second and Third Series* (1959), edited by Robert L. McDougall."

³ John Webster Grant, "The Ryerson Press," in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, ed. William Toye (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983), 721–722.

⁴ George Parker. "The Sale of Ryerson Press: The End of the Old Agency System and Conflicts Over Domestic and Foreign Ownership in the Canadian Publishing Industry, 1970–1986." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 40, no. 2 (2002): 7–56.

⁵ For more on the sale of The Ryerson Press, see Ruth Bradley-St-Cyr, "The Downfall of the Ryerson Press," (PhD Diss., University of Ottawa, 2014) held in electronic form at the University of Ottawa library.

⁶ Peter Gordon White, personal communication to the author, c. 1994.

⁷ The Board of Publication fonds (hereafter cited as BP), held at the United Church of Canada Archives in Toronto (hereafter cited as UCCA), provides much of the source material for any history of The Ryerson Press; however, as the archival term "fonds" suggests, its 51 boxes offer a collection of unorganized files, some of which are unnamed, or named "miscellaneous." Records from 1968 onwards are contained in the Division of Communication fonds. There is also a separate, vastly better organized fonds for the New Curriculum: 83.051C, Series VII (hereafter cited as NC).

⁸ Mrs. Harmon, Baptist, quoted in Allen Spraggett, "Virgin Birth, Goliath—Are They Just Myths?," *Toronto Star*, July 4, 1964, 1. NC Box 273, File 6.

⁹ James Taylor, email interview with the author, May 29 to June 6, 2013. For the entire edited text of the interview, see Appendix 9 of Bradley-St-Cyr, *The Downfall of The Ryerson Press*.

¹⁰ The author discovered dozens of books, almost an entire bookshelf, in class sets in Christ Church United in Chesterville, Ontario, in April 2013.

¹¹ "Robert Raikes' 'Ragged School,'" *World Christian Education*, Fourth Quarter, 1949. NC Box 273, File 3.

¹² In Queen's Park Circle in Toronto stands a copy of a statue of Sunday school founder Robert Raikes, an Anglican. The original stands on the embankment between the River Thames and the Savoy Hotel, London, England. The inscription reads as follows: "Unveiled at the Quadrennial Convention of the International Council of Religious

Education / June 28, 1930 / Commemorating the sesquicentennial of the founding of the Sunday School by Robert Raikes / Gloucester, England, 1780 / Go Teach.” For more on Raikes, see Nathaniel Hawthorne’s essay “A Good Man’s Miracle,” <www.eldritchpress.org/nh/gmm.html>: “How can any Christian remain idle, when there is so much evil to be remedied within a morning’s walk of his own home?”

¹³ “Robert Raikes’ ‘Ragged School,’” NC Box 273, File 3.

¹⁴ John Webster Grant, *A Profusion of Spires: Religion in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 103.

¹⁵ Janet B. Friskney, “Towards a Canadian ‘Cultural Mecca’: The Methodist Book and Publishing House’s Pursuit of Book Publishing and Commitment to Canadian Writing 1829–1926” (Master’s thesis, Trent University, 1994), 71.

¹⁶ The correct name was “Sunday School Guardian.” See <http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_04422>.

¹⁷ “Sunday School Guardian,” *Christian Guardian*, February 3, 1847.

¹⁸ “Home Publications,” *Christian Guardian*, June 10, 1863.

¹⁹ This would be similar to Canadianizing an American textbook, which is still widely done today.

²⁰ Friskney, “Towards a Canadian ‘Cultural Mecca,’” 73.

²¹ C. H. Dickinson, Report of the Book Steward, April 28, 1950, Lorne Pierce Archives, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, United Church Publishing House reports, 1932–1960, collected by Lorne Pierce, 12.

²² UCC biographical file W7.

²³ Bruce McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” Peter Gordon White obituary, *The United Church Observer*, May 2013, 35.

²⁴ Peter Gordon White, “Profile,” Department of News Services, Division of Communication, June 1974, 1. UCCA biographical file W7.

²⁵ UCCA, Board of Christian Education, Finding Aid, Series VII: The New Curriculum, 122–23.

²⁶ Peter Gordon White, “Sunday School: What Is Its Worth?,” *Observer*, March 15, 1955, 45.

²⁷ The Revised Common Lectionary is a list of readings shared by all churches, both Protestant and Catholic, which repeats every three years. For example, for Sunday, December 15, 2013, the third Sunday of Advent (Advent is the four Sundays before Christmas) in Year A of the lectionary, the readings are as follows: First reading: Isaiah

35:1–10; Psalm: Psalm 146:5–10 or Luke 1:46b–55; Second reading: James 5:7–10; Gospel: Matthew 11:2–11.

²⁸ See Peter Gordon White and Wilbur K. Howard, “Progress in the Development of New Curriculum,” November 28, 1960: “About 9:00 p.m. on November 3, 1959, the Executive of General Council approved plans for a new curriculum for Sunday Church Schools in The United Church of Canada.” For a more complete history of the New Curriculum, see Bradley-St-Cyr, “Appendix 6: Brief History of the New Curriculum by Olive D. Sparling.”

²⁹ McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” 36.

³⁰ In 1965, five years before the sale of The Ryerson Press, the editorial staff joined the Board of Christian Education, forming an expanded BCE. UCCA, Board of Christian Education, Finding Aid, Series VII: The New Curriculum, 122–23.

³¹ “Study Books on Religion Written to Help Adults,” *Hamilton Spectator*, December 10, 1962. NC Box 273, File 6.

³² “Curriculum brings problems to United Church ministers,” *Toronto Star*, September 14, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

³³ Phyllis Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), 171.

³⁴ McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” 36.

³⁵ Excerpted from the Finding Aid for Series VII: The New Curriculum, Subseries 1–9, UCCA.

³⁶ Peter Gordon White, Editorial Report, February 20, 1963.

³⁷ White, Editorial Report, February 20, 1963: “Uniform lesson quarterlies, one editor; Four Weekly papers, three editors; Periodicals such as FOCUS and THE CHRISTIAN HOME, one editor; New Curriculum reading books and teacher’s guides, three editors.”

³⁸ White, Editorial Report, February 20, 1963.

³⁹ BP AGM April 18–19, 1963, 549–58.

⁴⁰ BP AGM April 18–19, 1963, 554–57.

⁴¹ Planned economies also included printing on cheaper paper; cutting page counts; reducing the use of colour, art, and engraving; using more “free material and writing by editors”; and printing more than one publication at the same time. BP AGM April 18–19, 1963, 554–55.

⁴² BP AGM April 18–19, 1963, 555.

⁴³ “Re Section III, - Moved by Mr. McLean, seconded by Mr. Brisbin that the addition of the words ‘Union Shop’ is included.”

⁴⁴ BP AGM April 18–19, 1963, 555–556.

⁴⁵ White’s imagery here is reminiscent of the reader’s visit to the publisher in Italo Calvino’s *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller*. . . (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1979): “In his arms he has a pile of galleys; he sets them down gently, as if the slightest jolt could upset the order of the printed letters. ‘A publishing house is a fragile organism, dear sir,’ he says. ‘If at any point something goes askew, then the disorder spreads, chaos opens beneath our feet. Forgive me, won’t you? When I think about it I have an attack of vertigo.’ And he covers his eyes, as if pursued by the sight of billions of pages, lines, words, whirling in a dust storm” (98). Pierce himself said something similar in an interview: “In no other business is the element of risk so fantastic. Only a small number of things can happen to a race horse, but a thousand things can happen to a book” (Victor V. Murray, “Book Editor ‘Baits Hook’ For New Ideas, Talent,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 27, 1948, 1).

⁴⁶ Peter Gordon White to Dr. A. G. Reynolds, August 1, 1963. NC Box 198, File 3.

⁴⁷ Woods, Gordon Progress Report No. 3, October 1963. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 3.

⁴⁸ Comments on Budgets, March 12, 1964. BP 93.063C, Box 2, File 2, 6.

⁴⁹ Comments on Budgets, March 12, 1964, 7.

⁵⁰ Peter Gordon White, “Magnifying Voices, Sharing Visions,” in *Voices and Visions: 65 Years of The United Church of Canada*, ed. Peter Gordon White (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1990), 109.

⁵¹ “Minister Attacks New Curriculum,” clipping from Calgary, Alberta. NC Box 273, File 3.

⁵² “Calgarians Favor New Curriculum,” n.d., uncredited. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁵³ Rev. David Cline, “Our Churches Speak: Actions Follow Words in Christian Education,” clipping from Calgary, Alberta. NC Box 273, File 3.

⁵⁴ Allen Spraggett, “New Child Text at Odds with Bible” *Toronto Daily Star*, July 4, 1964. NC Box 273, File 6.

⁵⁵ “A Recall to the Baptist Principle of Spiritual Liberty by a Group of Ottawa Ministers.” NC Box 273, File 1.

⁵⁶ Spraggett, “Virgin Birth, Goliath,” 1.

⁵⁷ “Mr. Koulouras admitted that he had not seen the New Curriculum nor read one word of the books thus far published; neither had he read the Statement of Faith or the Catechism. His interview was based entirely on newspaper reports of comments by people who themselves had no knowledge of the Curriculum. Nothing need be said about the propriety or ethics of giving such an interview.” “Pastoral Letter to Congregations

Answers Curriculum Criticisms,” *The Jarvis Record* (Jarvis, Ontario), October 22, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁵⁸ Aubrey Wice, “They Are Teaching that Christ Was a Fraud,” *Toronto Telegram*, October 3, 1964. NC Box 273, File 3.

⁵⁹ Father Roberts, “Ecumenical News Notes,” *The B.C. Catholic* (Vancouver, B.C.), July 16, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1. See also “Catholics Agree Bible Part ‘Myth’: U.C. Editor,” *Toronto Star*, September 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶⁰ “The Bible in Sunday School,” *Peterborough Examiner*, October 10, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶¹ Jim Fairfield, “In His Service: Has the United Church Goofed?,” *The Evening Reporter* (Galt, Ontario), August 8, 1964, 7. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶² Jim Fairfield, “In His Service: Apologies in Order,” *Sarnia Observer* (Sarnia, Ontario), November 7, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶³ Richard Loesch, “New United Church Curriculum Written to Be Comprehended,” *London Free Press*, November 20, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶⁴ “Unitarians Must Take New Shock Treatment,” *Mirror*, October 14, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶⁵ Hugh Garner, “Biblical Myths: A Recantation,” n.d., n.p. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁶⁶ Gary Lautens, “Even Religion Gets New Image,” *Toronto Star*, July 6, 1964. NC Box 273, File 3.

⁶⁷ McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” 36.

⁶⁸ Ruth Wilson (daughter of former Moderator Lois Wilson [1980–1982]) quoted in McLeod, “The Best Moderator We Never Had,” 36.

⁶⁹ “Editor Gets Overwhelming Endorsement for the New Curriculum,” *Timmins Press* (Timmins, Ontario), November 28, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1. For White’s entire report, see White, “Good News? ... or Bad?” NC Box 272, File 5.

⁷⁰ White, “Good News? ... or Bad?,” 10, in NC Box 272, File 5.

⁷¹ “Pastoral Letter to Congregations Answers Curriculum Criticisms,” *The Jarvis Record* (Jarvis, Ontario), October 22, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁷² White quoted in Forrest, “The Next Generation,” 44.

⁷³ Unattributed quote from “Brief History of the New Curriculum” by Olive D. Sparling (see Bradley-St-Cyr, Appendix 6).

⁷⁴ See Bradley-St-Cyr, Appendix 2 for a line graph of church membership figures from 1925 to 2011.

⁷⁵ “Education in the Church in the 70’s: Recommendations and proposals from The Board of Christian Education for consideration by Commissioners to the 24th General Council” (1970). UCCA.

⁷⁶ *Observer* editor Al Forrest was opposed to the secularism that began to sweep the nation in the late 1960s, calling it “the faith of Expo ’67” or “the belief that man can make it on his own, achieve and bring about a wholeness within his life without spiritual help.” He pointed to the inherent contradiction of such secularism, saying, “The spread of agnosticism and atheism today is also accompanied by a great search for some kind of affirmation” (“Rejecting Religion, Going it Alone Described as New Faith of our Time,” *London Free Press*, n.d., n.p.).

⁷⁷ Peter Gordon White, Report to BP AGM April 20–21, 1967, 603.

⁷⁸ Len Dean, “New Curriculum Answer to Prayer,” Letter to the Editor, *Windsor Star*, December 12, 1964. NC Box 273, File 1.

⁷⁹ Brian Clarke & Stuart Macdonald, Working Paper, United Church of Canada Statistics, 3, http://individual.utoronto.ca/clarkemacdonald/clarkemacdonald/Welcome_files/unitedchurch.pdf

⁸⁰ Brian Clarke & Stuart Macdonald, Working Paper, Anglican Church of Canada Statistics, 3, http://individual.utoronto.ca/clarkemacdonald/clarkemacdonald/Welcome_files/anglicanchurch.pdf

⁸¹ Clarke & Macdonald, Working Paper, Presbyterian Church in Canada Statistics, 3, http://individual.utoronto.ca/clarkemacdonald/clarkemacdonald/Welcome_files/presbyterianchurch.pdf

⁸² Aubrey Wice, “In Sunday Schools, ‘Handsprings’ Don’t Help,” *Toronto Telegram*, October 1, 1966. NC Box 273, File 6.

⁸³ See Bradley-St-Cyr, Appendix 7, for Projected Financial Figures, May 18, 1967. BP Executive Minutes, June 23, 1967, 3–4. BP 93.063C, Box 6, File 3.

⁸⁴ BP Executive Minutes, October 31, 1967, 2. BP 93.063C, Box 6, File 3.

⁸⁵ Airhart, *A Church with the Soul of a Nation*, 172.

⁸⁶ UCC *Yearbook*, 1970, Digest of General Council Meetings: The Sub-Executive, January 9, 1970, 21.

⁸⁷ UCC *Yearbook*, 1970, 21.

⁸⁸ Carl. F. Burke, *God Is Beautiful, Man: Interpretations of Bible Passages and Stories, as Told by Some of God's Bad-Tempered Angels with Busted Halos to Carl F. Burke* (New York: Association Press, 1969), 92.

⁸⁹ Peter Gordon White, UCCA biographical file W7.

⁹⁰ "United Church Backs Curriculum Material with Variety of Resources...", UCC News Release, Press and Information Services, October 1971. UCCA.

⁹¹ Peter Gordon White, "Profile," 4. UCCA biographical file W7.

⁹² White, "Profile," 4–5.

⁹³ White, "Profile," 3–4.

⁹⁴ *Observer*, July 1985.

⁹⁵ McLeod, "The Best Moderator We Never Had," 36.

⁹⁶ White, "Magnifying Voices, Sharing Visions," 106.

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