

## **Religious Origins and Objectives: Canadian Standard Efficiency Tests for Boys and Canadian Girls in Training**

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When the federal Liberals under Wilfrid Laurier won the 1896 election the nation's evangelical Protestants were already worried about their churches' failure to hold children, boys especially, once they entered their dangerous teenage years. Sunday schools, generally regarded by this time as the chief source of church members, were losing most of their boys and many girls before they joined the church. The economic boom and increased immigration of the Laurier era intensified the problems this situation caused for Canada's Protestant leaders. They faced the challenge of perpetuating their religious, social and political values in a period when their churches' human and financial resources were being stretched beyond their limits by rapid urbanization in central Canada and the opening up of the prairie west by, among others, tens of thousands of non-Anglo Protestant immigrants. This challenge, moreover, came at a time when the Social Gospel movement was gaining strength within Canada's major Protestant churches.

Many of the nation's Protestants, including those who ran the emerging denominational Sunday school organizations, were convinced that the objective of the Christian gospel was the achievement of the kingdom of God on earth and regarded regeneration of society through social reforms as the means to that end. To ensure that Anglo-Protestant values informed this reform, they wanted religious education programming

that would produce a larger number of committed activist church members who were willing and able to assume leadership roles in every realm of society.

Denominationally controlled Sunday school organizations grew in early-twentieth century Canada partly in response to the need to improve Sunday schools as membership recruitment agencies. But so too did the efforts of Canadian branches of the American-based non-denominational International Sunday School Association and of the Young Men's Christian Association which had moved into boys' work in a big way around the turn of the century. By 1912 Canada's YMCAs had seized the initiative in boys' work programming and convinced the non-denominational Sunday School Association to join in a nation-wide campaign to win Canadian teenage boys for Christian service.<sup>1</sup> Denominational religious education officials had some doubts at first about whether non-denominational efforts could produce the badly needed church members. However, when studies made it clear on the eve of the World War One that even Canada's best supported church-run Sunday school systems continued to fail as membership recruitment agencies, the nation's denominational religious educators joined their non-denominational colleagues in co-operative bodies for the purpose of winning Canada's teenagers for Christ and country.<sup>2</sup>

As the slaughter of thousands of Canada's young men on European battlefields got underway, the nation's small band of Protestant religious educators were embarking on a co-operative effort to provide the home front with succeeding generations of Protestant leaders. The young businessmen attracted to Canada's burgeoning YMCAs along with the first generation of professional boys' workers and denominational religious educators, saw themselves as efficient achievers and "virile" nation-builders who Protestant teenagers could, and should, emulate. Their first task was to persuade the major Protestant churches that the YMCA's mid-week religious education programming for Sunday school classes, *Canadian Standard Efficiency Tests* (hereafter *CSET*), would keep teenage boys in these classes and bring them into their respective churches. This programming, directed only at boys for the first few years, was based on the premise that physical, intellectual and social training were as important elements of religious education as spiritual training. The objective was to provide Canada with Protestant leaders in all walks of life thereby ensuring that the values and norms of evangelical Protestantism would determine

the national character. Once *CSET* had been launched the men behind it encouraged the YWCA and female Sunday school workers to produce a parallel programme for Canada's teen-aged girls so that they might be trained for their equally important, but quite distinct roles, as Christian citizens. While the result, *Canadian Girls in Training* (hereafter *CGIT*), was based on the same premises as *CSET*, the original programmes differed in significant ways. As the following examination of the way in which the religious element was incorporated into the boys' and girls' programme demonstrates, one of the most striking differences comes in the way that religion was presented initially in the male and female programmes.

### ***The Boys' Programme***

Canada's early twentieth-century Protestant religious educators approached boys' programming with a view to convincing adolescent males that the church and religion generally were legitimate masculine concerns. To this end they presented an ideal of virility attainable only through symmetrical development of all four aspects of life: the physical, mental, social and spiritual phases of human nature. Religion was an integral part of this ideal but it was presented as only one of four equally important areas of development. From the outset *CSET* was promoted as "A Plan to Provide for the All-Round Development of Canadian Boys."<sup>3</sup> The objective was "to call to the attention of boys the fact that the ideal Canadian citizen must be an all round, well developed man." The secret of the "strong personality" which was regarded as the source of all power and something every father wanted for his sons, lay in "The Symmetry of the Four-Fold Development." The authors went on to explain that "in this twentieth century, masterful men of powerful influence possess strong bodies with sound minds and they must maintain an unselfish brotherly interest in their fellow-men and strive to be in harmony with the great will of God."<sup>4</sup> What is interesting is the ordering of the four elements with religion coming last and the warning that over-development of any one of the four characteristics of human life would produce "a lop-sided character with a bias that diminishes power."<sup>5</sup> Religion was essential to achievement of a boy's potential but over emphasis on this aspect of his nature was as dangerous as over emphasis on any of the other three components. In the words of the 1916 edition of *CSET*: "[I]t is possible to develop the

religious side of one's nature and neglect the development of body, mind and social nature. If care is not taken to avoid any of these extremes, one will fail to achieve the best type of all-round manhood." The message was clear: unless Christian men were well developed physically, mentally and socially their religious development would go to waste. Having made this point *CSET*'s designers went on to provide Biblical endorsement of their approach. Declaring that "[t]he greatest personality that ever lived was symmetrically developed in this four-fold life," they noted that four-fold programming was modelled on Jesus's development pattern as described in Luke 2:52 which read: "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men."<sup>6</sup>

While the designers of *CSET* did not want religion emphasized at the expense of physical, intellectual and social development, they believed that religious education had to be an integral part of any citizenship training scheme. Their reasons for rejecting Boy Scouts make this clear.

The widespread popularity of scouting . . . has seemingly blinded many . . . to the fact that this program, which is avowedly a system of training in citizenship ... cannot and should not be permitted to take the place of other programs, such as those of training in religion . . . A church, or home, or school that does nothing for the boys or girls beyond training them in scouting is falling far short of its responsibility and merits the vigorous criticism of those who are primarily interested in the complete, foursquare, spiritual welfare of the coming generation.<sup>7</sup>

*CSET*, the mid-week training programme designed to be carried out by Sunday school classes, sought to provide boys with everything that Scouting offering plus religious education.

The men behind *CSET* realized that the programme had to be as attractive to boys as Lord Baden Powell's immensely popular Scouting for Boys. Leaders were exhorted to put together exciting series of activities and to provide lots of opportunities for adventure and fun. *CSET* leaders, however, were to involve boys in the planning of every aspect of their group's programme. In contrast to the top-down nature of Scouting, *CSET* was to be run democratically by the boys involved. Under the guidance of many Christian mentors, the members of *CSET* were to be inspired to become self-motivated and self-regulated all-round men who would rise

to leadership positions in whatever segment of Canadian society their respective talents led them into.

Under the plan self-governing groups of 8 to 10 boys of approximately the same age would, with the help of an adult mentor, carry out an annual 32 week programme in eight successive years. By 1918 the original handbook which had gone through eight editions had been replaced by manuals that reflected the decision to divide *CSET* into three segments, Trail Rangers for boys 12 to 14 and Tuxis Boys for those 15 to 17. Those 18 and over would be involved in leadership training.<sup>8</sup> While the programme delivery mode had changed, the underlying premises remained in place.

At the beginning of each year a group's adult mentor would interview the boys individually and help them establish their standings in each standard according to the Four-Fold Chart. Following this a boy's personal goals for the year would be set. The group would also set goals for itself. Committees of boys would be responsible for arranging weekly sessions which would help individuals and the group to attain the goals they had set.

*CSET* groups, or Trail Rangers and Tuxis as they became known, all met twice a week, on Sundays as Sunday school classes, and in a mid-week evening session at which the training and testing aspects of the programme were carried out. Mid-week sessions began with a short business meeting run by the boys who had been elected to office. This segment incorporated or was followed by a devotional Bible period of about 20 minutes after which came a 20 minute training session related to one of the four standards and finally a half hour period of tests or group games. Boys earned credits by taking tests designed to meet their personal and group goals. Mentors were responsible for keeping a record of all credits earned so that they might be noted on a boy's annual diploma and on the group's record.

The war not surprisingly served to increase the importance of enrolling those Protestant "boys of ideals, intelligence and purpose" who would soon be "moulding [their] country's destiny as her national leaders in all walks of life."<sup>9</sup> Boys' work on the home front was identified as "A National Patriotic Responsibility," one that the nation's Protestants had to fulfill if Canada were

to be kept inviolate for the discharge of the high mission among the

nations of the world, then her boys . . . should be assisted to a high standard of mental, physical, religious and social life. The burden of national responsibility, which will surely be placed upon the boys of to-day within a very few years, will then not prove too heavy, but will evoke a response which shall result in the protection of our country from the calamities of materialism, social injustice, political corruption, and insure for it a national type, strong, sane, virile and Christian.<sup>10</sup>

To meet this challenge the YMCA's National Council shored up the co-operative boys' work movement by increasing its staff of boys' workers. Such additions had been made possible "through the interest and generous assistance of men of vision who are determined that every effort must be made to raise the standard of our growing boys, in order that "the Canada that is to be may be dominated by men of strong Christian character."<sup>11</sup>

In this vein the 1916 edition of *CSET* was presented as the means of putting into concrete form the new national ideal, "Prepare to live for Canada." Without in any way detracting from concentration on the necessity of four-fold development, this edition of the programme emphasized for the first time that *CSET* was "a course of training in 'The Jesus Way' of living." The roots of this emphasis can be traced to the work of Dr. H.H. Horne, Professor of the History of Education at New York University, who had given a series of lectures based on "Jesus and His Relation to this Four-Fold Life" to Canadian boys' workers in 1915 and written an introduction to that year's edition of *CSET*.<sup>12</sup>

Dr. Horne's stated objective in this introduction was "to show that the *CSET* [were] well designed both to promote and exemplify the ideals of complete living among Canadian boys." Beginning from the premise that man is a unity with distinguishable aspects Horne declared: "the four-fold, though unitary, life of man is physical, volitional, emotional and intellectual." He went on to explain that there was "an appropriate ideal of development" in each area. These were, in the order given, "health" for the physical, "goodness" for the volitional, "beauty" for the emotional and, finally, "truth" for the intellectual." The absence of any reference to religion or to faith notwithstanding, Horne concluded that "These ideals together, neither under-developed nor too exclusively developed, give the 'four-square' or fully developed man, the ideal of whom is found in Jesus,

who according to Luke 2:52, 'Increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.'

Horne went on to address the absence of any reference to man's spiritual nature or to the place of religion in a man's life. He explained that "each aspect of this four-fold life should be related to God" and that "when so related, it becomes spiritual . . ." It was when all sides of human life were related to God that one got "the spiritual man complete in all his being." To get spiritual men, therefore, it was necessary to integrate religion into every aspect of a boy's life rather than to separate it out. "[T]he spiritual nature of man is not to be thought of as a mere section of the man . . ." Rather

this love of God . . . is expressed on the physical side when he conforms to His laws in seeking to attain the ideal of health; on the volitional side when he conforms to His will in seeking to attain the ideal of "goodness;" on the emotional side when he senses His perfection in seeking to attain the ideal of "beauty;" and on the intellectual side when he "thinks His thoughts" in seeking to attain the ideal of "truth."

Boys essentially would become spiritual by doing what came naturally to them in the right frame of mind.

The result, in Horne's view, would be success in meeting the challenge facing Christianity in 1915 which was "the spiritualizing of existence . . ." The efficiency tests presented in *CSET* programme, he asserted, "endeavour[ed] to associate the spiritual with each part of the four-fold development." They also, he continued, "in the 'Religious Standard' rightly associate religion and beauty, as the church has likewise done in her history." On this basis, Horne concluded that he must ". . . regard the *CSETs* as a wholesome and practical endeavour to develop more adequately the ideal of the complete living of Jesus among Canadian boys."<sup>13</sup>

The relationship between religious education and citizenship training was raised in the 1918 Tuxis manual. Noting that it had been said that "the Tuxis Program [was] a training in Canadian Citizenship," the manual continued: "It is that and more. It is a training in Canadian *Christian* Citizenship."<sup>14</sup> The objective was "to lead the impulses and aspirations of the boy into worth-while tasks of service for the Church, Community, and

the World.”<sup>15</sup> Physical development, however, was key to the achievement of this objective because muscles were “the instruments of the intellect, the feelings, and the will.” “Flabby muscled boys” would become “pliant men who only talk” while “[w]ell-developed boys become men who will say and act and produce results.”<sup>16</sup> In the final standard, through “Training for Service,” “Good Citizenship,” and “Nation Study” a boy’s life would broaden out “into social and civil goodness so much in need to-day.”<sup>17</sup> *CSET* mentors had “no worthier task than to inculcate in the minds of boys the real meaning of Democracy and the principles that make for true national greatness.”<sup>18</sup> To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation *CSET* organized the World’s first Boys’ Parliament. Elected from the ranks of enrolled older boys delegates were seen as potential national saviours whose “rich, clean patriotic Christian idealism . . . could . . . lift [Canada] into heights of National life of which it has as yet fallen far short . . .”<sup>19</sup>

Once the war ended returning veterans were looked to as allies in the battle for Canada’s soul.<sup>20</sup> *CSET* was presented to a 1919 British Columbia Boys’ and Leadership Conference as “doing much to meet the most vital needs of the Church and State . . . by enlisting and developing Christian leadership, thereby making Democracy safe.”<sup>21</sup> The “supreme question” remained “Who shall lead and whither?”

It is in large measure for the boys who will be leaders in the industrial, commercial and professional life to determine, for upon them in a few years will fall the heavy responsibilities of guiding the destinies of our land . . . Lawyers, doctors, business men, teachers and labourers may all . . . help to mould the destinies of our land that the great part which is apparently possible for Canada to play . . . may be wisely and successfully played.<sup>22</sup>

*CSET*, the religious education programme of the nation’s major Protestant denominations, sought to shape postwar Canada by making the boys enrolled “stronger, braver, more honest, more manly, more loyal” who “every day were striving to build into their lives ideals that mean a better, cleaner, freer Canada. Their loyalty is finding expression in lives based on Canadian and Christian idealism which will make a Canada worthy of the sacrifices of her older sons.”<sup>23</sup>

Having examined how religion and citizenship training were



incorporated into the *CSET* programme attention will now be directed to how these elements fit into *CGIT*, the parallel programme for girls. What is interesting here is the different way religion is presented in these two programmes. The girls' programme, like the boys', wanted to incorporate the spiritual element into every aspect of an individual's four-fold development. However, the practice of religion was much more front and centre in the girls' programme while the lengthy explanation of the nature of religion found in the boys' Religious Standard was missing entirely from the girls'.

### ***The Girls' Programme***

As mentioned earlier the Protestant designers of *CSET* had close allies among the young women active in the YWCA and various non-denominational and church-based religious education agencies. Many of these committed evangelical Protestant women were college graduates who sought to apply the teachings of modern psychology and educational theorists in such a way as to improve the quality of Canada's girls.<sup>24</sup> Following experience with the Girl Guide programme which led them to conclude that it would not provide Canada with the new brand of committed Christian girls possessed of initiative as well as useful skills and proper civic values, these women worked in co-operation with *CSET*'s designers and produced a four-fold training programme for girls. There was, however, markedly less commitment to the four-fold approach and much more emphasis on the importance of Canada's girls to God as well as to Canada.

It was only in the second edition of the *CGIT* programme, published in 1917, that the four-fold development model was accepted for the religious education of Canada's girls. Even then support for the model was qualified. In contrast to the boys' programme which began with a lengthy analysis of the merits and scriptural foundations of the four-fold approach to religious education, the girls' programme dealt with it in a brief paragraph of three sentences on pages 5 and 6 of the introduction. The final sentence of the three, moreover, related a girl's four-fold development more directly to her relationship with God than anything in the boys' programme did, declaring that "The only woman who is finding her true self, as God intends she should, is one who seeks to keep her body in health, as a 'temple of God,' whose mind is growing in its love of truth,

whose will is trained to right choices, whose heart is set to love God and her neighbour.” This endorsement of the four-fold model was, moreover, followed two paragraphs later by a claim that “no personality can really be divided into four specified parts.” Leaders using the programme were, therefore, advised that it was “in the spirit and not in the letter that it must be used.”<sup>25</sup>

It should be made clear that what is being compared here are the ways in which the spiritual was situated in the early editions of the first twentieth-century “made-in-Canada” Protestant religious education programmes for boys and girls. Having noted the lack of privileging of the four-fold model in early *CGIT* programming compared to the *CSET* programming for boys, it is now necessary to go back and examine what *CGIT* designers highlighted in the pages preceding mention of this model.

Nationalism was as important a motivating factor in *CGIT* as it was in *CSET*. The first sub-section following introduction of the Advisory Committee responsible for production of the girls’ programme was entitled “Worth of Girl Life.” It began:

No apology is needed for attempting to help those who are working among our girls, for girl life is of such infinite value to Canada today that no foresighted thinker dare ignore it. In the latent powers of teenage girls lie those faculties and characteristics which will make the foundations, good or bad, of the homes on which the Dominion is built.<sup>26</sup>

Having made this point the authors continued “Not only to Canada is girl-life of importance, but we dare reverentially to say, to God himself. The desire of His love is . . . to draw into the service of His Kingdom a band of earnest and great-hearted women, trained from girlhood to be His witnesses by life and word.”<sup>27</sup>

What differentiates the girls’ Religious Standard from the boys’ is the complete absence of the introductory discussion of the nature of religion. Both Religious Standards endorsed the premise that “true religion will necessarily make itself known through physical, intellectual and social avenues . . .”<sup>28</sup> What the girls’ Standard omitted was the two-page analysis of the nature of religion with which the boys’ Standard opened. The *CSET* Religious Standard began with the statement: “Religion has universally had to do with cultivation of the heart life of man, i.e., the emotional

nature: too often in the past, this aspect of life has been discounted.” This was followed by support for the claim that “Christ and the Bible clearly teach . . . that the affections and sentiments, the feelings and desires, are of the very centre of personality.” Using Jesus as the “perfect example of fully-developed manhood on the religious and emotional side of life,” the Standard explained “That the man is spiritual on the emotional side of his nature, therefore, who has brought his feelings and desires under the control of Christ and is giving them full expression in his service. The feelings and desires have a spiritual significance; the heart, too, is God’s.” Citing the belief that the adolescent years were those of “the largest expansion of the emotional nature and . . . the high water mark of religious awakening,” the Standard declared: “No boy or young man ought to pass through these years so responsive to every emotional appeal and so sensitive to religious impulses without the privilege of coming to know and choose Jesus as his Saviour . . . and of publicly acknowledging Him by uniting with His Church.”<sup>29</sup>

None of this discussion appeared in the girls’ Religious Standard which took the nature of religion for granted and concentrated on inculcating the responsibilities associated with the spiritual aspect of life. The introduction to the girls’ Standard explained that emphasis should be put on “the value of accepting both the privileges and duties of Church membership.” This accounted for “the stress laid on learning to discipline one’s own life in such matters as . . . giving and spending, and setting aside for God’s work a regular proportion of money earned or given.”<sup>30</sup> The girls’ Religious Standard was less philosophical and more practical in its approach.

Both Standards attached primary importance to bringing adolescents into their respective churches and assigned responsibility for realizing this objective to the church and Sunday schools. In the case of Canada’s girls the challenge was to ensure that the tens of thousands of girls reached by Sunday schools were “taught the things of God in the very best way.” The point was made that this challenge would not have been met successfully “unless the teacher [could] also quicken the conscience so that the girl [might] see that in her home, her school, or her place of business lies the field for daily practice of all that she is learning.” What girls had to be taught was “how the ordinary duties of every day life contribute[d] to [their] life-equipment and how truly Christian life means a life of full development dominated by a master-motive, to desire to be ‘like Christ.’”

It was with this latter problem “of translating the Sunday teaching into week-day action” that *CGIT* sought to deal in order that “the play life, the reading, and the social service to which girls turn should all be inspired by that Sunday teaching.” Mid-week programming was presented as a means of helping girls to “fuller self-development.”<sup>31</sup>

There were clearly differences, as well as similarities, in the way religion was incorporated into the first made-in-Canada Protestant religious education programmes for boys and girls. *CSET* had to overcome the view that religion was “feminine” because it involved “the cultivation of the heart life of man.” Thus religious growth is presented as one aspect of four equally important kinds of development. As *CGIT* did not face this challenge, the religious purpose of the programme could be, and was, front and centre and remained so even after a four-fold standard for girls was added to the second edition of *CGIT*.

At the heart of the whole of our great enterprise with Canadian girls lies the intense desire to pass on to them the knowledge of God—the “life eternal” — which, taking possession of their lives and wills, shall quicken and develop in them all things good and beautiful. Such a communication of life can only come, as its ultimate source, from the very in-breathing of the Spirit of God in their souls, and should result in a conscious covenant between them and God. But, outward means and plans were never despised by our Master, Jesus Christ . . . We, therefore, dedicate to Him, our Teacher and Saviour, these plans whereby we believe He would have us reach out throughout the length and breadth of Canada to help forward our girls into the joy and fruitfulness of full Christian womanhood.<sup>32</sup>

An examination of the Religious Standards of *CSET* and *CGIT* demonstrates that the language and approach taken in the religious education programme for boys and girls differed significantly. In the case of Protestant boys four-fold development was the means whereby they would be won for their churches and the nation. As far as Protestant girls were concerned the four-fold training programme was to teach them to bear witness to their Lord and Saviour in all aspects of their lives.

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