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**Conversion and conflict in Palestine : the missions of the
Church Missionary Society and the protestant bishop
Samuel Gobat**

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Gobat and the CMS missionaries: educational principles and activities

Introduction

In his autobiography Samuel Gobat describes his visit in 1823 to the school run by the famous Swiss educational pioneer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) in Yverdon. At the time Pestalozzi's school was already in decline. It took Gobat only half an hour to see that there was no unity among the teachers in the establishment, and a few years later the school did indeed collapse. According to Gobat, its decline was the result of the fact that Pestalozzi had based his "otherwise excellent system" on a mistaken concept, that is, "on the supposition that human nature in children is good, and only needs a sound development; wherefore it was impossible that in the long run he could realise his sanguine expectations". Gobat adds that Pestalozzi had seen his "error" when he visited the school run by Gobat's future father-in-law Christian Heinrich Zeller in Beuggen in 1826. Although Zeller's teaching was based on the same educational system, Gobat continues, his school was not founded on the idea that the nature of children is good, but rather on the opposite concept: the depravity of human nature is already seen in young children. When Pestalozzi had observed Zeller's school for four days, he is said to have exclaimed: "This is what I have been seeking all my life!"¹

In my opinion, Gobat's account reflects the core of his pedagogical ideas, because it shows how strongly the central Evangelical views influenced his policy. In his criticism we hear the doubts of a firm and traditionalist Evangelical about the theological

¹ "Bishop Gobat on Pestalozzi", *Journal of Education. A monthly record and review* 7, 1885, 65. Cf. Gobat, *Leben und Wirken*, 50-51. The story about Pestalozzi's visit to Zeller's school and his conclusion that this was what he had always wanted also figures in other accounts about Zeller's school in Beuggen. See for instance, J. de Liefde, *Vruchten des geloofs: ingezameld op den akker van het Protestantisme* 2, Amsterdam, 1867, 47. Arnd Götzelman concludes that in the story about Pestalozzi's visit to Zeller's school, Zeller was described as the "Testamentserfüller des pädagogischen Meisters". A. Götzelman, "Die Soziale Frage", U. Gäbler (ed.), *Geschichte des Pietismus* 3, *Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*, Göttingen, 2000, 282.

implications of Pestalozzi's educational principle.² There was a central element of the Evangelical faith that Pestalozzi, who himself was a pietist as well as an adherent of Rousseau, did not share, namely the doctrine of justification by faith. He did not believe that mankind's collective sin was taken away by Christ's death on the cross.³ Consequently, although Zeller and others within the intercontinental Awakening movement had taken up Pestalozzi's pedagogical ideas, some Evangelicals had reservations with regard to his theological views.⁴ Although the objections to Pestalozzi's educational principles were not restricted to the Evangelicals, Gobat's criticism perfectly illustrates how much the bishop was concerned with the views and ideas of Evangelicalism. One only has to read through Gobat's letters to see that during his years as a bishop in Jerusalem his educational policy had been influenced by his Evangelical background. His personal history in the European Evangelical network, his connection with the CMS, and his strained relations with the Tractarians also demonstrate how much he was involved in the Evangelical movement.⁵

In this chapter the influence of the Evangelical religion on Gobat's educational views will be discussed, concentrating on the joint activities of Gobat and the CMS missionaries in the educational field in Palestine. The primary schools run by Gobat and the CMS will be examined against the background of three out of the four characteristics of Evangelicalism formulated by David Bebbington: biblicism, conversionism and crucicentrism.⁶ In what way are these three characteristics reflected in the educational principles and activities of Gobat and the CMS missionaries? As we will see, biblicism is a prominent feature in the schooling provided by Gobat and the CMS missionaries. As

² On this point I do not agree with Tibawi, who blames Gobat for just being arrogant and naive when he calls Pestalozzi's educational system wrong and flawed. Tibawi, *British Interests*, 155. Cf. Stunt, *From Awakening to Secession*, 165. See also K. Silber, *Pestalozzi. The Man and his Work*, London, 1960, 291-292.

³ Pestalozzi did not consider men to be guilty of original sin. For more information about Pestalozzi, his theological ideas and his view on the nature of mankind, see also F.P. Hager, "Stufen der religiösen Entwicklung bei Pestalozzi", F.P. Hager and D. Tröhler (eds.), *Philosophie und Religion bei Pestalozzi. Pestalozzi Bibliographie 1977-1992*, Bern, Stuttgart, Wien, 1994, 7-45; A. Brühlmeier *Wandlungen im Denken Pestalozzis. Von der 'Abendstunde' bis zu den 'Nachforschungen'*, Zürich, 1976. See also Brühlmeier's website: http://www.bruehlmeier.info/fundamental_ideas.htm. For Zeller the *Erlösungsbedürftigkeit* of people and their belief in the Saviour Jesus was the core of his anthropology (Götzelmann, "Die Soziale Frage", 281).

⁴ A fervent Evangelical follower of Pestalozzi's teaching methods was John Synge (1788-1845). Synge was very worried about the fact that some people objected to Pestalozzi's principles. Silber, *Pestalozzi*, 291-292. Cf. Stunt, *From Awakening to Secession*, 156, 165.

⁵ See also Chapter 4.

⁶ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 2-17.

the number of schools significantly increased during the Gobat years, and with Gobat's missionary aim in mind, it is also interesting to examine how the missionaries themselves described the results of the CMS schools, and the reactions from other denominations to these schools. Before going into these matters I will provide a general survey of the schools run by Gobat and the CMS missionaries.

Survey of Protestant schools

When Gobat arrived in Palestine, there were no Protestant schools. Although his predecessor Alexander had already appointed a schoolteacher in Jerusalem, this functionary had not been able to lay a firm foundation for a Protestant school. In 1847, Gobat opened the Diocesan School in Jerusalem. In January of the following year, he wrote that the school was under the direction of Miss Lucy Harding (d. 1872) who had been sent out for this specific task by the FES. The school started in 1847 with nine pupils, in January 1848 there were twelve children, and, according to Gobat, within three weeks this number had increased to seventeen.⁷

During Gobat's episcopate many schools were established, a fact he loved to boast about. Two years before he died, for instance, he wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archibald Campbell Tait (1811-1882), that when he started his career as a bishop there had not been a single Christian school in the whole of Palestine, but now, in 1877, there were 37 so-called "Bible Schools" in Judea, Samaria and Galilee.⁸ Although this was not completely true (there had already been schools of other denominations in Palestine for a long time),⁹ this and similar quotes illustrate the importance of the foundation of schools to the bishop.¹⁰ The majority of the Protestant schools were established by Gobat in cooperation with the CMS. From the moment the CMS

⁷ Gobat to Tait, Jerusalem, 21 November 1877, London/LPL, TP, 234, ff. 280-283; Gobat to Rose, Jerusalem, 26 January 1848, London/BL, RP, 27, Add. 42798, ff. 207-208; Gobat to Rose, Jerusalem, 15 February 1848, London/BL, RP, 27, Add. 42798, ff. 209-214. Lucy Harding was the first agent the FES sent to Palestine. She arrived in Jerusalem in October 1847. In May 1851 she returned to Britain because of a serious conflict with Gobat and his wife. See Stockdale, *Colonial Encounters*, 154-156.

⁸ Gobat to Tait, Jerusalem 1877, London/LPL, TP, 234, ff. 280-283.

⁹ In his annual report for 1871 Gobat also mentions that there were no Christian schools in Palestine when he arrived, but adds that there were Latin monks who instructed about twenty boys in Italian. Gobat, Annual Report, Jerusalem, 10 November 1871, in Gobat, *Leben und Wirken*, 483.

¹⁰ For a discussion of Gobat's claims to be an educational pioneer and the presence of schools run by other denominations in Palestine long before Gobat's time, see Tibawi, *British Interests*, 156-158.

missionaries had arrived in Palestine in 1851, Gobat and the CMS missionaries closely collaborated in the educational field.¹¹

It is difficult to give an overview of Protestant schools, numbers of pupils, years of establishment and towns because the missionary sources are inconsistent and often incomplete on this point.¹² From the missionaries' letters we learn that besides Jerusalem, over the years schools were founded in other towns and villages, such as Bethlehem, Fuhais, Gaza, Jaffa, Lydda, Nablus, Nazareth, Ramallah, Ramle, Salt, Shefa Amer, Taybeh, and Yaffa. In some towns Gobat or the CMS established more than one Protestant school. The numbers of pupils varied from a dozen in the small village schools to more than sixty in larger towns.

The education in the schools run by Gobat and the CMS was free of charge. When in 1868 the question of school fees was discussed on a 'Conference of Missionaries of the CMS in Palestine' chaired by Gobat, it was decided that the training offered in their schools would remain free. This decision was made because the conference thought that people's knowledge of the value of education was "still very imperfect". Moreover, the schools run by other denominations were also free. According to the conference, in some cases parents were even paid for sending their children to these schools.¹³ Fallscheer, for instance, complained that the Orthodox in Nablus promised to give a "Turkish dollar" at Christmas to all children who came to their school. As a result many pupils had left the Protestant for the Orthodox school. In line with Protestant criticism on the material support offered by the convents, Fallscheer considered this proof of the "mercenary spirit" of the Christians in the country.¹⁴

Some promising pupils from the Protestant schools were trained as catechists or schoolmasters in a training institution or Preparandi Class, established especially for this

¹¹ The Evangelicals believed in 'Social Christianity' and the foundation of schools and hospitals among the local and often poor people fitted this principle. See also P. Sangster, *Pity my Simplicity. The Evangelical Revival and the Religious Education of Children 1738-1800*, London, 1963, 20.

¹² For a rough overview, see the table of schools run by Gobat and the CMS, years of establishment and attendance figures in Appendix I.

¹³ "Minutes of a Conference of the Missionaries of the C.M.S. in Palestine, held at Jerusalem under the Presidency of the Bishop, on the 28th day of October 1868", C M/O 2/1. See also a report by Zeller from 1878, in which he stated that the pupils of the Diocesan School or orphanage at Jerusalem must be received free of charge, since the other "religious bodies" maintained "Free Schools". Zeller, "Appeal for the Diocesan School, Jerusalem" [printed], Jerusalem, March 1878, C M/O 71/101B. Both documents: Birmingham/UL.

¹⁴ Fallscheer to the CMS, Nablus, 1 July 1878, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 24/1. For the Protestant criticism of material support, see the previous chapter.

purpose.¹⁵ This class aimed at providing the students with a “thorough knowledge of the Bible and of the chief doctrines of Christianity”. The students were also taught other subjects necessary for a schoolmaster, such as geography, history and mathematics. English and Arabic were also offered.¹⁶ The young men sometimes went out to discuss the Bible in the streets. Ferdinand Palmer, who was attached to the Diocesan school and the Preparandi Class in Jerusalem, wrote that some of the preparandi went to a neighbouring village on Sunday to converse with the inhabitants and to preach the Gospel to them.¹⁷

From the letters to the CMS one gets the impression that to the missionaries and Gobat teaching methods were of minor importance, especially in the smaller village schools.¹⁸ Some elements of the CMS schools are reminiscent of the British ‘Charity Schools’. In both the Mission and the Charity schools, education centred on religious instruction. Just as the Charity Schools, the CMS schools were free of charge and aimed at teaching the (poor) children the principles of the Christian religion in order to let them grow into good people and faithful servants of God.¹⁹ The CMS missionary William Francis Locke Paddon compared the Protestant boys’ school in Nazareth with the Charity and Sunday schools in Britain and concluded that it would “not be found wanting tho’ examined with reference to” these schools. He considered the boys’ school the most hopeful, cheering and important part of the mission’s work and was convinced that the school’s results might be “inestimable”.²⁰ It seems that in some cases the schools had introduced the monitorial system of teaching. In Shefa Amer, for instance, the eldest pupil replaced the schoolteacher Nicola Dabak when he went to Nazareth as a

¹⁵ Gobat to the CMS, Jerusalem, 5 October 1876, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 28/104.

¹⁶ *Proceedings of the C.M.S. (1876-7)*, 60-61, cited in Tibawi, *British Interests*, 165. See also Gobat to the CMS, Jerusalem, 5 October 1876, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 28/104.

¹⁷ Palmer to the CMS, “Annual report of the Diocesan School 1878”, Jerusalem Mount Zion Orphanage, 4 November 1878, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 8/124B. Palmer had come to Jerusalem as Chrischona Brother together with Conrad Schick, to live and work in the Brother House (see Chapter 4).

¹⁸ Cf. Tibawi, *British Interests*, 155.

¹⁹ According to Holmes “at the beginning of the nineteenth century the English missionaries had rather few models from which to choose in establishing schools. Charity schools had been set up at home and abroad”, B. Holmes, “British Imperial Policy and the Mission Schools”, B. Holmes, *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools. Case Studies from the British Empire*, London, 1967, 25-26. Cf. H.C. Barnard, *A Short History of English Education. From 1760-1944*, London, 1947, 6.

²⁰ Paddon to the CMS, Nazareth, 28 December 1868, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 60/9.

teacher.²¹ In Gobat's Diocesan school reading classes were also partly supervised by "monitors", i.e., the elder pupils.²²

A difference between the Charity schools and the schools run by Gobat and the CMS, however, seems to be that the former combined religious instruction with training in manual labour, which was also the case in the institution led by Christian Zeller in Beuggen, mentioned above, after which the Syrian Orphanage was modelled.²³ In this way the children would learn to work and had the opportunity to become labourers or domestic servants.²⁴ As to the schools run by Gobat and the CMS missionaries, there is no mention in the CMS reports of such a combination of manual labour with religious instruction. The only exception seems to be the bishop's Diocesan School in Jerusalem. John Zeller, in charge of the school in the late 1870s, wrote about "Bishop Gobat's school" and the boy's orphanage that outside school hours some of the boys were "initiated in trades, as shoemaking, tailoring, carpentry and bookbinding". Others were "employed at the Printing Press of the mission". Besides this, the children were also employed in domestic work.²⁵ This difference between the Diocesan School in Jerusalem and the schools run by Gobat and the CMS in other villages and towns might lay in the fact that the former was an orphanage where the children stayed on after school hours. Furthermore, especially in the village schools children were needed by their parents to assist them in agricultural work. From time to time the missionaries lamented the small number of pupils in their schools because of this.²⁶

²¹ Zeller to Fenn, Nazareth, December 1872, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 72/277.

²² Gobat to Rose, Jerusalem, 8 August 1848, London/BL, RP, 27, Add. 42798, ff. 215-216.

²³ Götzelman, "Die Soziale Frage", 281-282; Hanselmann, *Deutsche Evangelische Palästina-Mission*, 50-51, 91. See also Chapter 4.

²⁴ On the Charity schools, see Barnard, *A Short History*, 5-8; A. Digby and P. Searby, *Children, School and Society in Nineteenth-Century England*, London, 1981, 75-77.

²⁵ Zeller, "Report of Bishop Gobat's School on Zion", Jerusalem, July 1880, C M/O 72/284. Cf. Zeller, "Appeal for the Diocesan School, Jerusalem", Jerusalem, March 1878, C M/O 71/101B; Zeller, "Report of Bishop Gobat's Orphanage on Mount Zion", Jerusalem, June 1879, C M/O 72/282. This is a printed version of a letter from Zeller to Wright, "Report of the Diocesan School and Orphanage [to its subscribers]", Jerusalem, 4 June 1879, C M/O 72/283. All: Birmingham/UL.

²⁶ When Huber, for instance, visited the Protestant school in Yaffa, he only found a small number of children, as many children were "still engaged in thrashing and other agricultural occupations". Huber to Chapman, "Journal extracts for the Quarter ending September 30th 1858", Nazareth, 9 October 1858, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 34/74; Zeller to Fenn, Annual Letter, Nazareth, December 1872, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 72/277. Krusé complained that many boys were taken from the school "and put into a trade" when they were able to read Arabic tolerably. Krusé to the secretaries of the CMS, "Journal of the Jaffa station for the month of August. 1855", Jaffa, 4 September 1855, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 45/169.

Another difference between the Diocesan school and the other schools run by Gobat and the CMS in Palestine was the level of education, which in the Diocesan School seemed to be highest. According to Zeller, the higher classes of the Diocesan School furnished the Protestant mission with “suitable candidates for the preparandi institution” in which pupils were trained as teachers and evangelists. This was important, according to Zeller, because he believed that no other Protestant school in Palestine was able “to prepare such candidates for their [i.e. the Protestant or CMS mission’s] future work”.²⁷

Many wives of the CMS missionaries participated in the mission’s work and took the initiative to instruct girls. Gobat’s wife Maria, for instance, and the wives of the CMS missionaries Fallscheer, Huber, Muller, Krusé and Zeller were all very active in the mission field.²⁸ The girls’ education consisted of a combination of religious instruction and needlework. The CMS missionaries frequently underlined the importance of educating the girls with an eye to their future task as mothers. They wanted to teach the girls (Evangelical) Protestant Christianity, and wanted them to be able to read the Bible so that they could later read it to their children. Both male and female missionaries, however, combined this desire with the wish to raise good Christian housewives and mothers, which involved domestic training such as needlework and housekeeping. In this way the girls would be able to establish a ‘Christian home’ in the future.²⁹

In view of the girls’ future as mothers, Gobat and the CMS missionaries also stressed the importance of teaching the girls the Bible in their vernacular; therefore, Arabic had to be the main language in the Protestant schools. Missionaries such as Klein criticised schools and institutions in which this was not the case; they thought that after finishing their education the girls would forget the (foreign) language they had learned in school and would not be able to read the Bible in Arabic.³⁰ One of the institutions regularly criticised by the CMS missionaries was the school of the Deaconesses of

²⁷ Zeller, “Report of Bishop Gobat’s Orphanage on Mount Zion”, Jerusalem, June 1879, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 72/282.

²⁸ Some of them, among whom Mrs. Krusé, the wife of the CMS missionary William Krusé, were in the service of the FES. Stockdale, *Colonial Encounters*, 123.

²⁹ For the missionaries’ view on what constituted a ‘Christian home’ and a ‘good housewife’, see Chapter 8. Cf. Stockdale, *Colonial Encounters*, 113-115.

³⁰ It saddened Klein that the girls of his congregation in Jerusalem, who were students of Gobat’s girls’ school, could not read a single sentence in their own language. He did not blame the school, however, because as he saw it, it was meant for the children of Jewish proselytes, and therefore most attention was paid to the English language. Klein to the CMS, Annual Report 1857-1858, Jerusalem, 23 February 1858, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 41/283.

Kaiserswerth in Jerusalem, in which, according to Wolters, German was the main language and Arabic was “treated as a secondary object”.³¹

As mentioned earlier, at the end of his episcopate Gobat handed over many schools and mission stations to the CMS “with a view of securing that for the future the work which he [had] been carrying on for twenty-nine years, [should] be conducted in the same spirit as hitherto”.³² In March 1876 Gobat recorded that he would “transfer the Diocesan School with all the property belonging to it” to the Society.³³ About four months later, he mentioned that from 1 January 1877 the CMS would “take charge of the schools of Ramleh, Lydda, and Nablous including four other schools”. He also wrote that he was able to hand over to the CMS all his schools in Palestine including the Diocesan School or orphanage, “together with the Revd. Mr. Fallscheer of Nablous”.³⁴ In November of the same year, Gobat stated that he had transferred nine schools to the CMS as well as his missionary and catechist at Nablus, with the exception of his orphanage on Mount Zion. The CMS was now in charge of twelve ‘native’ Protestant congregations and 22 or 23 schools with children of various denominations.³⁵ Gobat also transferred two of his schools, those in Bethlehem and Beit Jala, to the Berlin *Jerusalems-Verein* in 1871.³⁶

Biblicism: the Protestant “Bible Schools”

The first prominent characteristic of Evangelicalism reflected in the schools run by Gobat and the CMS is biblicism. As mentioned earlier, the Bible occupied a central

³¹ Wolters to Fenn, Annual Letter, Jerusalem, December 1878, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 71/155. According to Michael Kavar, in this institution the children learned the catechism in German and were not able to explain it in their own language. Kavar to the CMS, Annual Letter, Jerusalem, December 1879, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 40/12. For the Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth in Jerusalem, see Chapter 4.

³² Zeller, “Appeal for the Diocesan School, Jerusalem”, Jerusalem, March 1878, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 71/101B. Cf. Gobat, Annual Letter, Jerusalem, November 1877, in Gobat, *Leben und Wirken*, 526.

³³ Gobat to Wright, Jerusalem, 9 March 1876, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 28/99.

³⁴ Gobat to Wright, Jerusalem, 29 June 1876, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 28/100. Cf. Richter, *A History of Protestant Missions*, 248. Johann Christian Fallscheer was in charge of Nablus under Gobat since 1864. After Gobat had transferred him ‘in local connection’ to the CMS in 1876 he continued to work there. See *Register of Missionaries*, 175. For Fallscheer, see E.J. Eisler, “Gewalt gegen die protestantische Mission in Nablus und die nachfolgende Versöhnung (1854-1901)”, *Mission und Gewalt. Der Umgang christlicher Missionen mit Gewalt und die Ausbreitung des Christentums in Afrika und Asien in der Zeit von 1792 bis 1918/19*, Missionsgeschichtliches Archiv 6, Stuttgart, 2000, 47-53.

³⁵ Gobat to Tait, Jerusalem, 21 November 1877, London/LPL, TP, 234, ff. 280-283.

³⁶ Gobat, Annual Report, Jerusalem, 10 November 1981, in Gobat, *Leben und Wirken*, 483.

position in Evangelical circles. Evangelicals held the Bible in the highest regard and were devoted to ‘searching’ the Scriptures. For Gobat and the CMS missionaries the Bible was the guiding principle in their work, and their writings are full of Bible quotations. Furthermore, they considered it a significant element in the process of conversion. As “literacy was a precondition for reading the Bible” the schools were very important.³⁷ Shortly after his arrival as bishop in Jerusalem, Gobat wrote that he thought that the Word of God should be woven into all aspects of education as much as possible, and teaching it should proceed from a “lively conviction of the teacher”. What counted for him was the “simple reading of the Bible, with short observations in a free conversational or catechetical manner”. For Gobat, religious education did not consist of teaching the “creeds” or “catechisms” and “least of all the theoretical differences existing between different churches”, but of teaching “the positive, historical, dogmatical and moral truths of the Word of God”.³⁸ Gobat’s emphasis on the centrality of reading the Bible, his desire to weave it into all aspects of education, and the importance of a lively conviction on the part of the educator to create faith in the child remind us of the pedagogy of Christian Zeller, after whose institute in Beuggen Schneller’s Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem was modelled. These were all elements of Zeller’s pedagogical principles.³⁹

Referring to his own views on religious education Gobat stated that, considering the fact that he was dependent on the British public for funds, a system based on his educational views would “not meet with any supporter”. With this statement Gobat referred to the school funding controversy in Britain at the time, adding that some people wanted to support a school in which only religion was taught, whereas other people preferred schools in which religion was not taught at all.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, reading the letters written by Gobat and the CMS missionaries, one cannot escape the impression that, especially in the small village schools, education was centred on the Bible,

³⁷ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 12-14, 123. According to Bebbington, throughout Protestant Northern Europe reading skills had long been fostered primarily for the purpose of reading the Bible, often by informal methods outside the schools.

³⁸ Gobat to Rose, Jerusalem, 13 October 1847, London/BL, RP, 27, Add. 42798, ff. 205-206.

³⁹ Hanselmann, *Deutsche Evangelische Palästina Mission*, 150-151, 191.

⁴⁰ Gobat to Rose, Jerusalem, 13 October 1847, London/BL, RP, 27, Add. 42798 ff. 205-206.

which often was the only subject taught in the schools. It is not without reason that the Greek patriarch once characterised the schools as “Bible schools”.⁴¹

The central position of the Bible in education is demonstrated by the Protestant school in Nablus, which Gobat had opened in 1848. For this school the bishop had appointed a teacher whose main task was to teach the children the Bible. It was the only religious book in the school and the focus of education. It did not even seem to matter who the instructor was, because in this case the teacher was a Greek Orthodox. This seemed to be of negligible importance as long as the Bible was taught. According to Gobat, the Bible lessons had been fruitful, as schoolmaster and boys, all Greek Orthodox, made rapid progress in the knowledge of the Bible. The children started to read the Bible to their parents, who began to see their own so-called ‘ignorance’ and desired instruction, too.⁴² Gobat did the same in Salt as he had done in Nablus: he opened a Protestant school for which he had “appointed a Greek priest as teacher without making any important condition, but that he should teach the children to read the Bible”.⁴³

In his annual report for 1853 Gobat explains why he sometimes appointed teachers from other denominations. In towns or villages where members of other churches asked him to open a school (as their own clergy refused to open one), Gobat established a school and let the people choose a teacher of their own denomination in order not to offend their clergy. He had one condition: only the Bible was to be read to the children, no church doctrines were to be taught. Gobat’s demand to read the Bible seems innocent. However, in the same report he states that people who read the Bible and wanted to live in accordance with it would feel obliged to leave their churches.⁴⁴ This strongly suggests that Gobat was convinced that a deeper knowledge of the Bible would induce people to leave their original (Orthodox, Catholic) churches, which of course would greatly offend their clergy.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Gobat to Tait, Jerusalem, 21 November 1877, London/LPL, TP, 234, ff. 280-283. According to William Parry, the Greek patriarch called Gobat’s schools “Bible schools” by way of reproach. Parry to Tait, Alresford Rectory near Calchester, 15 February 1876, London/LPL, TP, 221, ff. 174-175.

⁴² Gobat to Venn, Jerusalem, 9 January 1850, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 28/69. For the hostile reaction to the Protestant school in Nablus, see Chapter 4.

⁴³ Gobat to Tait, Jerusalem, 17 July 1873, London/LPL, TP, 195, ff. 280-282.

⁴⁴ Gobat, Annual Letter, Jerusalem, 14 November 1853, in Gobat, *Leben und Wirken*, 362-363.

⁴⁵ Ibid. See also Chapter 4.

The Bible formed a major part of the children's education, especially in the smaller village schools. Reading lessons consisted of reading the Bible, but it was also taught by means of discussion. Furthermore, scriptural knowledge formed a major part of the children's examinations. From the missionary reports it appears that attention was also given to learning the Scriptures by heart. In the school at Lydda, for instance, the children were examined on all the events described in the "books of Moses", and on the New Testament: the birth, parables, miracles, crucifixion, appearance and ascension of Christ. According to the Protestant schoolteacher Hannah Damischky one of the schoolboys knew the first sixteen chapters of the Gospel of Matthew by heart.⁴⁶ Descriptions of the elementary curriculum suggest that in most CMS schools the children were taught the Bible and Bible-related subjects, while some attention was given to writing, arithmetic and sometimes also to geography and history.

In the majority of schools the curriculum had probably been expanded during the Gobat years, and at the end of his episcopate there may have been hardly any schools left in which only the Bible was read.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, in Gobat's and the missionaries' descriptions of Protestant education and examinations in the 1860s and 1870s the Bible still held a prominent position. Someone who seemed to be very concerned with the centrality of the Scriptures in the CMS schools was Gobat's son-in-law Wolters, from the CMS Jerusalem mission. As a result of his visits to several CMS schools in Palestine he was worried about the education offered there. Although he thought that from certain points of view teaching subjects such as reading, writing and arithmetic was useful, he failed to see "any adequate efforts" of the schoolteachers "to make the boys acquainted with the Word of God in such a way that they might be attracted by the stories [therein?] contained and especially by the picture of our Lord's Life and Death there given and by all the teaching therewith connected, and led to Christ". He added that the teachers had to be made aware of their responsibility; "they were directed to pay the greatest attention possible to the Scripture lessons, and to seek in every way to bring the children entrusted in their care, to Jesus as their Saviour". On his suggestion, his

⁴⁶ Damischky to the Committee of the CMS, Report, Lydda, 1 November 1879, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 22/5. In the CMS missionaries' Bible classes adults were also sometimes asked to learn Bible texts by heart. See Chapter 6.

⁴⁷ Bourazan, however, in 1874 mentions a boys' school in which the children were still used to reading only the Bible. Bourazan did not approve and started to teach arithmetic, geography and Bible history. Bourazan to the CMS, Salt, Jerusalem, 4 February 1874, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 8/96A.

brother-in-law, John Zeller, also stationed in Jerusalem at the time, had made a school plan in order to secure greater uniformity in teaching. According to Wolters, this plan specified “the number of hours which must be devoted to Scripture lessons and the way in which these lessons must be given”. When completed and after other missionaries in Palestine had commented on it, Wolters intended to distribute the plan to all schoolmasters in the CMS schools in the country.⁴⁸ Whether he succeeded in implementing it is uncertain.

Evangelical education: opportunity for making converts

As we have seen in the previous chapter, for Evangelical Christians a ‘true conversion of the heart’ was of the utmost importance. As the missionaries considered the Bible an important element in the process of conversion,⁴⁹ biblicism and conversionism were closely connected. We have seen that Gobat was convinced that people who read the Bible and accepted it as their guiding principle could not remain members of their church.⁵⁰ The reports by Gobat and the CMS missionaries all demonstrate that they considered their ‘Bible schools’, in Zeller’s words, a “very valuable means of spreading the truth as it is in Christ”.⁵¹ Bourazan even believed the mission schools the “only means the missionary can work upon”, as they were important in teaching children the Word of God and bringing them up in the way of Christianity in order to make a new generation. Bourazan thought that preaching to the ‘old’ generation was not effective at all.⁵² The multid denominational and multireligious background of the pupils made the schools perfectly placed to spread the fundamentals of (Evangelical) Protestantism. The schools were attended by children from various denominations: only a small part of the parents had any fixed ties to Protestantism, and most of the children belonged to one of the other churches or religions. They came from Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox,

⁴⁸ Wolters to Fenn, Annual Letter, Jerusalem, December 1878, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 71/155.

⁴⁹ See Chapter 6.

⁵⁰ See chapter 4.

⁵¹ Zeller to the Secretaries of the CMS in London, Annual Letter for 1874-75, Nazareth, January 1875, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 72/278.

⁵² Bourazan, 4 February 1874, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 8/96A.

Greek Catholic, Muslim or Jewish families.⁵³ Converting the future generation to the Protestant-Evangelical version of Christianity was considered of crucial importance for the future of Christianity in Palestine.

Besides the children's various denominational backgrounds, the missionaries considered the Protestant schools an ideal opportunity to reach the children's parents, families and other relations.⁵⁴ One way in which parents came to know the Bible through their children seemed to be by simply attending some of the children's classes. According to William Krusé, some mothers of pupils in the Protestant school of Jaffa took delight in stopping at the school whilst the children were being catechised. This led him to think that by educating the rising generation they got "at the hearts of the parents" as well. He daily thanked God for the mission school which led to so much real good.⁵⁵

However, the most common way in which the children's newly-acquired knowledge reached their parents and families were the children's own stories about what they had learned in school, or their reading the Bible to their parents, as was the case in the Protestant school in Nablus. Gobat and the CMS missionaries loved to write about this effect of their schools. A girl from the Protestant school in Lydda, for example, had heard the story of Isaac in school. After school she went to her grandfather, who was a Greek Orthodox, and told him: "my Grandfather' you are as Isaac [...]. The master at school told us, that Isaac has blessed the children of Joseph". According to the schoolmaster who told this story, the old man knew nothing of the Bible and was astonished to hear this little girl telling him such a religious story. He asked the girl to bring her Bible the next day and to read it to him and so she did. The old man promised to bless her before he died. The schoolmaster ended his story by expressing the hope that the "light of Christ" would enter the girl's heart one day.⁵⁶

The CMS missionaries seemed to consider the school examinations another valuable tool for spreading the Gospel. From the missionaries' stories about examinations in

⁵³ To quote William Paddon, the children of Muslims, Greeks and Latins in the Protestant schools were "brought under the daily sound of the Gospel". Paddon to the CMS, Nazareth, August 1868, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 60/2.

⁵⁴ See for instance Gobat's annual letter for 1871, in Gobat, *Leben und Wirken*, 485.

⁵⁵ Krusé to the Secretaries of the CMS, "Journal of the Jaffa Station, first quarter 1858", Jaffa, 22 April 1858, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 45/175.

⁵⁶ Damishky, "Abstracts of God's vineyard at Lydda God's providence May 30th 1879", Lydda, 15 August 1879, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 22/2.

the mission schools it appears that these were open to the public, since they regularly mention the presence of other people. These could be other Protestant missionaries, but also clergymen of the other denominations, and important people from the local community.⁵⁷ Probably the children's parents were also present. Since an important part of the examinations consisted of testing the children's scriptural knowledge and the catechism, this information would also reach those present. Occasionally, pupils of the Protestant schools were 'spontaneously' examined in school, or even in the streets, when a Protestant missionary visited their town or school.⁵⁸

Although the Protestant missionaries considered their Bible schools a central means for evangelisation aimed at making converts, stories about children who were actually converted are generally lacking in the CMS documents.⁵⁹ In the 'success stories' the missionaries wrote about their schools they did mention the inner change of their pupils or their good or 'improved' behaviour, sometimes mentioning several characteristics of typical Evangelical conversion stories.⁶⁰ For instance, Samuel Muller once wrote that, although the boys of the school had not been truly converted yet, a great change of character had taken place in them over a short time; they were "abhorring their bad habits and loving the truth".⁶¹ In the Protestant school at Salt the boys had even started their own prayer meetings. When the minister of Salt, Chalil Jamal, asked the boys what blessing they had found as a result of the prayer meetings, the boys told him that they realized they were sinners and that they felt the weight of sin more than

⁵⁷ For instance, in the Protestant school at Salt the pasha and mufti of nearby Nablus were invited, as was the judge of Salt. Jamal to the secretaries of the CMS, Annual letter, Salt, 29 November 1879, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 36/11. In the Diocesan school in Jerusalem Gobat himself was present at the children's examinations. Palmer to the CMS, "Annual report of the Diocesan School 1878", Jerusalem, 4 November 1878, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 8/124B.

⁵⁸ When, for instance, the missionaries Johnson, Jamal and Kawar visited Fuhais, three boys from the CMS school were brought to them for an examination. After the Protestant schoolmaster had examined the boys on three catechisms, in which the children performed wonderfully well, Jamal continued by asking questions on Old Testament History. Johnson to Hutchinson, Jerusalem, November-December 1875, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 38/9.

⁵⁹ In his annual report for 1871, Gobat mentions that of the women and men who were educated in the Protestant schools some were truly converted. A larger number, however, had joined the Protestant church but were not 'truly' converted. The majority did know the truth, but had stayed in their own church under the pressure of their parents. Gobat, Annual Report, Jerusalem, 10 November 1871, in Gobat, *Leben und Wirken*, 484.

⁶⁰ See the previous Chapter.

⁶¹ Muller to Chapman, Annual Report, Nazareth, 31 December 1858, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 54/3.

before. On asking what they thought to be the remedy of sin, the boys answered Jamal that the remedy for sin was “the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ”.⁶²

The positive effect of their education on the children’s behaviour is a favourite theme in the letters written by Gobat and the CMS missionaries. They wrote about children who criticized and corrected the behaviour of their parents or fellow pupils, for instance by telling their parents not to swear, or preventing their schoolmates from stealing, referring to the Ten Commandments.⁶³ With such stories the missionaries obviously wanted to convince the home public of the success and the fruitful effect of their schooling, and to show that the children had adopted Protestant views. However, the ‘positive’ effect of the Protestant schools on the children should probably be nuanced, as the missionaries might have exaggerated the results of their education in order to obtain the support of the home front.

Teaching doctrines and discussing the Bible: polarization through education

Conversionism is also closely linked to another characteristic of Evangelicalism: crucicentrism. The doctrine of the cross was the heart of Evangelical faith. It stressed the importance of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. With his atoning death Christ had died as a substitute for sinful mankind.⁶⁴ The doctrine of the cross was bound up with two central Evangelical principles: Christ as the only mediator between God and mankind, and justification through faith instead of good works. Through faith only, people could take part in the atonement and could attain salvation.⁶⁵ George Nyland wrote in his “report about the outstations near Jerusalem” that his first aim in his work was always “to show [Catholic and Orthodox people] the love of God through Jesus Christ to us sinners and then to teach them that we cannot of ourselves by our good works, fasting and

⁶² Jamal to the secretaries of the CMS, Annual Letter, Salt, November 1879, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 36/11.

⁶³ For instance, a girl from the CMS school in Lydda told her mother not to swear, reminding her of the Commandment she had learned in school “Thou shalt not to swear or take the name of the Lord thy God in vain”. Damishky, “Abstracts of God’s vineyard at Lydda God’s Providence”, Lydda, August 1879, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 22/2.

⁶⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 14-17, here 15.

⁶⁵ Cf. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 6.

praying, gain our salvation and reach heaven as they [members of other churches] are taught by their priests to believe".⁶⁶

Rather than teaching the doctrine of the cross and other central Evangelical doctrines as such, Gobat and the CMS missionaries taught the schoolchildren the Evangelical principles by reading and discussing the Bible; the Bible led them to the main Evangelical doctrines. Although reading and discussing the Bible was central to the curriculum of the 'Bible schools', in many Protestant schools the catechism was also part of the programme. John Robert Longley Hall insisted that all children in the schools of Jaffa and its outstations should learn the Church Catechism. He was anxious that the children should clearly see and understand what the Protestants believed, because if the children did not know what the Protestants believed, they would "return as a rule to the Church of their infancy" after they had left school.⁶⁷ This statement underlines the importance of doctrines in relation to the other denominations.⁶⁸

According to Paul Sangster, Evangelicals in general used all the methods they knew to install religious principles in children. Catechizing was the most obvious and easiest way. In the eighteenth century the Evangelicals 'revived' the old-fashioned method of catechizing by changing it into a "lively method of instruction which children would not merely endure, but enjoy". The doctrines were taught not only by means of repetition, but by asking supplementary questions, "both to make the information more interesting and to ensure that there was real understanding".⁶⁹ From the missionaries' correspondence it appears that their Evangelical views and principles were transmitted in the same way; by means of discussing the catechism but especially the Bible with the pupils, putting questions and answering them.

As was the case with the missionaries' conversations, these discussions were often punctuated with criticism of the doctrines and rituals of the other churches. Zeller, for instance, wrote that in the school in Nazareth the story of Elisabeth and Zacharias was

⁶⁶ Nyland, "Report about the outstations near Jerusalem", Ramallah, 25 March 1880, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 57/1.

⁶⁷ Hall to Fenn, Annual Letter for "Jaffa, Ramleh and Lydd stations", Jaffa, 6 December 1877, Birmingham/UL, 31/36.

⁶⁸ Gruhler was also convinced that the Christian pupils of other denominations would "be preserved from the superstitions of their church and learn the pure Word of God" as a result of the Protestant education. Gruhler to Sandreczki, Quarterly Report, Ramle, 24 December 1858, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 29/7.

⁶⁹ Sangster, *Pity my Simplicity*, 40. Sangster gives an example in which the teacher asks the children how they expected to be saved. The children answered: 'By believing in the Lord Jesus Christ'. After that the master went on asking and the children answering. Sangster, *Pity my Simplicity*, 40-41.

discussed. When the children were asked what Zacharias' duty was in the temple, they answered "to burn incense". To Zeller's question what the duty of the priests in the churches of Nazareth was the children gave the same answer. When he asked for what purpose they burned incense, a girl answered: "It is done for the pictures of Saints". Zeller went on to ask why the Greeks and Latins burned incense and the Protestants did not. A seven-year old girl replied that Latins and Greeks still stuck to the Old Testament, whereas Protestants had adopted the New Testament.⁷⁰ This discussion is in line with the general rejection by the missionaries of outward form and profession of the faith. By comparing these rituals with the Old Testament customs, the missionaries clearly relegated them to the past. They presented the New Testament as the Protestants' guiding principle, which was about the truth as it is in Christ, a spiritual religion rather than about outward appearance.⁷¹

In his catechizing Zeller not only taught a Protestant religious principle, but at the same time he also contrasted Protestantism with the other denominations. Another example of such polarization comes from the Protestant school in Yaffa, a village near Nazareth. When the catechist Seraphim Boutaji entered the school, he heard the children reading a Psalm: "Thy word is *clear* teach me thy ways". When Boutaji asked them what the word 'clear' meant, one boy answered that it was easy to understand. At this answer, Boutaji responded: "If David declares the word of God to be clear, why do the priests say, that it was *not* clear and therefore had better not to be read by common people?". He went on to ask whose word had to be obeyed first, the word of God or the words of the priests, who are men. The boy answered Boutaji without hesitation that the order of the priests had to be obeyed first.⁷² With this story, not only the use of Latin in church and people's adherence to their priests were criticised, it also pointed to the so-called 'ignorance' of the children and the need for Protestant education.

⁷⁰ Zeller to the Secretaries of the CMS in London, Annual Letter for 1874-1875, Nazareth, January 1875, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 72/278.

⁷¹ This view also appears in William McClure Thomson's book *The Land and the Book*. In her discussion of this book, Heleen Murre-van den Berg states that the comparison of religious practices of other denominations and other denominations with Old Testament customs entitled "these religious practices to a certain amount of respect and understanding, but at the same time relegates them safely to the past". Murre-van den Berg, "William McClure Thomson", 53. The CMS missionaries in Palestine, however, so fiercely disapproved of all outward appearance that it is almost impossible to discover any respect for and understanding of these customs.

⁷² Zeller, "Extracts from Journals", Nazareth, August 1867, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 72/265.

The effect of the criticism of the other churches in the Protestant education is sometimes reflected in the CMS missionaries' descriptions of discussions between 'their' schoolchildren, and teachers and clergymen from other denominations. Such stories had to prove the success of Protestant schools, as they described children not only spreading Evangelical beliefs but also defending them. It seems that the pupils of the Protestant schools closely imitated their teachers in their discussions with people they wanted to convince of the Protestant viewpoint. Both pupils and missionaries liked to quote the Scriptures. In their eyes the clergy of the other denominations and their church members did not know the Bible. Just like the missionaries' conversations, the children discussed traditional subjects of dispute: the worship of the Virgin Mary, Mary and the saints as mediators between God and man, and similar matters.

Jamal described such a discussion between a Greek Orthodox boy of the Protestant school in Salt, named Wakeem, and the Roman Catholic schoolmistress. Accused by the Latin priest that he had insulted the crucifix, Wakeem and his father went to the convent where they met the Latin schoolmistress. She asked Wakeem why he did not worship the Virgin Mary and the Cross. The boy answered: "Because it is written [...] 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him *only* shalt thou serve, also the Angel said to St John Worship God'". When the teacher replied that the Virgin Mary was their advocate and intercessor, the boy denied, again quoting the Bible: "there is *one God* and *one mediator* between God and men, *the man Christ Jesus*". The schoolmistress went on and told the boy that they [i.e. Mary and the Saints] were the way to heaven. One last time the boy cited Jesus' words from the Bible: "I am the way, the truth & the life. [...] No man cometh unto the Father but by me". The teacher turned aside angrily and told the boy's father to take his son from the Protestant school before he was completely spoiled and corrupted. However, the father answered that if she called this corruption, he wanted his son to be corrupted and spoiled more than he was now.⁷³ Thus, Jamal wanted to show that the "young soldiers of the Cross", as he called the schoolboys, were doing wonderfully well, they had an excellent knowledge of the Bible and knew central Evangelical doctrines. The boys were even aware of the 'errors' in the other churches.

These examples indicate that the Protestant missionaries liked to emphasize what they thought to be the 'errors' of the other churches in their education. This indicates that Gobat's and the CMS missionaries' actions were in contradiction with Gobat's

⁷³ Jamal to the secretaries of the CMS, Annual Letter, Salt, 29 November 1879, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 36/11.

statement that controversial matters should be avoided in Protestant teaching, and his claim that he did not want the “theoretical differences existing between different churches” to be stressed in Protestant education.⁷⁴

Reactions of the other churches to the Protestant schools

In view of the examples above it comes as no surprise that other denominations fiercely opposed the presence of the Protestant schools. The correspondence of Gobat and the CMS missionaries is full of stories about conflicts between them and the clergy of the other churches regarding the Protestant schools. Of course, the fact that the Protestants were a new denomination in Palestine and rapidly established schools throughout the country was bound to evoke a reaction from the other churches. The fact that Protestant education contained a liberal sprinkling of criticism of other denominations and was considered to be a perfect tool for making converts must also have contributed to a negative reaction to the Protestant schools.

According to the Protestant missionaries, other denominations started to found schools to counterbalance the Protestant schools. In 1877 Gobat wrote that in thirty years not only thirty-seven Protestant schools were established, but also “nearly as many Roman Catholic and Greek schools, established at first with a view of counteracting” the Protestant schools.⁷⁵ He was not the only one who noticed the growing number of Roman Catholic and Orthodox schools. In 1867 Zeller observed that the Latin monks were building a church and schoolhouse in Yaffa to counterbalance the Protestant activities there, and that they had opened a school in Shefa Amer across from the Protestant school.⁷⁶ More than ten years earlier Klein had seen “the efforts of the Latins [in Nazareth] doubled”.⁷⁷ Clearly, the Protestants considered the growing number of Greek Orthodox and especially Roman Catholic schools an act of opposition

⁷⁴ Gobat to Rose, Jerusalem, 13 October 1847, London/BL, RP, 27, Add. 42798 ff. 205-206; Gobat to Rose, Jerusalem, 15 February 1848, London/BL, RP, 27, Add. 42798 ff.209-214. This was written by Gobat against the background of criticism in England of his orientation on the Eastern Churches.

⁷⁵ Gobat to Tait, Jerusalem 1877, London/LPL, TP, 234, ff. 280-283.

⁷⁶ Zeller, “Extracts from Journals”, Nazareth, August 1867, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 72/265.

⁷⁷ Klein to Venn, Annual Letter, Nazareth, 11 February 1855, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 41/282.

to their work. Seraphim Boutaji of Shefa Amer, for instance, wrote that the Latin monks and nuns used every means to ruin the Protestant school there by opening theirs.⁷⁸

According to CMS reports, the reaction to the missionary educational activities was not restricted to the opening of schools by Catholics and Orthodox. The CMS documents contain numerous accounts of the fierce opposition of Catholics and Orthodox to the schools run by Gobat and the CMS, such as the excommunication of members of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches by their clergy for sending their children to the Protestant school.⁷⁹ The Protestant missionaries considered excommunication a threat to the continuation of their schools, as it put pressure on people and often led them to remove their children from the Protestant schools. In Lydda, for instance, the Greek priest excommunicated all parents who sent their children to the newly opened Protestant school. In response to this measure the majority of the children were taken from the school. Only three children remained in the school, which had started with twelve pupils.⁸⁰

The missionaries also complained about the Catholic and Orthodox clergy persuading parents to send their children to the denominational schools, by offering 'their' pupils meals, clothes and other presents. Assad Saleem complained that the children of the Protestant school in Beit-Sahur were offered meals by the "Popish priest" if they left the Protestant school and would attend the Roman Catholic school instead.⁸¹

Children from other denominations often attended the Protestant school because of the lack of a school of their own church. If such a school was established nearby, most parents would send their children there. If for whatever reason this school was closed, the children often went back to the Protestant school. This could lead to children switching schools rather often. In Ramle, for instance, the Greek Orthodox school

⁷⁸ "Translation of the report of Seraphim Boutagi, for the quarter ending, March 31st 1873. Shefamer", Shefa Amer, 31 March 1873, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 16/13.

⁷⁹ A certain Assad Saleem wrote that some Roman Catholics in Beit Sahur were even excommunicated when they came within twenty yards of the Protestant school. Saleem, Jerusalem, 25 May 1871, Birmingham/UL, 8/83B.

⁸⁰ Gruhler to Sandreczki, Quarterly Report, Ramle, 18 June 1864, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 29/15. According to Gobat, in Nablus in 1850 the Greek patriarch not only excommunicated the Greek Orthodox who sent their children to the Protestant school, but he also asked the government of Nablus to destroy the school and to burn the schoolbooks. Because of Gobat's friendship with the governor of Nablus and the Pasha in Jerusalem, the patriarch did not succeed. Gobat to Rose, Jerusalem, 11 September 1850, London/BL, RP, 27, Add. 42798, ff. 227-228. We will return to the subject of excommunication in the next chapter.

⁸¹ Assad Saleem to the CMS, Jerusalem, 25 May 1871, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 8/83B.

was closed and re-opened several times. When the school was closed, many parents sent their children to the Protestant school; when the Greek Orthodox school was re-opened, they moved them back to the Orthodox school again. This happened several times and every time the children came back to the Protestant school, the parents promised not to take them away again. For a long time, the CMS missionary in Ramle, John Gruhler, did not say anything when the parents moved their children in and out of his school. However, when a new Greek Orthodox schoolteacher arrived, Gruhler told all children that if they left the Protestant school this time he would never take them back.⁸²

During the same period that Gruhler complained about the children switching schools, the schools in Ramle were also subject of discussion between Bonava da Solero, Custodian of the Holy Land (1857-1863), and the Patriarch Valerga. In January 1860 the Custodian wrote about the necessity of opening an Arab school for the Greek Catholic youth in Ramle. These children had visited the Greek Orthodox school in the past, but after it closed they had gone to the only other school in the village, which was Protestant. In order to heal the damage done to these children and because of the benefit of the Roman Catholic school for all Catholic children and the children of other religions, the Custodian thought that a Roman Catholic school should be opened in Ramle. With his letter he asked the patriarch for his approval.⁸³ According to Valerga, however, the Greek Orthodox school had not been closed down as the Custodian thought. He also stated that none of the five schoolboys included in the Catholic population of Ramle went to the Protestant school. However, Valerga approved the appointment of a teacher.⁸⁴ In 1861, a Roman Catholic school was established.⁸⁵

In such stories about excommunication, giving presents, and children switching schools, the parents are often depicted as very dependent on their clergy and having no influence at all. To some extent this might be true, as many of them were very poor and had to be supported by their churches. However, it seems that the missionaries could not comprehend that parents just might have preferred to send their children to a

⁸² Gruhler to Sandreczki, Quarterly Report, Ramle, 1 February 1860, C M/O 29/9; Gruhler to Sandreczki, Annual Letter, Ramle, 18 January 1861, C M/O 29/17. Both in Birmingham/UL.

⁸³ The Custodian wanted the language in this (free) school to be Arabic and he wanted a secular teacher to be appointed. "Terra Santa" was to pay for this school. Bonava (Bonaventura) da Solero to Valerga, Jerusalem, 15 January 1860, Rome/AGOFM, TS, 8, SK/602, 8.

⁸⁴ Valerga to Bonava (Bonaventura) da Solero, Jerusalem, 24 January 1860, Rome/AGOFM, TS, 8, SK/602, 7.

⁸⁵ Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, *Franciscan Schools of the Holy Land*. 29.

school run by their own denomination. It is especially the stories about children switching schools that suggest that parents above all wanted their children to receive education, and if possible in a school of their own church. Having different schools to choose from put parents in a position of power.

Some missionaries provide us with information about parents who did not want to give in to the pressure of their clergy and kept their children in the Protestant school. In Gaza a Greek Orthodox superior begged some parents not to send their children to the Protestant school after he had found out that there were only ten children in the Greek schools, and that the other Greek children attended the Protestant school. When their parents answered that they were pleased with the Protestant education and did not want to give it up, he threatened them with excommunication. Alexander Schapira, the CMS missionary in Gaza, did not know what influence this threat might have on these parents.⁸⁶ Maybe parents used the Protestant schools to put pressure on their own clergy to improve the denominational schools. If the education in the schools run by their own denomination improved, they might send their children there. This seems to have been the case in Nazareth in 1855 where the number of pupils in the Protestant school had diminished. Klein thought the school's decline was caused by the improvements made in the Orthodox school by a Greek Orthodox teacher who was sent by the Greek patriarch for fear of "the Protestant's heresy". This encouraged the Greek Orthodox to send their children to their own school rather than the Protestant one. Not surprisingly, Klein did not see it this way; he blamed the Greek Orthodox parents' lack of faith, stating that many Greeks Orthodox would in fact "gladly" join the Protestants, but that their faith was not yet strong enough to enable them to choose "the way of truth even at the risk of being persecuted or ill-treated".⁸⁷

The CMS documents give the impression that parents took their children from the Protestant school mainly as a result of the measures taken by the clergy of other denominations, their dependence on their clergy, or their lack of faith. The level of education in the Protestant schools in comparison with schools run by other denominations is discussed only rarely or not at all. Most probably the educational levels of the schools hardly differed, especially at the small village schools, where education was

⁸⁶ Schapira to Wright, Annual Letter, Gaza, December 1879, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 64/8.

⁸⁷ According to Klein, the Latins had also improved their school, fearing the "spreading Protestant heresy". Klein to Venn, Annual Letter, Nazareth, 11 February 1855, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 41/282.

very basic. In the missionaries' eyes, the fact that in the Protestant schools the Bible was read actually made them superior to the other schools, because, as mentioned earlier, they frequently accused the Catholic and Orthodox clergy of a lack of biblical knowledge.

The CMS documents also reveal that the competition and rivalry between the Protestants and the other denominations regarding the schools sometimes resulted in harassments and even sabotage and riots. Simple bullying was used to prevent children from going to the Protestant schools. In Shefa Amer, for instance, the Catholic priests stood before the school door trying to prevent the schoolboys from attending. When Michael Kawar asked them what they wanted, they answered him that they wanted to take away 'their' children. Kawar replied: "You are monks and have no children, but the children in my school belong to their parents; [if] their parents themselves came and asked me to take charge of them and only to them I will give them back". This answer made the priests furious, and they went away cursing and threatening that they would take the children by force. However, it seems that Kawar was on good terms with some people of the Catholic congregation, as he gathered a number of influential Catholics after the incident and told them what had happened. They felt ashamed and promised Kawar to reprove these priests for their impudence.⁸⁸

Another incident is described by Zeller. In 1864 the Roman Catholics had "caused much damage and danger to the Protestant school by obstructing the regular watercourse, which in the raining season runs through the Latin Quarter and having broken in the door at the back of the premises they caused a destructive inundation in the garden and in the school".⁸⁹ In Salt, the establishment of a Protestant school was even said to have led to a terrible riot. Three weeks after Gobat had opened a school, for which he appointed a Greek priest as teacher, the Greek patriarch forbade the priest to continue and the school was closed. After a year Gobat appointed a layman as teacher and re-opened the school. The Greek patriarch apparently offered some Muslim sheiks

⁸⁸ Zeller, "Extracts from Journals", Nazareth, August 1867, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 72/265.

⁸⁹ Zeller listed many 'grievances' in a "petition for more effectual protection of Protestantism". "Petition Principal grievances of the Protestants at Nazareth and its neighbourhood since 1852", written by Zeller, 1868, Birmingham/UL, C M/O 2/1; Zeller, "Protest against the proceedings of the Turkish Government with regard to attacks made by Latins and Greeks upon the Mission premises in Nazareth and Reneh in November 1864", Nazareth, C M/O 72/40B. I will return to this petition in the next chapter.

money to destroy the school. This resulted in a battle in the streets of Salt, in which on both sides several people were killed.⁹⁰

Concluding remarks

The letters written by Bishop Gobat and the CMS missionaries reveal how much their schools reflected their Evangelical beliefs. Of Bebbington's characteristics of Evangelicalism, biblicism is especially prominent in the educational principles and activities shown by Gobat and the missionaries. Although attention was given to other subjects, the Bible was at the centre of the education in the schools. Reading the Bible was important to the process of conversion, and literacy was a precondition for reading the Bible. In some cases the education in fact chiefly consisted of reading the Bible. The importance of the Bible in education is also stressed by the fact that even a Greek Orthodox could be appointed as teacher, as long as the children read the Bible.

For Gobat and the CMS missionaries the schools were an important instrument for achieving conversions. The multireligious backgrounds of the children made them ideal tools for evangelisation. Through their pupils the missionaries could also reach the children's parents and families. It seems that the central Evangelical doctrines were taught especially by discussing the Bible. These discussions were interspersed with criticism of the other denominations, by which the missionaries contrasted Protestantism with the other churches. By their accounts of the children's good behaviour the missionaries wanted to demonstrate the successes to the home public. However, this achievement should probably be qualified: the missionaries could not claim many 'truly' converted children. They themselves largely attributed this lack of actual conversions, implicitly or even explicitly, to people's lack of faith, their dependence on their clergy, and especially to the structural influence and opposition from the clergy of other churches.

Besides the mere presence of Protestant mission schools, the rivalry between the Protestants and the other denominations must have been stimulated by Protestant criticism in their education of the doctrines and rituals of the other churches. According to the CMS documents, the rivalry between the Protestants and the other churches became manifest in the opening of schools by the other denominations, but it also

⁹⁰ Gobat to Tait, Jerusalem, 17 July 1873, London/BL, TP, 195, ff. 280-282.

resulted in a struggle for children and in harassments, and even led to sabotage and riots. In the next chapter the rivalry between Protestant missionaries and the other churches will be further examined in the light of the Protestant anti-Roman Catholic and the Roman Catholic anti-Protestant polemics.

