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Christian mind \neq Christian pedagogy

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A few years ago, I surveyed with colleagues four decades of output from 26 Christian and interfaith peer-reviewed journals in North America across a range of disciplines outside of theology (Smith et al., 2014). The study surveyed 9,028 articles published between 1970 and 2010. These articles were taken to offer a substantial sample of the consciously Christian scholarly output of North American Christian (especially Protestant) higher education. The basic question addressed in surveying the articles was whether they focused on the faith–learning intersection only in terms of ideas, worldviews, perspectives, and theories, or whether they also paid attention to matters such as students, teaching, learning, or formation. The bar was set low, with as little as a paragraph on any of the latter topics being taken as grounds for classifying an article as pedagogical. Even so, the pedagogical pickings in most disciplines were extremely slim.

Interestingly, the presence of attention to pedagogy was especially low in some of the disciplines from which some of the key voices shaping past discussions about the “integration of faith and learning” have emerged. Philosophy, literature, and history provided a third of the total pool of articles, and scholars in those disciplines have been prominent in informing wider conversations about faith and learning in Christian higher education. In terms of a pedagogical focus, however, philosophy mustered three pedagogical articles out of 1072 articles published (0.28%), English had 18 of 1474 (1.21%), and history did a little better, with 22 of 425 articles mentioning pedagogy (4.92%) (Smith et al., 2014: 83). We concluded that attention to pedagogy has been weak compared to the attention given to getting Christian ideas about knowledge straight, and that “What continues to be needed is disciplined inquiry into the meanings and values communicated by pedagogy, a culture of evidence around best practices, and an ability to engage in discipline-specific SOTL conversations” (Smith et al., 2014: 85).

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The conversation about the integration of faith and learning that has helped shape North American Christian higher education has exhibited a bias towards epistemologically oriented questions. This is understandable given the pressures of positivism and the resulting motivation to demonstrate the viability of faith-informed knowledge claims and the relevance of Christian intellectual perspectives and worldview frameworks. However, a side effect has been that during the last half century the scholarly conversation that has emerged from and sought to clarify the nature of Christian higher education has for the most part been a conversation that seems to have felt little need to focus for long on teaching and learning. Not only the quantity, but also the nuance and precision of writing about the goals of education, the history of ideas, and the intellectual perspectives advocated rarely seem to be matched by equally disciplined or sustained faith-informed attention to the actual practices and processes of teaching and learning. Holding together big theological or philosophical ideas and concrete educational practices seems to be a challenge. The resulting lack of a rich, shared framework for conversation risks leaving Christian institutions somewhat at the mercy of cultural pressures towards manipulative techniques, reductive forms of assessment, and standardized learning outcomes.

Recently published data from the work of Nathan Alleman, Perry Glanzer, and David Guthrie offer a fresh and confirmatory take on this landscape. Alleman et al. (2016) surveyed 2309 faculty at 48 Christian colleges and universities that are members of the evangelical Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Their data addresses various aspects of faculty members' conception of their task as Christian professors. The results emerging from one question in particular are telling in the present context.

Faculty were asked: "Does your theological tradition influence the following areas of your teaching?" in relation to five aspects of teaching. Three of these areas might be taken as resonating with the perspectival, worldview-oriented focus of much of the Christian scholarly literature, and the results in these areas seem to suggest that faculty have largely internalized the messages of that literature. 79 percent of faculty feel their theological tradition influences the "foundations, worldview, or narrative guiding the course," 78 percent agree that it influences their "motivations for or attitude toward the class," and 84 percent affirmed that it influenced their "ethical approach." When the focus is on framing perspectives, then, roughly four out of five faculty affirm that their theological tradition plays a role in their approach (between 5% and 9% answered "don't know," and between 12% and 16% denied any influence).

The two remaining areas were "course objectives" and "teaching methods," which move us more squarely into the realm of concrete pedagogical decision-making. 48 percent agreed that their theological tradition influenced their objectives (43% denied an influence), and 40 percent saw an influence on their teaching methods (an identical 40% denied an influence). Perhaps most tellingly, the 20 percent figure for "don't know" in answer to the question about teaching methods is more than double any other area of uncertainty, with the "yes" and "no"

responses evenly divided around it. It seems reasonable to conclude that among Christian academics there is a great deal more confidence in the possibility of relating faith to perspectives and philosophies than to pedagogical practices.

I think it is worth noticing the relationship between the contrasting responses. As noted above, the figures for the more perspectival questions suggest that the majority of faculty have internalized the emphasis on integrating faith and learning that has shaped and emerged from the Christian scholarship of recent decades. In other words, the results pertaining to teaching methods do not come from a sample of educators that has failed to engage with the existing project of connecting faith and learning. The same faculty that have by and large embraced the idea of integrating faith and learning at the level of worldview, vision, and ethics are the ones who show a clear majority that either sees no connection to teaching practices or does not know whether there might be such a thing.

There are various possible reasons for this, many of them well canvassed in the scholarship of teaching and learning literature, which has examined a number of factors that tend to undermine scholarly engagement with pedagogy (see, for example, Huber and Hutchings, 2005). I suggest that an additional factor worth considering is that the intellectual emphases and cognitive tools developed for the task of describing what a Christian practice of scholarship might look like philosophically and epistemologically are not well suited to fostering effective faith-informed engagement with the embodied practices of pedagogy. This has begun to change in recent years, with a growing focus on conversations about practices and pedagogical imagination, but the data from Alleman et al. (2016) suggest that there is a great deal of ground to make up with regard to Christian faculty's perceptions of their task. I hope that, among the many valid and necessary scholarly projects in our field, this journal will serve as a venue that helps foster a specifically pedagogical conversation about Christianity and education.

The articles in this issue of the journal range from the worldwide church to the first-grade classroom, but cluster in two areas of emphasis. Two of the articles focus in different ways on the global context. Bram de Muynck, Willemieke Reijnoudt-Klein, and Marike Spruyt-de Kloe address the question of how judgments can be made about Christian education in varied and complex cultural contexts around the world. They propose a framework with three domains containing 24 dimensions and referenced against four kinds of societal factors. Beginning with a study in Zambia, they discuss how the framework could be validated by empirical study in different regions. While this article focuses on a structural framework for making comparisons across cultures, Aminta Arrington's contribution adds to existing conversations about hospitality to strangers as a lens for examining Christian intercultural learning. Arrington describes a pedagogical intervention that aimed to help develop world Christians—a "Hospitality Project" that engaged students in reflectively extending hospitality to someone from another culture. Arrington explores some of the kinds of learning that can result from such a project.

Our other two research articles share a focus on virtue and character. Rachel Griffis considers David Brooks' recent *New York Times* bestseller, *The Road to*

Character, and puts his ideas in conversation with reflections on the role of suffering in relation to virtue from Dante and St John of the Cross. This leads to reflection on the role of willingness to encounter one's own weaknesses and limitations in cultivating virtue and character in higher-education students, and to a questioning of an overemphasis on students' strengths. Julie Yonker, Cassie Wielard, Carolyn Vos, and Ashley Tudder complement this focus on virtue with an empirical study of four classes of first-grade children at a Christian school who took pre- and post-tests measuring humility in connection with intervention classes that had devotional lessons on humility. Devotional lessons featured humility-related children's literature, cognitively appropriate discussions, writing about humility, and teacher-reinforced behaviors of humility. Intervention classes showed a slight increase in humility relative to comparison classes, which disappeared after statistical control for personality traits of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

We hope that these articles will continue to foster work on Christianity and education that spans the globe, the age range, and the complexity of educational topics from structural and policy decisions to first-grade devotions.

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