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IJCE and Scholarship on Christianity and Education

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The *International Journal of Christianity & Education* is a new journal that carries forward a long history. There is an immediate history, spanning decades; two journals are merging to form this new journal: the *Journal of Christian Education* and the *Journal of Education & Christian Belief*. These two journals have a combined history of publishing scholarship on Christianity and education that stretches back many decades. The *Journal of Christian Education* was founded in Australia in 1958 and has a remarkable record of maintaining an uninterrupted flow of scholarly work since then. It built up an international readership of scholars and practitioners concerned with various aspects of education. The *Journal of Education & Christian Belief* began in the United Kingdom in 1997, replacing *Spectrum*, which itself began in 1969 as a magazine for Christian teachers. Over the years *Spectrum* had increasingly sought to make a more rigorous contribution to academic discussion of Christianity and education; the *Journal of Education & Christian Belief* took forward this aspiration.

There is also a much larger history, spanning millennia: this whole constellation of publications is heir to a tradition of reflection on what Christianity has to do with education in its various forms that stretches back through the ages to the early church. The *International Journal of Christianity & Education* seeks to strengthen and focus twenty-first century scholarly conversations concerned with all aspects of what Christianity can contribute to the theory and practice of education in its various forms and settings. Given the complexity and diversity of education past and present and the breadth and depth of Christian theology and of the Christian tradition, the possibilities for fruitful engagement are in principle vast indeed. The new journal will seek to reflect this legacy of speaking Christianly into contemporary debates about education. In so doing it seeks to fulfil the ongoing mission of the

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worldwide Christian Church while being fully engaged with the wider field of educational scholarship.

Examining how Christianity in all its aspects – with its diversity of beliefs, traditions, history, practices, spirituality and contexts – might intersect with any part of education across its various ranges of age, institutional setting, and varieties of theory and practice is a rich and variegated task, not reducible to a single set of preoccupations or positions. Doing justice to this task calls for a transcending, or at least a relativizing, of some of the familiar configurations of knowledge and discussion that have at times made debates about Christianity and education feel more like a narrow and contested footbridge than a broad horizon of possibility. We would like to open this inaugural issue of *IJCE* by considering some of the ways in which we hope to see a broadening scholarly conversation continue to emerge in these pages. What follows is far from an exhaustive list; it is intended to point to breadth of possibility, indicating some of the kinds of work we hope to welcome to this journal, with examples drawn especially from the pages of our two predecessor journals and other sources. The intention is not to create a restricted agenda for future contributions, but rather to illustrate the breadth of possibilities. We hope to see scholarly reflection on Christianity and education continue to grow and expand in terms of curricular scope, conceptions of faith, varieties of Christian education, global reach and research approaches, and we look forward to being surprised when we receive article submissions that open up new avenues of exploration.

Curricular scope

First there is the question of curricular scope. Christianity is something regularly taught *about* by educators – a curricular topic within the practice of education. At its narrowest, Christianity's relationship to education is sometimes imagined as only, or primarily, having to do with those moments when the belief content of Christian faith is taught or discussed in educational settings – those moments when faith is being explicitly taught or talked about in class or made visible in devotional activity such as public prayer. Here the relationship of Christianity to education is mainly as a potential subject matter, present when explicitly mentioned. Debate then tends to concentrate on questions around the proper form for communicating faith claims or pursuing devotional activity in educational settings. Should we pray in school? How should religion be taught? Are the goals of religion and those of education compatible? How concerned should we be about confessionalism and indoctrination?

Clearly this is a significant cluster of issues; it is unlikely to disappear any time soon. These questions continue to invite careful work. Our predecessor journals have certainly contributed important insights to these discussions (see, for example, Ghiloni, 2011; Thiessen, 2013; Thompson, 2004). However, the relationship of Christianity to education is much broader, even if we stay focused on curricular questions, as has been indicated by the wide range of scholarship that has appeared

over the past several decades exploring various versions of what has often been referred to as the ‘integration of faith and learning’. Here the questions become much broader, and stretch beyond the question of religious curricular content and into questions of pedagogy, formation and moral vision. What does a Christian educational framework suggest for how questions of social justice should be addressed in an undergraduate engineering course (VanderLeest, 2006)? How should spiritual formation be approached in professional programmes for nurses and educators (Hegeman et al., 2011)? How does the depiction of suffering in children’s books relate to Christian accounts of suffering (Belcher, 2008)? How do the beliefs and identities of Christian English as a Second Language teachers interact with their educational practices (Wong et al., 2012)? How can a physics course pedagogically integrate a concern for the theological implications of physics (McCoy, 2014)? How does the theatre programme contribute to the educational goals of a Christian college (Lewis and Lewis Hall, 2012)? Is curiosity a vice or virtue for Christian teachers (Cooling, 2005)? These examples are plucked almost at random, and could be multiplied ad infinitum. In sum: we are concerned with the relationship of Christianity to all of education, definitely including but not restricted to the chapel and the religion class.

Conceptions of faith

These examples already lead us into a second set of questions concerning what it is in ‘Christianity’ that can be brought into interaction with education. Beliefs, truth claims, worldviews and philosophical positions are one part of what Christianity brings to the educational table, and have been the focus of a great deal of discussion. As Wolfhart Pannenberg puts it, ‘a particular type of piety involves not only a specific theological focus and corresponding life-styles but also a particular conception of the human world, the world of human experience’ (Pannenberg, 1984). Christian conceptions of the world of human experience, and therefore of the proper roles and contours of various subject matters, of the goals and values proper to education, and of the responsibilities of teachers, students and parents, form a major segment of Christian educational discussion. This project has stood in tension with the contention that education can be construed as an autonomous field of inquiry and is distorted if religious considerations are allowed to shape educational deliberation. An intense and long-running set of arguments around questions of epistemology, indoctrination, autonomy, the defensibility of Christian educational thought, and the nature of worldviews has resulted (Sandsmark, 1998; Thiessen, 1993, 2001). Probably one of the most influential outcomes of this has been the recognition of the fundamentally important place of worldview in education (Belcher and Parr, 2010; Thomson, 2012). However, the configuration of concerns and positions that frames such discussions has at times risked narrowing scholarly discussion of Christian education to a protracted debate about the nature and validity of truth claims and the disciplinary foundations of education – a part, but only a part, of a larger whole. It has also risked stunting

our understanding of the vocation of the Christian teacher (Hartnett and Kline, 2005).

The landscape is, however, again larger. One strand of recent discussion, emerging from developments in moral philosophy, sociology and practical theology, has focused not just on the relationship between Christian beliefs and educational ideas, but also on the role of social practices (Dykstra, 2005). As Christian theology has re-engaged with virtue ethics and accounts of embodied, socially embedded human action, fresh points of contact have been found with approaches to education as a form of embodied social practice (Smith, 2009; Smith and Smith, 2011). The Christian tradition has probed the lived-out shape of discipleship in practices such as hospitality to strangers, Sabbath-keeping, testimony, discernment, forgiveness, intentional community and communal singing (Bass, 1997). A closer exploration of these practices and the worlds of human interaction intended within them opens up fertile space to explore how Christian practices might interact with, inform or correct educational practices. How might a foreign language class end up different in its choice of activities, images and goals if it were understood as a practice oriented toward seeking justice or extending hospitality to strangers (Smith and Carvill, 2000)? How could a focus on the relationship between desires and practices reshape a course about American car culture at a Christian college (Phelps and Waalkes, 2012)? What does fasting have to do with learning about poverty (Hadaway, 2006)? Once more, examples could be multiplied, though it should also be noted that pedagogical questions have been comparatively neglected in relation to questions of content and perspective across the curriculum (Smith et al., 2014); much work remains to be done.

Consider another line of inquiry: Christianity has over time brought to bear a particular kind of theologically rooted imagination, embodied in a set of stories and metaphors, that not only informed Christian thinking but has seeped into the educational imagination of Christianized cultures and left traces in our talk of schools as gardens (kindergarten) or as communities, or of a teacher's career as years of service or of pastoral care for students. This is not a matter of making deductions from doctrines, but more of exploring how biblical imagery and narrative has provided, and can yet provide, spaces within which to develop particular kinds of moral imagination that in turn shape conceptions of learning (Badley and Van Brummelen, 2012; Smith, 2014). There is a growing body of existing work and more to be done at the interface between theologically informed metaphor and narrative and the ways in which we think about learning and curriculum.

These are just some of the areas to explore. Talk of practices and narratives soon intersects, for instance, with current interest in virtue ethics and intellectual virtues, which again has connections both with the history of Christian reflection and with educational practice. The point here is once again not to draw boundaries, but to indicate that the relationship between Christianity and education is broad and complex, and part of that complexity lies in what Christianity is taken to be and to provide to the conversation.

Varieties of Christian education

If talk of education and Christian *belief* risks pre-emptively narrowing the ways in which Christianity might interact with education, talk of *Christian education* risks a narrowing of a different kind – one focused on institutional forms. In some contexts the phrase ‘Christian education’ tends to evoke primarily forms of educational activity that take place under the auspices of church programmes. Although Sunday schools, adult education programmes, and the various other kinds of educative activity that are a regular part of church ministries certainly represent a significant sector of the church’s investment in education, they are only a part of the story. In other contexts, ‘Christian education’ is commonly taken to refer to private faith-based schooling, to schools that work from an explicit Christian educational framework and sometimes (though far from always) target their educational work to Christian parents and students. In contrast, in some countries churches and Christian organizations run publicly funded schools as part of the state’s educational provision, often providing for a very religiously diverse student population. Indeed, sometimes the family backgrounds are almost exclusively Muslim. The Christian church indeed has a great deal of investment in schooling worldwide, but it forms only a subset of Christianity’s relationship to educational institutions. Christians have also founded and served in various other forms of classroom and institution, sometimes with a view to developing distinctly Christian forms of educational institution and sometimes with the goal of serving in faith-rooted ways amid the wider educational needs of the societies in which they have found themselves.

Questions arise in all of these institutional settings concerning what the Christian connection adds to or implies for educational practices, with theological implications far beyond the institutional context itself (Alleman and Glanzer, 2014). For example, what is the role and contribution of the Christian teacher in the secular school, or the experience of the Muslim student in the Christian school (Cooling, 2010; Wilson, 2014)? Christian education can then be a stimulus to more general theological thought, particularly about responses to religious diversity and the relationship between learning and faithfulness to Christian revelation and tradition. There will be distinct denominational responses to such questions, as reflected, for example, in Anglican and Roman Catholic approaches (see, for example, Jensen, 2009; McLaughlin, 2002; Sullivan, 2006), and then there are other educational contexts to consider. For example, what rethinking or creative carrying forward needs to take place among Christian educators as education moves online (Dalziel, 2011; Stuart-Buttle, 2014)? Or how does Christianity relate to service-learning, field-based learning, vocational learning and adult education (Feenstra, 2011)? How does competitive sport figure in Christian education (Henkel, 2007)? Here again, although the diversity of institutional forms of education is certainly a significant part of our subject matter, the field of inquiry is neither restricted to any one of them nor, indeed, to an institutional context at all.

Global reach

Another issue that has come into increasingly clear focus in recent decades concerns the fact that Christianity is not the property of the West or of the global North. As Andrew Walls puts it, ‘the most striking feature of Christianity at the beginning of the third millennium is that it is predominantly a non-Western religion’ (Walls, 2002: 1). Church history is being rewritten to acknowledge the biases and omissions created by telling the story only from a European/North American perspective (Marty, 2007; Walls, 1996). Conversations in systematic theology are having to take increasing account of theological reflection happening independently in varying national and cultural contexts around the world (Ott and Netland, 2006; Yong and Anderson, 2014).

Christian education (in all its senses) is also a global affair. Christian schools and universities, Christian teachers and learners, and church-based educational programmes are found around the world (Carpenter et al., 2014). Their structure, mission, and cultural, social and historical context varies significantly. Generalizations made in one context cannot be assumed to hold straightforwardly for other settings. Categories sometimes taken as basic frames for thinking about Christian education do not make sense everywhere. Debates about prayer in school look rather different in Dallas, in London, and in Abuja. Curricular needs and norms and pedagogical traditions vary. Christian education may be connected with centres of cultural power or identified with the margins. One thing that is abundantly clear is that our understanding of the ways in which the story of Christianity and that of education are intertwined needs to continue to become massively less parochial if we are to gain a more adequate understanding of what Christianity has to do with education. As editors our hope is to attract articles from across the world, as too often in the past the US, UK and Australia have predominated. There have been articles originating elsewhere in our predecessor journals, for example from Africa (Marius et al., 2011) and Continental Europe (Fatiou, 2009; Habl, 2011), to name but two other regions, but these are not nearly enough – we would welcome more.

Research approaches

An important sector of the conversation surrounding Christianity’s relationship to education will continue to draw on the tools of theology and philosophy to clarify the issues at stake. Christian educational questions cannot, however, be approached as if they were entirely resolvable using theological and philosophical argument. Although there has been growth in empirical study of various forms of Christian education (e.g. Fisher, 2008), the disparity between the scale of investment in Christian education worldwide and the amount of careful empirical study of how it is working, how it is understood by its various participants and stakeholders, and how its outcomes can be described and accounted for remains considerable. As one recent literature survey has demonstrated, our empirical understanding of what is happening in faith-based schools remains remarkably

fragmentary and limited (Green and Cooling, 2009). Contributions are needed from a variety of disciplinary approaches to fill out the picture of what is actually happening in Christian education. A particularly interesting model is in-depth case studies of individual schools (see, for example, Collier and Dowson, 2007). We hope to strengthen this dimension in IJCE, drawing on developments such as Vol. 16, No. 1 of the *Journal of Education & Christian Belief*, in which research methods were a prime focus.

As well as further empirical study of Christian education, historical work remains to be done that clarifies the possible contribution of past Christian engagement with education to present understanding and practice (Rossiter, 2011). It remains necessary to clarify and carry forward into present day contexts the contributions made to educational thought and practice by the likes of Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor, Aquinas, Lull, Erasmus, Comenius, Kuyper, Grundtvig, Bonhoeffer, Mason, More, Freire, Hauerwas, and many more.

In these and other ways, we hope that scholarly examination of the theoretical and practical relationship between Christianity and education will continue to broaden and deepen, and that the *International Journal of Christianity & Education* can become a platform that serves the growing conversation. The title of this new journal reflects some of the concerns outlined above. The journal is *international*, with editors in multiple countries. We hope that over time the international dimension of the conversation will grow, both in terms of contexts studied and in terms of authors contributing. It is, of course, a *journal* – a platform intended to foster genuinely scholarly work. Its focus is *Christianity* in all its aspects (beliefs, doctrines, practices, history, communities etc.) and *education* in all its dimensions (its various age ranges, institutional settings, curricular areas and forms of question-posing).

What gives the journal its specific focus amid the massive breadth of possibility indicated above, and indicates the kind of article that we will be looking to accept for publication, is one of the remaining small words in the title: *and*. Theological discussion that never quite touches down amid genuinely educational issues and educational inquiry that has little real intersection with Christianity are both fine things in their places, but the focus here is on the interface; we seek articles that by whatever scholarly means address some kind of interaction between *Christianity* and *education*, investing care in both sides of that conjunction. The *Journal of Christian Education* and the *Journal of Education & Christian Belief*, along with closely related publications such as the *Journal for Research on Christian Education* and *Christian Higher Education*, have helped sustain a tradition of work at this interface. We hope that the *International Journal of Christian Education* will serve as a strong platform for future work that extends the boundaries of the current conversation.

As editors, we therefore invite contributions from Christian scholars from across the globe, from a variety of denominational and theological persuasions and from different experiences of Christian education. Both of us had the privilege of being published in our two predecessor journals in the early days of our

academic journey. So we would like to finish with a particular invitation to those who may be looking to publish their first academic article in the field. We would be particularly delighted to hear from you.

Finally, we would like to mark the publication of this first issue of IJCE with a tribute to the editors of our predecessor journals. There are many of them – we think nine – and it would be invidious to pick out any individually. But we commend to you the reflective pieces written by two of them in the final editions of the *Journal of Christian Education* and the *Journal of Education & Christian Belief* (Hill, 2013; Shortt, 2014); they are, respectively, the most published author in the two journals and the longest serving editor of either journal. Their two articles give an excellent overview of the ministry of our two predecessor journals and the legacy on which we now have the privilege of building.

Contents of the current issue

Jennifer Herdt's article draws deeply from the history of Christian reflection mentioned above, returning us to Augustine's wrestling with the role of both pagan and Christian exemplars in his own formation. Exploring Augustine's understanding of ethical formation in dialogue with other major voices in the history of reflection on virtue and formative practices, Herdt argues that Augustine's experience points us beyond an antagonism between character education on the one hand and liberal affirmation of autonomy and critical reflection on the other. Her account draws together the virtue of humility, the role of reflection in practice, and our relationship to community and tradition in a rich reflection on what it means to be ethically formed.

Jacob Stratman turns us from philosophical reflection to concrete classroom practices. He focuses on a very simple and specific educational practice: learning students' names before the start of a new course or semester. Relating this practice to Christian discussions of education as a form of hospitality, he argues that recognition is central to a hospitable practice of teaching, and that the experience of being known and named as a student is an important component on the student side of experiencing education as hospitable. Stratman also connects the practice of name learning to the teacher's own formation and to other practices such as prayer for students, illustrating how a simple educational move can be embedded in a wider network of Christian concerns and practices.

David Benson focuses attention on the contextually specific question of how sacred texts might contribute to the aspiration to promote democratic citizenship that underpins the new national curriculum in Australia. Thereby he offers a case study in how Christianity can contribute to the shaping of secular, public education by offering an alternative model to the neutral conceptions that are influential with Western governments and are favoured by secularists in their response to religious diversity. Benson employs a dialogical methodology to do this where he brings the work of Dwayne Huebner into conversation with the official curriculum documentation and then forms his own conclusions.

Finally, Leslie Francis' article reminds us that discussion of Christianity and education should not be confined to the formal contexts of school, college and university. Francis is an internationally renowned empirical theologian specializing in quantitative methodology. In this piece he examines how psychological type theory throws light on the learning experienced by clergy on an in-service course and how this illuminates different ministry styles. He thereby offers an important insight for those involved in ministerial preparation about the learning of self-awareness that is integral to successful Christian ministry.

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