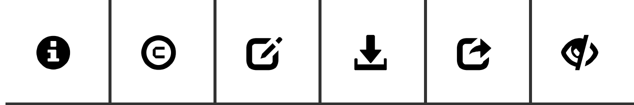

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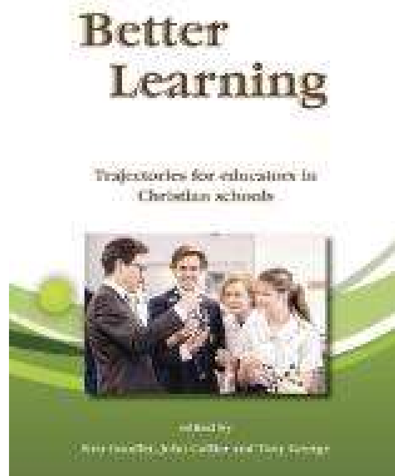

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Better Learning

Trajectories for educators in Christian schools

edited by

Ken Goodlet, John Collier and Tony George

It has been a privilege to integrate the thinking of *Teaching Well* into the units of our Master of Teaching at Excelsia over the last three years. Its sequel, *Better Learning* adds to the depth of thinking and knowledge of Christian education in Australia. Future teachers can engage further with those who are currently engaged in the thinking and doing in schools through this insightful text.—**Julie Mathews,** Former Head of Education, Excelsia College (Wesley Institute) & Acting Executive Director of the Anglican Education Commission, Sydney NSW.

I am delighted to recommend *Better Learning: Trajectories for educators in Christian schools,* the sequel to *Teaching Well: Insights for Educators in Christian schools* to all educators, which provided an outstanding practical foundational resource and reference for all pre-service teachers and leaders, for those involved in educating our future global citizens. *Better Learning: Trajectories for educators in Christian schools* has built on this foundation and focuses on the faith based cornerstone of Christian schools, various disciplines of learning and the formation of student's character that frames their decisions. It supports the development of their character traits that enable them to navigate life using their moral compass to be strategic participants in a global setting, aware of an eternal destiny. I commend *Better Learning: Trajectories for educators in Christian schools* to you.—**Lynne Doneley,** Executive Officer, Associated Christian Schools, Mansfield Qld.

Better Learning is a worthy sequel to the successful *Teaching Well.* The range of topics is extensive, relevant and vital in helping to meet the challenges in seeking to teach Christianly. The contributions have grown from the rich experience of many dedicated Christian practitioners and academics. The collection is substantial and practical in the way it seeks to address both the how and the why of the various topics. The many fresh insights offered are sure to provide stimulation, motivation and vitality to the ministry of Christian education in many quarters.—**Don Roy**, Conjoint Senior Lecturer, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong NSW.

This is an important and insightful book that adds to the literature available to educators in Christian schools. Articles are biblically grounded and cover a wide range of educational subjects. Written by major thinkers in the field, the book offers a broad discussion on the improvement of learning, contributing suggestions to help teachers evaluate their perspectives and strategies. An innovative section has been included on enabling students to better engage with their learning, advocating the presence of an authentically Christian culture for the school and encouraging strategies that help form student character and facilitate their competency as adults in society. Drawing upon its focus on Christian education as a ministry of schools into the lives of students, a strength of the book is its exploration into ways of enhancing learning in each of the disciplines represented in the school curriculum. Subject teachers will find the ideas invaluable in strengthening learning and will also appreciate the writers' reflections on the contribution of imagination and creativity to the Christian school curriculum.—**Alan Rice AM**, former Dean, Australian Centre for Educational Studies, Macquarie University, and Chair, Academic Board, Morling College NSW.

Christians implicitly recognize Christian education when it's happening and you know when it's not, but to define Christian education is a monumental lifelong challenge. Nevertheless, this inspiring book will illuminate the journey for any who seek to grapple with the indefinable length, depth and breadth of Christian education.—**Jim Twelves**, Dean Education and Program Director, Master of Teaching (Primary) and Master of Teaching (Secondary) Alphacrucis College, Parramatta NSW.

Here is a collection of thoughtful, informed essays by distinguished practitioners on a wide variety of topics reflecting on the challenge and opportunity of rigorous and Christ-honouring Christian education. A wonderful compendium and resource which I am confident teachers, teacher-educators, chaplains and heads of schools will find of great benefit.—**Kanishka Raffel**, Dean, St Andrews Anglican Cathedral, Sydney NSW.

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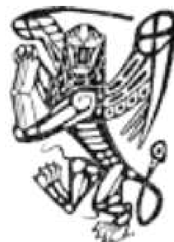

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This book is dedicated to the young
whose education will be informed
and whose lives transformed
through the agency of those who read these words

Editors

KEN GOODLET *MA DipEd MACE* taught in NSW state and Christian schools, was an educator and school administrator in NSW and Malaysian Christian schools and was editor for an Australian Christian book publisher. He has written five published community histories and another is at the printer. Ken has shaped this book and edited all the contributions.

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Foreword

James Dalziel

Is something new happening in Christian schooling? Well, it depends who you ask. For some decades the dominant academic voices in education paid little attention to Christian schools, especially the new low-fee schools that had been growing rapidly.[1] More recently some academics have begun to critique these schools,[2] but at the same time there has been a renewed recognition that the enterprise of schooling is far from ideologically neutral.[3]

Society can foster diversity not only at a personal level, but also at the level of schools. Having a range of schools driven by different pedagogical or religious traditions provides parents with greater choice. This institutional diversity among schools can be particularly important for those parents who are uncomfortable with aspects of the progressive secular model of schooling that dominates many modern schools.[4] The ideology that all schools must be the same seems oddly out of touch with a diverse multicultural, multireligious society. Surely the pluralism at the heart of liberal democracy should apply to its schools?

One of the delights of my recent experiences as an academic has been learning more about low-fee Christian schools—their history, practices and worldview. I'm sorry to say that for many years I simply didn't know much about them, but my recent contact has been fascinating and rewarding. It has helped me rethink deep assumptions I had taken for granted about schooling: What is the purpose of education? What kind of people will our students be when they graduate from

school? How can schooling take a holistic view that includes not only intellectual virtues, but also character and spiritual virtues?

But Christian schooling is not only about new low-fee schools; it also includes other traditions, such as schools affiliated with churches, often with long histories and high expectations of academic excellence. Some of these schools have progressively moved away from the Christian faith as received and passed on since the beginning, but some are trying to rediscover how the historic Christian faith can bring life and hope to young people in the twenty-first century.

My own experience of talking with young people in these schools suggests that many have challenging questions, but also a hunger for meaning and purpose. While the 'New' Atheists would have us believe that most young people have rejected all things religious, this is often a self-serving narrative that only applies to a minority.[5] The majority of young people are seeking meaning in spirituality and/or religion,[6] though many distrust institutional religion.

But my most striking experiences of Christian schooling have been in the developing world. There is something quite extraordinary going on that many in the developed world barely understand. There has been a rapid rise in Christian schools in the developing world, often with little support either from the developed world, or some of their local churches.

I have learned a great deal listening to people like Dr Samson Makhado about Christian schools in Africa, and others from around the world at the Global Christian Schools Network gatherings. In these discussions, and on my travels in Central America and South East Asia, I have heard Christian educators express the sentiment that God is doing extraordinary things in new Christian schools. Most strikingly, I have heard it said that the great revival of the twenty-first century is happening in Christian schools. Not 'will happen', but 'is happening'.

For disciples of Jesus Christ, this calls for deep prayer and reflection. Our models of revival tend to assume a certain concept of 'church', often focussed on a building. But we also know that the church is the Body of Christ—that is, all believers worldwide. What if our God has chosen in this age to transcend our limited concept of church, and to bring his kingdom into new pastures, with the focus on Christian schools?

If so, there is much work to be done. We need to seek God in prayer and through his scriptures to understand his will for schooling. We may need to repent of our mistaken attitudes towards Christian schools (I know I have), and we may need to humbly 'go look' to see what is afoot.

And we need solid scholarship to help us unpack our misconceptions about schooling and education (and 'church'). We need to develop in maturity about the different ways that Christian schools can operate, recognising the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. Without doubt we need deeper theological reflection, but we also need to rethink the purpose and practices of Christian schooling for the twenty-first century. We may need to rethink 'school' itself.

This is where this book, and its predecessor, play such an important role. I believe we need a revival in Christian education scholarship, and its role should be to serve Christians schools—to support, to guide, to correct (and be corrected), to research, and to train.

There are hard issues to sort out about the role of Christian schools in pluralist societies, especially in post-Christian ones. It should be no surprise that some of this work will lead to conflict with others who hold a different worldview of schooling. This is understandable, given that the educating of children is of the greatest importance, and the awareness that the worldview that students imbibe in schools will shape them, one way or another.

And here is the confronting truth: if you believe in redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and you follow him as a disciple, then of course this should change the way you think about schooling—how could it not?

James Dalziel
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Professor, University of Divinity

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Endnotes

1 Frisken, 2011; Justins, 2014

2 For example, Maddox, 2014

3 For example, Chapter 1 of the Review of the Australian Curriculum, Donnelly & Wiltshire, 2014, and Edlin, 2014

4 Hastie, 2014

5 Smith, 2014

6 Christian Research Association

Preface

There is a wealth of diverse ideas in this book. As fellow editor, John Collier, whose brainchild this book was, has said:

> Our role as editors has certainly been to format and apply consistency of styles to various chapters but, within that structure, to allow our authors to speak. That they have done, very helpfully we believe, within an evangelical theology, but sometimes in dialogue or debate with one another. We believe this is productive because we happen to share the view that there is no single template for Christian education.

As editors, John, Tony George and I believe it has been possible to maintain the book's diversity as we have sought to give it a measure of unity. Our editing attempts to ensure that these very different contributions sit well under the umbrella of *Better Learning: Trajectories for educators in Christian schools.*

Our well received 2014 book, *Teaching Well* owed its success in part to the title. While unspectacular, the title focussed unambiguously on our target audience, teachers, and those interested in teaching. In this second book, we want to maintain the interest of that audience who want a no-nonsense, focussed title; it is a title that picks up on a current issue, learning strategies, but is clearly differentiated from the first book so that it will not be dismissed as a new title for an old book.

Why 'learning' rather than, say, 'knowing'?

Either would do, but teaching and learning go well together as titles for companion books on education. Besides, learning as distinct from the teaching process can be more student needs centred which is our aim.

Teachers can have the best prepared lesson, but does it have an impact on students' thinking and learning? What virtually all students and teachers have in common in successful educational systems is that they take learning and thinking seriously. There is sustained self-discipline, rigour and enjoyment in the acquisition of knowledge. The Christian faith is a natural fit with this, in its pursuit of truth, knowledge and sustained, satisfying transformation.

How do we ascertain whether or not this learning process is happening for our students and so improve—even transform—their learning? We need to assess results step by step, stage by stage, subject by subject, and be open to change along the way. This is best done by looking at what we want to measure, questioning students and their teachers about the outcomes and seeing how these work out in students' school and outside lives. This means looking at successes and failures in both curriculum and attitudes (and working out how we classify outcomes as 'successes' and 'failures'). In ascertaining success and failure in Christian terms we need to look at ways of ascertaining growth in every aspect and stage of life amongst our students.

Why 'better' rather than, say, 'best'?

My wife's aunt, a Christian who had been involved in 'progressive' education all her life, having applied her principles, for example, to her headship of a Christian school in Canberra, after she died left money in her will for a book she had written she wanted to call 'A better classroom', which has now been published. She wanted her ideas to be seen as a step along the way. I, for one, would be put off by a book that claims more.

Why 'trajectories', rather than, say, 'insights'?

Apart from the fact that 'trajectories' differentiates this book from *Teaching Well*, it places emphasis on both the thinking side and the action side, an element that was much appreciated in our first book.

Why define who the book is for by using 'educators in Christian schools' in the sub-title?

My experience is that people don't buy books that are a catch-all in this market. On the other hand, there is much in this book that picks up matters of interest to those who are involved in a range of school systems and those who have an interest in education without being practitioners. Such is the quality of our contributors' ideas that there are gems here for everyone. We readers are the beneficiaries of this learning and its power to transform our schools.

Why is so much space given here to character formation?

Because, to most of the practising educators writing here, this is more significant than any other feature of their education program. When educators contributing to this book are asked what they most want for their students, most give an answer that relates to character formation. Although one whole Part of the book is dedicated to this, with ground-breaking suggestions for measuring this area so difficult to assess, character formation permeates the whole book. Nicola Taylor, for example, in the concluding article writes:

> [The Christian faith] models respect for others, for experience, for self, for authority, each of which is needed by the learner to be receptive to instruction and to grow from information to knowledge, from knowledge to insight and from insight to wisdom.

This is just one of many such statements. It is perhaps not too much to say that such an educational goal is the main reason that many of the educators listed here are in education. It gives inspiration and purpose to their teaching, focussing attention on the learner rather than the educator.

A word of thanks

I wish to thank my co-editors, John Collier and Tony George, for their helpful advice and companionship as I worked my way through a long editorial process; and the publishers St Mark's NTC Publishing and

particularly designer and production manager Graham Lindsay for his commitment, generous spirit, reassurance and skills.

What has given us the fortitude to continue has been the sense of being in a common mission with our wonderful authors who have been unswerving in their determination to share with us their gifts with enthusiasm, high level of competence and selflessness.

Concluding thoughts

The book is dedicated to our young whose educators will read it, inform them and, we believe, contribute to transforming them. It comes to you with the blessing that you might be encouraged to partner God in the service of enabling students to find the thought that God has in mind for each one of them. John Collier, who had the vision for this project and who has sustained us throughout it has said:

> It is our hope and prayer that you find this book helpful as you minister within the work of Christian education.

Ken Goodlet
Senior editor

Introduction

Tony George

Education in Australia is in crisis, apparently. Hardly a week goes by without an educational research body such as the Grattan Institute or at least a newspaper tabloid such as the *Sydney Morning Herald* declaring that there is little point getting out of bed and going to school. It's all gone pear-shaped—student behaviour, motivation, teaching training, curriculum, funding, academic results—the list goes on and on.

Surely it is no small miracle that more than 90% of Australian children do get out of bed each day to attend Australian schools despite the doomsday call of researchers and newspapers alike. If we were to take the research and the newspapers seriously, we might actually shut our schools and put our money to better use, or at least start again. With Australian education of school students costing us more than $45 billion a year, we would do well to do it well. Perhaps Australian education is as stubbornly resistant to criticism as it is resistant to reform. Yet, despite the polemic, can we honestly say that education, as the primary industry of learning and innovation, has led learning and innovation in Australia over the past century? Unfortunately, we think not. But we also think that to presume that NAPLAN and PISA results are an adequate measure of educational performance is not only naïve, but fundamentally misunderstands and misrepresents the human enterprise of education. Indeed, basic knowledge and skills, while necessary, are not sufficient for a good education, any more than knowing the road rules and how to use a car's pedals makes one a good driver. Our children deserve a bigger vision of education for better learning.

We used to think, and some still do, that education concerns the transmission of knowledge and skills from a teacher to a student. It was Jean Piaget, and other constructivists such as Ernst von Glasersfeld, who helped us understand that we can no more transmit knowledge and skills than we can make children think what we want them to think, and that children construct knowledge within their mind as they make sense of their experiences. While some took this to an extreme in terms of child-centred learning, almost removing the role of the teacher entirely, it was Lev Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development that helped us understand that the child would learn more in the context of a teacher than without. Further, it was Jerome Bruner who helped us to understand the central, if not exclusive, place of culture in education and the importance of understanding the school as a community, while Hans-Georg Gadamer pointed to power of culture in sustaining knowledge over time, particularly through language. Thomas Kuhn and Karl Popper observed the resultant power of paradigms that permeate our culture and frame our construction of knowledge, perspectives that gave impetus to the influential notion of worldview. And Alasdair MacIntyre has exhorted us to look beyond the mere disciplines that dominate the curriculum of education and look to the development of the person as a virtuous citizen.

In each of their various ways, each of these educational thought leaders has contributed to our understanding of education as more than merely the curriculum and its testing, and challenged us to consider the significant role of the teacher, the culture and community of the school, the importance of language, the influence of worldview, and the formation of character in our students. Yet despite their consistent challenge for more than a century, and much research besides, John Hattie observes that the practice of teaching remains relatively unchanged as individual teachers stubbornly adhere to whatever they believe works for them. This is a very sad indictment on what is arguably the most significant and essential profession of our time. For while doctors may heal peoples' ills and lawyers settle their disagreements, it is educators who are entrusted with making people who they are. As educators, we grow people; so we better take it very seriously and do it very well! We need better learning.

Christian education

The rise of Christian schooling in Australia over the past 50 years has been influenced and fuelled by a number of factors, but by no means least has been the dissatisfaction of some parents with the education offered by state owned schools. These Australian parents have as much been pushed away from the government school sector as they have been drawn to the independent school sector. Many parents cite the decline of education in values and character being offered by government schools as a major reason for their choosing of a Christian, or at least independent, school. The significance of this observation is that should Australian education be in crisis, as the research centres and tabloids keep telling us, then it is an Australian crisis and not just a Christian crisis. If the education system is broken, then it is broken for everyone and not just Christians.

Christian education, therefore, should offer alternative solutions to the problem of education that are valued not just by Christians but all Australians. And indeed, this reflects much of the discussion and debate within the hallways and playgrounds of Christian schools. Are Christian schools just for Christians or for everyone? Should we offer a Christian curriculum or a secular curriculum, albeit from a Christian perspective? How is a Christian school different from a government school? Should Christian education be offered in government schools? Australia is a secular country and our schools are secular institutions—so how can we be both Christian and secular? All these questions relate to the human phenomenon of what it is to educate our children while upholding the Christian notion of being in the world but not of the world.

Christian educators are, consequently, a rather disparate group, and yet are committed to Christ and passionate about education. We are united and divided at the same time. But surely this is the nature of an academic community, especially one that is united in its Christ-centred orientation towards the professional service of our educational communities. We experience the disciplinary tension of bringing our understanding of theology and education together meaningfully and cogently, without compromising either our faith in Christ or our commitment to our students. As Christians we each bring different biblical

and faith perspectives, shaped by our individual Christian traditions and experiences, and as educators we each bring different theoretical and practical approaches, shaped by our particular disciplinary and professional backgrounds.

Fundamentally, however, as Christian educators we seek to bring our disciplinary and professional understanding as educators under the authority and lordship of Christ and his gospel. For the biblical metanarrative that points to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and its subsequent vision for humanity as that of being in Christ, sets the context for a Christian understanding of education that is neither temporally nor culturally nor geographically bound. For while all curricula are, by definition, human constructs, and have a temporal, cultural and geographical context, both the gospel of Jesus Christ and the future of humanity as realised in Christ are eternal and universal. How do we, then, as Christian educators bring a perspective of the eternal to the temporal and of the universal to the local without compromising either the gospel of Christ or his word, the Bible?

The Bible claims not only to be the word of man but, more importantly, also the word of God. That it is the word of man means it is written within and for a particular cultural context—people, place and time with a specific purpose. However, that it is the word of God means it carries divine authority and relevance that transcends its particular cultural context, extending across people, place and time with a more general or eternal purpose.

Our challenge as Christians is to understand the meaning of a biblical text given its original context (exegesis), its meaning and significance generally and, consequently, for us today in our own cultural context (hermeneutics). In particular, we need to be careful that we don't take something that was descriptive of the cultural context of a text and assume it to be prescriptive for the cultural context of our present day.

To provide a rather silly example, to suggest that we should walk everywhere we go because Jesus walked everywhere would be one such error, for other than riding on animals or carts, walking was simply how one travelled. In similar fashion, to consider a more serious example, to suggest that we should adopt teaching and learning practices as described in the Bible, whether of Israelite life or of the early church, may also be in error if such practices are merely descriptive of the cultural

context rather than prescriptive for people living in the Kingdom of God. Whether we teach like Jesus or learn like early Christian communities may be of historical educational interest, but to claim that they should be prescriptive for Christian educational practice today may be simply a hermeneutical error. To go further, are we to understand that the early Christian communities were learning communities because they were Christian or simply because they were human and learning is an essentially human quality?

Better learning

We understand that while the Bible brings us to a knowledge of God and an understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live, not everything in the Bible is intended as an example for us to follow or an imperative for us to live by, whether it be fishing, carpentry, teaching or learning. However, the Bible clearly exhorts us to follow Christ's example of humanity, for it is in Christ that we understand what it means to be truly human regardless of our particular cultural context. Thus, insofar that education is a human activity, Christian education ought to be characterised by a Christ-centred understanding of and vision for humanity. It is in this respect that an understanding of a biblical anthropology, or more specifically a Christ-centred anthropology, is foundational for our understanding of Christian education. Consequently, an understanding of Christian education is not merely predicated on being a good educator with a Christian faith, but also being informed by wise and discerning biblical scholarship. This is indeed a significant interdisciplinary challenge!

The purpose of this publication is to explore this interdisciplinary challenge by bringing together a representational group of Christian educators, academic and practical, united in their love for Christ and their passion for education, but necessarily different in their views and approaches to Christian education. If we have been successful in achieving this purpose, then the reader will find both agreement and disagreement within these pages. We hope that agreement will point to important foundations for Christian education upon which we might continue to build, while disagreement should point to those areas in need of further enquiry, research and deliberation. After all, we too

are a learning community, seeking God's wisdom as informed by his gospel and his word as we seek to better understand the contribution of Christian education to Australian schools.

To explore this interdisciplinary challenge in a somewhat organised fashion, the book is organised into four major sections: Part A considers the contemporary context of Christian education; Part B, the nature of Christian schools as Christian communities; Part C, the relationship of Christian education to curriculum; and Part D, the contribution of Christian education to character formation.

Part A: Grounding Christian education in its contemporary context

This collection of chapters explores the relationship between Christian education and the broader Australian educational context. Christian education is a significant way in which Christians engage with the world as those who are in the world but not of the world, and Christian schools are a significant way in which Christian education is practised and experienced. While some Christian schools seek to engage with only those who are Christian, from a discipleship perspective (this perspective would also include Bible colleges and ministry training centres), most Christian schools actively engage with the broader community in which they exist, enrolling the children of families from all backgrounds. Consequently, many Christian schools have only a minority of Christian families, in keeping with the demographics of the surrounding society. This raises an important issue concerning one's understanding of how Christian education is practised and what constitutes a Christian school. Some such schools advocate for only Christian families, others for only Christian staff, and others for Christian leadership, and perhaps others are Christian in name only. It also raises important questions of how Christian education and Christian schools relate to the secular context of Australian school education.

Part B: Over-viewing the nature of Christian schools and Christian communities

This collection of chapters explores the essential nature of Christian schools as Christian communities and their contribution to a broader understanding of education. Education is a uniquely human phenomenon.

For to be human is the wonderful interplay between nature and nurture. While we are born with all kinds of potentialities, it is only in the context of community that we become human. For example, we are born with capacity for language, but will only develop competence in the context of our community. Consequently, education is that human activity by which one generation gives rise to the next generation. In doing so, we decide what we want the generation to be, rather than simply what we want them to know. This raises important questions of how education relates to life, faith, wisdom, justice, mercy, imagination, leadership and governance. While Australian education over the past century has increasingly emphasised the knowledge and skills that we want for the next generation as units of production for our economy, Christian education is more concerned with the human qualities we want the next generation to embody and live out.

Part C: Exploring the relationship of Christian education to curriculum

This collection of chapters explores the essential relationship of Christian education to curriculum. Curriculum is the 'stuff' of education and provides the informational context for the formation of our students as people. While the formal Australian curriculum is important to our temporal, cultural and geographic context, it need not set the agenda for our understanding of Christian education. Rather, our understanding of Christian education ought to set the agenda for teaching and learning within the context of our Australian curriculum.

While much of the Christian education literature has attempted to capture this concept with the term 'worldview', this is possibly one of the most contentious areas in Christian education, particularly with respect to developing a Christian curriculum. While it is unlikely that agreement will be reached any time soon on the place of the Bible and Christian worldview in the role of a formal curriculum in Christian education, it is important to be aware of the differences in perspective and approach, and perhaps to at least recognise such differences as evidence of the influential role of different 'christianities' in Christian education. In particular, we should recognise that this is one of the areas of significant disagreement amongst advocates for Christian education

that has caused much division, both at individual school and at broader systemic levels. At a time when resources are scarce and funding for education is diminishing, it is perhaps better to contribute towards that which unites us rather than divides us.

Part D: Contributing through Christian education to character formation

This collection of chapters explores the significant contribution of Christian education to the character formation of our students. This area, while much less contentious, has perhaps been largely undervalued or underplayed in Christian education, vis-à-vis curriculum, and yet is arguably more important. Indeed, for many parents, while consideration is given to school results, programs and resources, many decide on their child's school in terms of the kind of person they want their child to become.

Much of our focus on knowledge and skills in Australian schools today concerns literacy and numeracy, for without them students do not have access to learning. However, while much attention is given in schools to curriculum-based knowledge, skill-based knowledge such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, judgement and wisdom is often under emphasised, as is the intentional development and growth of patience, perseverance, compassion, and self-control, among others. Yet, it is this understanding of what we do with our knowledge that is of critical importance in Christian education. This is the practical import of the Christian gospel, that we not only believe but act. As James of the Bible exhorts us, we are to show the evidence of what we believe in what we do, that we live out our faith in word and deed.

In conclusion

Our hope is that you will be encouraged, challenged and enthused by both the unity and diversity of the voices that follow as you reflect on your own place within, and contribution to, the community of Christian education as we continue to contribute positively and actively to better learning in Australian education.

Preliminary thoughts

Jesus: an effective teacher?

Sylvia Collinson

> The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.
> Mark 1:22

There has been considerable philosophical debate about the relationship between teaching and learning. I do not intend to contribute to that debate, but to examine the effectiveness of Jesus as a teacher. I will consider his intention to 'teach' and whether his hearers 'learned' from him. Evidence will be considered from the four Gospels and the experiences of his followers in the early church as recorded in Acts. Jesus' teaching was holistic. He did not concentrate purely on the cognitive, seeking to develop knowledge and beliefs, but through informal methods he sought to influence the development of kingdom attitudes, values and behaviours. And by actively involving his disciples in ministry he sought to develop their ability to use his authority to preach, teach and proclaim the good news through life, words and actions.

Jesus' aims as a teacher

Jesus commenced his public ministry, proclaiming the good news of God's Kingdom throughout Galilee. He outlined his mandate for

ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth using the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'to proclaim good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, set the oppressed free, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Luke 4:18, 19). This itinerant ministry continued for three years until he was crucified, rose again and ascended to the Father. Although he came to earth to die for the sins of the world, the primary focus of his teaching was to proclaim to his own nation, Israel, the unique character of God's Kingdom and prepare people to enter and live within its freedoms. He would do this by public proclamation and private teaching of twelve disciples and a wider group of followers who would continue his work after he returned to the Father.

When Jesus called his fishermen disciples he outlined to them his primary aim—for them to become those who would 'fish for people' (Luke 5:10). They were expected to learn attitudes, values and behaviours from his own example of kingdom living and within the learning community of fellow disciples; knowledge and beliefs from his formal and informal teaching words; ministry skills from active involvement in his work as helpers, miracle workers and proclaimers; and from reflection on their communal and individual experiences to grow to a holistic maturity as his followers (Luke 9:6). He was preparing them for their role as foundation members and leaders of his church, which would be established. They were to be apostles bearing witness to him by life and word, conveying to others all that he had taught, baptising, and making them his disciples (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Jesus' recognition as a teacher

Once Jesus was baptised by John and commenced his public ministry, he was quickly recognised as a teacher and attracted great crowds in Galilee. The four Gospels record much of his wide-ranging teaching. Although he had not undergone the extensive formal years of rabbinic training, the Gospels record 45 occasions on which people addressed him as 'Teacher' or 'Rabbi'. Those who recognised him as a teacher included the crowds, individuals who came to him for healing, his disciples, Pharisees, teachers of the law, a synagogue ruler, spies sent by the chief priests to gather incriminating evidence against him and the Sadducees (Luke 8:49; 9:38; 10:25, 11:45; 12:13; 18:18; 20:21, 28, 39;

21:7). Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the powerful Jewish ruling council, saw Jesus' miracles as authentication that he was 'a teacher who has come from God' (John 3:2). Jesus even referred to himself using the title 'Teacher' (Luke 22:11). The Jewish historian, Josephus, writing for a Roman audience around 93AD, referred to Jesus as 'a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure'.[1]

How successful was Jesus as a teacher? The parable of the sower as a case study

Jesus' well-known *Parable of the Sower* shows that the effectiveness of teaching is not solely dependent on good communication (Mark 4:3–20). The teaching and learning process also depends on the receptiveness of the hearer and learner. Jesus repeatedly said, 'Let anyone with ears to hear, listen'. A person's free will is involved.[2] Unless a person is open to see, hear and accept, they will not retain learning. Potential learners may not always receive teaching with the same effect every time. Their acceptance may reflect any one of four different soils. Every time spiritual truth is presented there are at least four possibilities as to how it will be received and retained. No matter how faithful and skilful the teaching, like the seed on the path, some teaching will never even find a hearing. It will be immediately snatched away. Other teaching may be taken in and absorbed for a short time, but quickly forgotten when difficulties arise. Some will take root, but be lost as other things gain greater priority. But some teaching will be effective and bring lasting results and exceptional productivity.

Jesus' hearers responded to his teaching in the same variety of ways. First, most residents of Nazareth, religious leaders and powerful Jews were never really open to hear him. Satan snatched away his words. Second, the crowds listened with delight, loved the entertainment and stayed with Jesus for days but when his popularity diminished and their leaders wanted to kill him, they turned against him and shouted for his crucifixion. Third, a wider group of disciples, and later Judas Iscariot, followed for a time but when his teachings became too difficult they rejected him and left. Fourth, there were those who heard and accepted his teachings and although they repeatedly failed, his words were received and brought amazing results which still continue today.

First, the seed on the path

Not everyone welcomed Jesus as a teacher. The residents of Nazareth, his home town, heard his claims and rejected them (Matthew 13:54–58). 'They were amazed, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?"' They had known him and his family all his life and could not comprehend that this one of their own was claiming to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy. 'They took offence at him' and were furious. Driving him out of town, they prepared to throw him off a cliff, but such was his authority that he walked through them and left (Luke 4:14–30). His own brothers did not believe in him, nor his teaching until after the resurrection, which authenticated his divine standing (John 7:5, Acts 1:14).

Jesus had very little success in teaching the religious hierarchy (pious Pharisees and teachers of the law) and the rich and powerful (Sadducees, Herodians and members of the Roman occupying forces). Pilate was interested enough to question him concerning his kingdom (John 18:33–38), Herod was curious to see and hear him (Luke 23:8, 9), but neither was open to his message. Jesus did not even deign to answer Herod's questions. He would not cast his pearls before swine.

Although the Pharisees and teachers of the law were frequently present among the crowds who heard him, they rejected his words, forming his main opposition in Galilee. The only known disciples from their ranks were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who followed secretly. His opponents watched him closely, questioned his authority to forgive sins (Luke 5:21) and criticised his and his disciples' actions on the Sabbath (Luke 6:1–11). They wished to humiliate him (Luke 7:36–50), sneered at his teachings (Luke 16:14), attributed his actions to evil powers (Mark 3:22) and plotted his death (Mark 3:6).

Once Jesus arrived in Jerusalem for Passover celebrations, the Temple hierarchy of priests and elders, Sadducees and leaders of the nation heard his teaching, rejected it and quickly joined forces to kill him. They could not do so openly because of his immense popularity. They complained that 'the whole world has gone after him' (John 12:19). They questioned the source of his authority (Luke 20:1–8) and attempted to gain evidence from his words for a conviction. But Jesus was aware of their intent and answered them with such skill that those

sent to trap him were confounded, and from that day did not dare ask any more questions (Luke 20:40).

Jesus soundly condemned their hypocrisy and hardness of heart (Matthew 23). His teaching was unsuccessful because it exposed the evil within them, and threatened the power they held in their nation under Rome. Using the *Parable of the Tenants,* he cleverly exposed their intention to kill him (Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:19). This was one parable he didn't need to explain. Its telling sealed his fate. In less than a week they had secured his crucifixion.

Second, the seed on rocky ground

Initially Jesus gained enormous popularity. His teaching was received with joy and amazement: crowds 'from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem' (Luke 5:15, 17) came to hear him. Later, 'a large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon' (Luke 6:17). Some hearers even came from the neighbouring regions of Decapolis, Trans-Jordon and Idumea. On at least one occasion 'a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another' (Luke 12:1). The feedings of the five and four thousand demonstrate the devotion of his audience who spent many days listening to his teachings, in spite of lack of food and sustenance (Matthew 14, 15). People 'listened to him with delight' (Mark 12:37), 'spellbound by his teaching' (Mark 11:18). He accepted all learners and eagerly taught men, women and children, rich and poor, religious or non-religious, Jews, a few Samaritans and some Gentiles. Even those rejected by Jewish religious leaders—outcasts, 'tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear' (Luke 15:1). His presence and message captivated their attention.

'The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law' (Mark 1:22). Jewish rabbis never pronounced on their own authority. They quoted from the scriptures or respected rabbis from the past. In contrast, Jesus' authority was clearly demonstrated, *Truly I tell you.*[3] He spoke the very words of God. A Roman centurion believed Jesus' word alone could heal his servant. He recognised his authority came from One even greater than the Roman Emperor (Matthew 8:5–13). However the chief

priests, teachers of the law and elders, while recognising his authority, 'Who gave you this authority?' (Luke 20:2), refused to attribute it to God, implying its source was demonic.

Jesus used parables almost exclusively to teach the crowds (Matthew 13:34). Most regarded him as an entertaining story teller and flocked to hear his words. Parables contain surprising truths hidden from all but genuine seekers.[4] His purpose was to separate listeners with no desire to explore the spiritual truths contained, from those wanting to learn about God's kingdom. He quoted Isaiah to explain why he used parables, 'So that, they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven' (Mark 4:10–12). Jesus was protecting those outside the kingdom from the consequences of rejecting his teaching. However, the hidden meanings were not always easily found. The disciples frequently asked for explanations. So was this an ineffective method? Few teachers today could bear to leave their main teaching point for their hearers to discover at a later date! The great value of an unexplained parable is that its surprising twist worries thinkers until they discover its truth. Discovery learning is always retained. At least some members of the crowd were genuine seekers of the kingdom and would eventually discover his message. Together with his disciples they probably formed the core of his church founded at Pentecost.

Jesus' popularity with the pilgrim crowds from Galilee, and other places, remained high right into the final week of his life. They rejoiced over his entry into the holy city (Matthew 21:8–11). He taught daily in the temple of Jerusalem and 'the people came early in the morning to hear him' (Luke 21:37, 38). 'All the people hung on his words' (Luke 19:48). But though they received Jesus' teaching gladly, it did not take root deeply in their lives. It was soon obvious that he wouldn't fulfil their messianic expectation of deliverance from Roman oppression and, motivated by 'fear of the Jews' (John 20:19) and persecution, they turned against him and shouted for his crucifixion (Luke 23:21).

Third, the seed among the thorns

Another group who heard Jesus' teaching, accepted it for a time. Some even came to him asking to be included in his disciple band, but when

faced with his stringent requirements of discipleship, they found the cost too high and left in disappointment (Luke 9:57–61).

John records an occasion when a wider group of his disciples protested that the content of his teaching was offensive and too difficult to accept. They grumbled about him, rejected his teaching, 'turned back and no longer followed him' (John 6:60–66). So extensive was the disillusionment, that Jesus even questioned the Twelve as to their allegiance. Peter spoke for them all when he replied, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.' (John 6:68) The demands of discipleship were high, involving sacrifice of home, family and regular income. The seed of Jesus' teaching was choked by 'the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth and the desires for other things' (Mark 4: 19) and yielded nothing.

Judas Iscariot heard all of Jesus' teaching to both disciples and the crowds. He remained as a full member of the Twelve until the night of Jesus' arrest, but his love of money proved too much (John 12:6; Matthew 26:14–16). It choked the seeds of teaching. Judas betrayed his master with a kiss. Even then he could have repented and been forgiven, but he failed to understand the wonder of God's forgiveness and put himself outside that possibility, by ending his life (Matthew 27:3–5).

Fourth, the seed on good soil

Jesus spent the majority of his ministry with his disciples, teaching them by example, demonstration, action-reflection, through community and group interactions and his more formal words. He involved them in his work and gave them his authority, expecting that they would fulfil a similar role. They were not always 'good soil'. Results were patchy; some failed, some succeeded. When the 5,000 were hungry he expected them to act. 'You give them something to eat' (Luke 9:13) but the disciples failed. With the 4,000 he pointed out their need to his disciples, but they did not respond (Matthew 15:32–39). While he was on the Mount of Transfiguration with the three, the other disciples were begged by a desperate father to cast the demon out of his son, but they failed (Luke 9:40). However, when on two occasions he sent them out in pairs to preach repentance in readiness for the coming of God's kingdom, heal the sick and cast out demons, they reported their success with great joy. (Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–17).

Jesus aimed to develop their faith, but two Gentiles were the only people he praised for their 'great faith'—a Roman centurion (Matthew 8:10) and a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:28). Though his disciples had some faith, it was small; 'You of little faith, why ...?' (Matthew 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20). They asked him, 'increase our faith' (Luke 17:5), so he led them into the storm, and Peter he invited to walk on water. These were life-threatening situations where faith was required (Matthew 8:23–27; 14:22–33), but they failed. However, by reflecting on these situations, they later learnt to trust him more. He taught that the undoubting prayer of 'faith as small as a mustard seed' can achieve the impossible (Matthew 17:21; 21:21). They possibly only achieved this level of faith after the resurrection, but even then some doubted.[5]

Although the disciples were generally motivated, willing learners, they were slow on the uptake. At times he despaired of their learning. 'Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes and fail to see? Do you have ears and fail to hear? Do you not yet understand?' (Mark 8:17–21). 'Don't you remember? How is it that you don't understand?' (Matthew 16:9, 11). He often used figures of speech in his teaching, but promised that he would speak plainly when the time was right (John 16:25). When they asked him to explain the Parable of the Sower he questioned, 'Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?' (Mark 4:13). Later, when Peter requested another explanation, Jesus exclaimed, 'Are you still without understanding?' (Matthew 15:15, 16)

Understanding came slowly. 'Then they understood ...' (Matthew 16:12; 17:13). Jesus sometimes assessed their learning. '"Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied' (Matthew 13:51). Three times he predicted his suffering, death and resurrection, but the disciples 'did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it' (Luke 9:45). They 'were afraid to ask him about it' (Mark 9:32). 'The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about' (Luke 18:34). But for the two on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection, 'their eyes were opened' (Luke 14:31). It seems that the disciples' lack of understanding was not purely cognitive, but at times required revelation from God and the exercise of faith. In Caesarea Philippi, when asked, 'Who do you say that I am?',

Peter, inspired by the Father, stated, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.' (Matthew 16:16).

Mark's Gospel particularly mentions the failure of his disciples. But for Jesus as teacher the very process of the recognition of their weaknesses facilitated their learning, and their failures were never regarded as irreparable.[6] When Peter tried to divert Jesus from his determination to suffer and die, Jesus rebuked him, stating that his words came from the Evil One (Mark 8:33). Peter denied Jesus three times in his hour of need but Jesus commissioned him three times to care for his flock (John 18:15–27; 21:15–19). In Gethsemane his disciples failed to watch and pray while Jesus struggled with the ordeal he was about to suffer. When he was arrested they all deserted him and fled (Mark 14:32–42, 50). Even the women who followed him from Galilee, at his crucifixion 'were watching from a distance' (Mark 15:40). Failure didn't negate a person's discipleship or willingness to learn. Acceptance of failure provides opportunity and motivation for further teaching and renewed learning.

Jesus' teaching role was not always complete in itself. His disciples only reached full understanding as the Holy Spirit brought light to the spiritual truths Jesus taught. Jesus sowed the seed but the Spirit who came from the Father and the Son to empower his disciples for the task ahead, reminded them of Jesus' teaching and guided them into all truth. Thus the apostles were saved from error (John 14:26; 16:12–14)[7] and their subsequent writings in the New Testament were able to convey genuine truth from God (2 Timothy 3:16). In the face of persecution, Jesus promised that 'the Holy Spirit will teach you ... what you should say' (Luke 12:12). We may conclude that even among his faithful followers Jesus was only partially successful as a teacher. They also needed the consolidating input and enlightenment brought to their minds by his Holy Spirit.

The seed planted in the hearts and minds of his band of followers did in time bring forth a crop of extraordinary proportions, 'some thirty, some sixty some a hundred times what was sown' (Mark 4:20). On the Day of Pentecost Peter preached boldly and 3,000 came to faith and were baptised. The disciples' subsequent lives demonstrated the kingdom qualities which Jesus had taught—unity, joy, fellowship, sharing possessions, generosity, compassion, hospitality, genuine praise

and worship, prayer, a desire to learn, miracles and signs—and proved to be a wonderful attraction for 'all the people' (Acts 2:41–47). Their numbers grew daily, many possibly having heard Jesus' earlier teaching for themselves. They spoke the word boldly. Men and women were welcomed into their number and 'a large number of priests became obedient to the faith' (Acts 6:7).

Conclusion

Jesus is regarded as one of the great teachers of this world, if not the greatest. But although a teacher par excellence, he was not totally successful in all he aimed to do, with the crowds or with his disciples. He quickly rose in popularity with the crowds, but in a relatively short time they were calling for his death. Results among his pupils were equally devastating. Judas betrayed him and subsequently took his own life. Peter denied he ever knew him. At his crucifixion all twelve failed the test of faithfulness, deserted him and fled. Even the women watched from a distance. Two secret disciples took his body and buried him, while his other followers hid in a locked upper room in fear for their lives.

After three years of faithful teaching, this was not a very strong foundation on which to build his worldwide church. Yet with the power of his Holy Spirit working through Jesus' faithful followers, 2000 years later, Christianity is the largest religion in the world, accounting for over 2.3 billion people who claim to be followers, 32% of the world's population.[8] Jesus' success as a teacher is phenomenal. And his words faithfully recorded in the Gospels continue to teach men, women and children of faith from all nations.

Endnotes

1. *Jewish Antiquities,* 18:3.3. There is some debate regarding its authenticity. Many believe they were inserted by a third or fourth century Christian copyist.
2. 'You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink.' (English proverb)
3. Seven times in Matthew 5; 24 times in John's Gospel.

4 PG Wodehouse comments, 'Sounds at first like a pleasant yarn, but keeps something up its sleeve which suddenly pops up and knocks you flat.' (quoted by AMHunter)

5 Collinson, SW, *Making Disciples: The significance of Jesus' Educational Methods for Today's Church,* Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004, p. 53.

6 Collinson, p. 39.

7 Packer, JI, *Knowing God,* London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973, pp. 72–75.

8 Mandryk, J, *Operation World,* (Seventh Edition), Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2010.

Part A

Grounding Christian education in its contemporary context

1 Shifting the paradigm in education

Bryan Cowling

> I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.
>
> Mother Teresa

Six years ago, when Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was at his peak promoting his so-called 'education revolution', I cheekily suggested in an address to the National Christian Schools Policy Forum that, despite the federal government's pouring billions of dollars into technology, school buildings, a national curriculum and national standards for teaching and learning, it was premature to claim that it was revolutionising the quality of learning throughout Australian schools. In fact, a significant feature of the Rudd and Gillard governments was the strengthening of pragmatism and utilitarianism as the driving forces behind education. The succeeding Coalition governments have merely reinforced these emphases.

In this address, I borrowed Rudd's terminology to outline eight aspects of education, including some peculiar to faith-based schools, in which I believed 'a real revolution in thinking and in practice' was needed. If I were giving that address again, I would refer to a 'paradigm shift' rather than a 'revolution' and I would apply it to just four significant areas.

First, we need a debate in the area of educational aims

I'd start by arguing the need for us to have a national debate on what we believe should be the stated aims of school education, if not the stated aims of all levels of formal education. While the *Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) purported to provide a reference point for school education, it was not reflected very clearly in the Australian curriculum issued a few years later. The reason for this, I am led to believe, was not laziness or oversight so much as deference to each of the states and territories to insert their own statement of purpose as a preface to their respective version of the national curriculum documents. Some jurisdictions have done this better than others. My criticism, however, is that the political imperatives relating to productivity and the enhancement of Australia's status in the global league tables have, by default, become the defining aims of education.

This debate needs well-informed champions

I am somewhat cautious about proposing we have a national debate because I am not confident that there are enough well-informed educational practitioners with the conviction, courage and credibility to stand against the forces of individualism, pragmatism and utilitarianism with a view to achieving a more balanced statement of intent. I share Professor Trevor Cooling's view expressed in an EdComm Agora Forum in Penrith in 2015 in which he asserted that there is a variety of ways in which a focus on performance can be combined with a focus on pedagogy without losing an important emphasis on character education.

My experience in education has been in the government and non-government sectors and while I think a significant paradigm shift in respect to the aims of education would be beneficial for faith-based schools, it is just as critical that it occurs in the public sector. To a reader of educational theory and practice, it is a no-brainer to assert that schools are in the business of forming their students socially, cognitively, emotionally, physically, culturally, morally and spiritually. Ironically, at the same time that utilitarianism has driven schools to place their energies, time and money on addressing what is measured quantitatively, there has been a deluge of research and practical articles on how and why to educate the whole child.

The debate needs to be faith-based

The reason why I think faith-based schools should be at the forefront of a campaign to diminish the hold of utilitarianism in favour of a more humanist approach is that their fundamental beliefs, whatever religion or worldview they espouse, acknowledge that each of us is made in the image of the Creator God, and that we have been made to learn, to inquire and to be creative in order that we might flourish—not just at school, though that is very important, not just in the immediate post-school years (where the utilitarian drive is most evident) but throughout our lives. Faith-based schools have good reasons to be interested in the moral and spiritual development of their students, and though they may differ in respect to content, government schools have an equal obligation to pursue these goals.

The debate requires a recognition that purpose affects pedagogy

How we view the purpose of education clearly has a significant bearing on how we create our pedagogy. Pedagogy is much broader than the mere act of teaching. Pedagogy incorporates how we perceive the students we teach. It incorporates the multiplicity of ways in which our students learn. It embraces the questions we ask as well as the answers we give. It includes the tone in which we speak to or respond to our students. It is, as much through our pedagogy, as it is through the content and form of the curriculum, that we exercise a significant influence on the lives of our students.

For example, used thoughtfully, contemporary technologies can facilitate and enhance students' learning. Used lazily or inappropriately, the same technology can distort a student's learning and growth. Notwithstanding the massive amounts of money now devoted to technological improvement in schools, there is a significant need for teachers, individually and collectively, to keep a close eye on the way technology is used.

A robust national debate about the goals of contemporary education could be a useful catalyst in schools from all sectors to promote an integrated whole-school approach to learning. Within the independent sector, a large proportion of schools are Preparatory school to Year 12, but too often, students' learning experience from Preparatory school to Year 12 is anything but seamless. I daresay, a century or more

of segregated junior and senior schools, even when a middle school is created, has balkanised learning. Even when the primary and the secondary school are located on the same site accountable to the same principal, in practice the interface between the two is minimal. A whole-school approach supported by a coherent set of common goals has a lot to commend it. I find it interesting to read in the official material from the Safe Schools Coalition how important a whole-school approach is in communicating a consistent message. There are lessons in this for all schools, including those that are faith-based.

Second, we need to debate how we regard teaching

The second paradigm in which I think a significant shift is needed relates to the way we regard the vocation of teaching. This is not new and there is an on-going discourse about entry requirements for the profession as well as the national standards which existing teachers have to meet in order to maintain their registration. I have to admit my bias: all of my working life has been in, around and across schools, first as a teacher and subsequently as an executive, consultant, principal, inspector, director and researcher. Though salaries have gone up modestly, the work-loads placed on teachers seem to have increased but with negligible recognition of the importance of the vocation by the wider community.

I am not proposing some magic solutions but I am prepared to throw in some suggestions that I think are worthy of experimentation, in faith-based schools as well as in others. At the heart of teaching is the precious gift of relationship. Students who relate well to their teacher/s also learn well. Teachers who cannot, or do not, engage meaningfully, thoughtfully and lovingly with their students have little chance of influencing them for the good. When impediments of any kind dilute or destroy this relationship, the learning process is seriously compromised. Schools and systems need to ensure that the sustenance of the student-teacher relationship is afforded high priority.

At the same time, I think schools and systems need to do more to promote scholarship and further study among their teachers. Changes in the funding of universities is playing havoc with this suggestion. It is particularly important that lots of teachers at every level acquire

the skills to undertake action research within their own and in other schools. It is great that teaching should be evidence based but of little value if no-one has gathered reliable evidence.

The terms 'coach' and 'mentor' are becoming more apparent in schools but sadly the practice is not as prolific as the rhetoric. The reasons are simple: the right teachers to mentor have not been trained and those who have often do not have enough quality time to devote to their mentee. The mentees are often keen but lack the flexibility to interact effectively with their mentor. In the schools that I have visited where mentoring and coaching is working very well the main reason is that the principal, the executive and the teachers all believe it is extremely valuable. They recognise that the act of teaching along with the act of student learning is the most important thing happening in their school. They make it and the nurture of both their highest priority. For this to happen in most schools, a new mindset or a new paradigm relating to teaching is needed.

Third, we need a dramatic change to religious education

The third aspect of education in which I think a dramatic change is needed is religious education. In Australia, I would include not only the religious education that is offered to students attending government schools but also the religious education that is offered within faith-based schools. A recent review of religious education in England reported that:

> ... most of the GCSE religious education that had been observed, failed to secure the core aim of the examination specifications: that is to enable pupils to adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion. The teaching of religious education in primary schools was not good enough because of weaknesses in teachers' understanding of the subject, a lack of emphasis on subject knowledge, poor and fragmented curriculum planning, very weak assessment, ineffective monitoring and teachers' limited access to effective training. The way in which religious education was provided in many of the primary schools visited had the effect of isolating the subject from the rest of the curriculum. It led to low-level learning and missed opportunities to support pupils' learning more widely, for example in literacy.

Similar comments could be made about religious education in Australia in both government and non-government schools. The problem is structural as much as it is ideological. For over a century and a half, politicians and educators alike have deemed it as acceptable that students in government schools only receive instruction in their parents' chosen religion, and for that to be delivered only to those students whose parents request it. When this is all that students experience, they graduate without an understanding of the major religions of the world and a capacity to critique their own worldview and that of others. By and large, the religious education which students receive in school bears little relationship to the rest of their studies.

Within faith-based schools there is considerable variety in what passes for religious education, how frequently it is taught, how and whether students' learning is assessed and reported, the relationship it has to the rest of the curriculum and the extent to which it reflects the school's ethos and mission. It is apparent that some faith-based schools believe that religious education can be taught by 'anyone' whereas others require rigorous pre-service training as a minimum requirement and ongoing professional development to maintain professional currency. In New South Wales, schools which have implemented the BOSTES courses known as Studies of Religion have reported a significant growth in student interest and a higher quality of learning compared to the less formal school-based programs in Christian Studies.

I believe there is a case for arguing that schools which choose to differentiate themselves on the basis of a particular religious affiliation should invest in specialist, tertiary qualified religious education teachers and use professionally developed curriculum and resources that compare favourably with the other subjects taught in the school. A rigorous religious education program should be assessed, reported and linked quite intentionally to students' learning in their other subjects.

It should be noted in passing, that in the past, in many faith-based schools the teaching of divinity, Christian Studies or Religious Education was a function of the ordained school chaplain. This is still the case in many schools, though in some the 'instruction' is limited to the weekly 'chapel' service while other staff members teach the mandatory religious education lessons. I think it is fair to say that in some jurisdictions, the traditional role of the solo chaplain is being supplanted

by a diversity of pastoral and spiritual roles performed by pastoral or chaplaincy teams. I suspect that one of the casualties of this paradigm shift is that many faith-based schools have no specialist teachers with religious education qualifications.

Of course, if a school adopts a holistic approach to biblically-shaped education, a student's exposure to the theological foundations of much of his/her learning will not be restricted to the weekly Christian Studies lesson but will occur quite naturally (and authentically) in lots of subject areas. Such an approach may come as a challenge to teachers who have never really thought about the philosophical and theological underpinnings of what they teach or of what they have learned themselves. Tackling this form of religious illiteracy is hard, but ultimately very rewarding work.

Fourth, we need to explore the way we relate to those with differing views

The fourth, and for some the most controversial area in which I believe a significant paradigm shift is needed, is the manner in which we, as Christian educators, interact with other educators who hold different ideological, sociological or theological views to ourselves. The society in which you are reading this book is not the same society in which *Teaching Well* was published. The days of Christendom are over. Our society is now one in which almost everything that we took for granted is now contested. For example, it was once assumed that a qualified teacher who did not subscribe to the religious tenets of a faith-based school would not bother applying for a position in such a school. Faith-based schools were granted exemptions from the relevant anti-discrimination legislation to enable them to give preference to applicants who held the same beliefs as those espoused by the school or at least were prepared to support the school's ethos. This could soon be a practice of the past. Some faith-based schools may need to review their employment and enculturation practices should the legislation change.

How will they do this? Will they cease to recruit only persons who subscribe to their particular beliefs? Will they need to change their constitutions, their goals, their mottos and their fundamental ethos?

These are important questions with which school governors should be wrestling now.

But in the meantime, the challenge for faith-based schools will be how to model for their students (and for that matter their families the majority of whom may not regard themselves as religious) a process which allows both parties to hold to their respective beliefs and at the same time maintain genuine respect for one another. This is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the governors and leaders of faith-based schools, and how it is managed could be critical for the future of such schools. How confident can we be that our religious leaders will be able to model such interactions so that we can apply them in the educational arena? We have in Miroslav Volf and Trevor Cooling, as well as in the Centre for Public Christianity in Sydney, some admirable exemplars. You would think that in a pluralist society all views would be recognised and tolerated, but it is becoming the fashion for many people (including students) to vilify and demean those whose views they do not like.

While it may be contentious issues related to marriage, sexuality and identity that capture the headlines today, my guess is the harder issues will be the ones raised by parents and students in relation to the everyday life of the school, and it will be the ordinary teachers who find themselves in the middle of the discourse. Will our schools be able to create and sustain environments in which differences of opinion can be honoured within a culture of respect and hospitality? Will teachers be able to explore human knowledge in a way that honours the influence of a biblical worldview in the context of a Christian community seeking truth? They will need unambiguous role models to support them.

Conclusion

Schools dwell within an amazing paradox. On the one hand, they are among the most stable and conservative institutions in society. But they are also places in which creativity, experimentation, innovation and change happen every day. As Christians with a passion for quality education, whether in government or independent schools, we need to be active encouragers and supporters of the highly motivated principals and conscientious teachers whose goal is the betterment of their students. However, we need to realise that there are still many schools

in which the paradigms that drive them are the very antithesis of these progressive schools. To the extent that we have the opportunity to do so, we need to be encouraging them to abandon these unhelpful paradigms and embrace new paradigms that will see students flourish.

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2 Religion, secularism & Australian education

Richard Edlin

Most folks have been so long immersed in the sea of secularism that they no longer perceive the presuppositions that support it.
S Prior

A state or established religion was identified by Adam Smith as being an ideology that has a unique, most favoured status in a nation, determined 'partly through the limitations on entry of competitors and partly through [state] subsidies'. (Barro & McCleary, 2004, p. 3). Anglicanism is the established religion of England, Islam of Iran, Buddhism of Cambodia and communism was the established religion of Soviet Russia. And today, using Smith's definition, in education anyway, secularism is the established religion of Australia.

Some will protest this claim. First, they might argue that Australia has no established religion—that is, there is no religion in Australian compulsory education which claims special favour in the life of the society and which, to some extent, is enshrined in law. Second, they might argue that secularism is not a religion anyway. This paper seeks to refute those two objections by exploring the meaning of the concept of religion, and by reflecting upon Australian history and contemporary culture to show the favoured place given to a secularist ideology in modern mainstream Australian schooling.

I believe secularism has become a fundamentalist religion in Australia—that is, secularism is a belief system that is fiercely guarded by its adherents against all other religions and the superiority of which is an almost unquestioned and unquestionable mantra among key culture shapers and commentators in this nation. This has significant implications for education, particularly concerning justice and fairness, in our religiously pluralistic nation because, apart from optional settings around the margins of school activity, the general Australian classroom experience in public and many private schools is preserved for the exclusive exercise of a secularist ideology.

Meaning of the term 'secular'

According to Perkins (2011), in pre-modern times the term 'secular' was used to distinguish between various forms of full-time ordained church officials within the Roman Catholic Church, with some categories of these people at times being referred to as secular or diocesan clergy. This distinction persists today, with sisters and brothers who have taken simple church vows seen as secular clergy, whilst priests and nuns who have taken a second step of more solemn, enduring vows linked to a specific religious order, are seen as cloistered clergy (Saunders, 2003). In general, Catholic secular clergy live in the regular world, whilst non-secular clergy often live in nunneries and priories (Boudinhon, 1912). In this context, the term 'secular' was a special ecclesiastical word, and was never meant to have referred to something non-religious.

Marion Maddox in her book *Taking God to School* (2014) echoes the generally agreed perspective that the use of the term 'secular' in the nineteenth century in Australia, when it was codified into law with reference to patterns of public schooling, reflected the meaning of the word as described in the previous paragraph. It related to the concept of cloister or the more overarching term of denomination. Echoing the pattern of Forster's Education Act of 1870 in England, the term 'secular' was included in laws such as the Education Act in Queensland in 1875, the Education Act in Victoria in 1872, the Public Instruction Act in New South Wales in 1880, the Education Act in Tasmania in 1885, the Elementary Education Amendment Act in Western Australia in 1893, and even the New Zealand Education Act in 1877.

The reason for all these state laws on education, and the use and meaning of the word 'secular', related to the dramatic changes that were occurring in society in general and education in particular at that time. In the rapidly unfolding industrial age, and in a time when the franchise was no longer limited to the wealthy, it was becoming important for every prospective adult to have a rudimentary grasp of numeracy and literacy. In colonial Australia the provision of schooling had mainly been carried out by Christian churches and missions. This meant that educational curricula were infused with the dogma, beliefs and scriptures of those groups. For Protestant denominations, biblical references were common, and in Roman Catholic schools, references to papal authority and church views of history and science, for example, were normal. The problem was that if schooling was to be extended to all children, churches did not have the resources to fund this or in the case of Protestant groups, often did not have the desire to carry it out. Roman Catholic authorities remained committed to providing education to their own parishioners, but most Protestant churches were prepared to transfer the responsibility of schooling to the state as long as the education provided remained non-denominational (i.e. secular) and did not proselytise children into any specific cloister or denomination.

Thus the use of the term 'secular' in the laws noted above meant that universal public schooling had to be overtly non-denominational. It was never intended to mean that schooling should be non-religious. As Australian historians have noted, a distinctly Christian worldview continued to underpin curriculum materials and pedagogical practices (Perkins, 2011, Campbell, 2014), and this was understood by most to be generally compatible with the secular (i.e. non-denominational) character of classroom activities.

Fast forward to the latter twentieth century and the twenty-first century, and you have a very different story. Today, secularism in education has been re-defined to mean the exclusion of any ideological foundation in regular classrooms other than a positivistic, enlightenment-based worldview (i.e. only things that are observable and measurable are real). It champions the self-evident self-sufficiency of human reason, and assumes that anything else is a distorted understanding of reality and has no place in the classroom. Ideas such as a belief in an interventionist

God, and a reality beyond the observations of our basic senses, is seen as unscientific and divisive—fanciful religious bigotry. Secularism claims not to be opposed to other religious perspectives, but nevertheless insists that only a secularist perspective has any right to underpin regular class instruction and pedagogy (Nugent, 2010). At best, God is an irrelevant irritant, and at worst God is hocus-pocus nonsense.

Some advocates of secularism in education bemoan what they see as the contemporary undermining of the secularist agenda in Australian public education. Macquarie University's Marion Maddox probably is the most ardent advocate of this position. She notes with alarm the rise of school chaplaincies, partial government funding for low-fee Christian schools, and the attempts by some groups to allow intelligent design belief about earth origins to be presented in classes as an alternative to the curriculum-mandated evolutionary perspective. Her view seems to be that these are overtly religious interpretations of reality and they have no place in Australian public education (Maddox, 2014a).

Despite Maddox's concerns, the reality is that in large measure, a secularist perspective reigns supreme in much of education in Australia—even in many private schools. Apart from religious instruction as a marginal and optional activity, any understanding and practice of education in this country usually assumes the irrelevance of the non-secular. Thus questions about patterns of child development, or evaluation and assessment, or how to understand and teach key learning areas like Mathematics or History or English, all assume that religious beliefs (other than secularism) have nothing to say about these matters, and that a secular approach to them would be plausible and acceptable to all religious groups. Secular principles provide the presuppositional foundations for contemporary education.

This is the water in which we swim, the air that we breathe. In this sense, and hence the title of this paper, secularism represents the ideological fundamentalism of modern Australian education—a mantra uncritically accepted as true, and apparently only questioned by religious bigots or ill-informed simpletons. Pryor, from Regent University, puts it this way:

> Most folks have been so long immersed in the sea of secularism that they no longer perceive the presuppositions that support

> it. What once was acknowledged as a 'faith' (in the sense of foundational premises the consequences of which could explain the world, human nature, knowledge, etc.) has become received fact. This explains the increasing marginalisation of 'non-believers' who operate outside the premises of secularism. (Prior, 2014).

The religious nature of secularism

This paper repudiates the notion that 'There are religions, and then there is the non-religion of secularism.' This is a dramatic, and perhaps dangerous repudiation to make, for if secularism is validly described as a faith commitment or religion, then any attempt to make secularism the prime foundation block for Australian schools is not the removal of religion from the classroom, but is the imposition of a state-funded religious monopoly on teaching and learning—a position that has no place in pluralistic Australia.

To understand the claim that secularism is just one religion among many, we must explore a definition of the word 'religion'. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2013), a religion is 'a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held with ardour and faith'. This is an accurate description of Christianity, Islam—and also secularism. Confusion arises when people equate religion with theism. Theism is one sub-category of religion, atheism is another religious category, and there are hybrids as well. Diagram 1 shows the relationship:

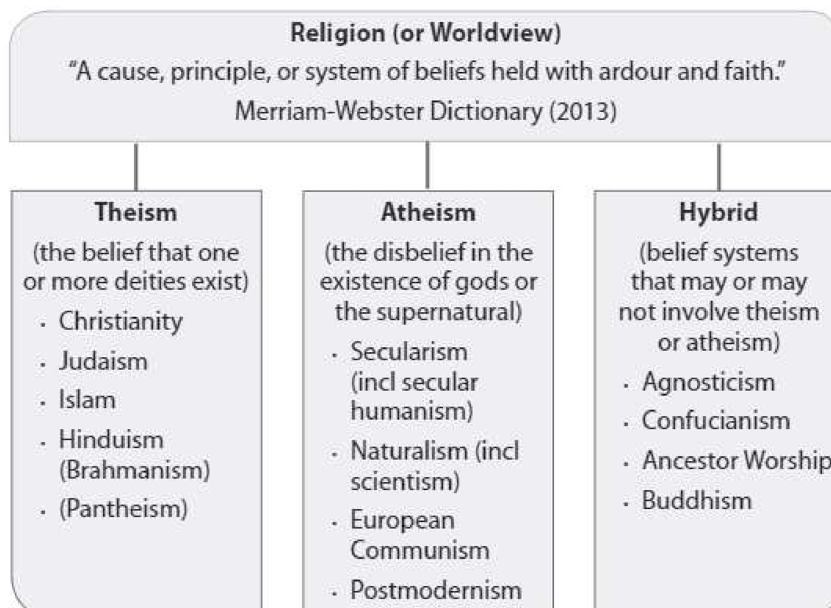

Diagram 1. Definition of religion and its sub-categories

An approach to life does not have to include a belief in God in order to be classified as a religion. As long as it involves a set of beliefs that are firmly held, as is the case with both Christianity and secularism, it is a religion. Secularists believe that their rationalistic, positivist approach to reality is the only one that is valid, the only one that has a place in mainstream education. To the extent that in law, policy and practice, this secular religion is state supported and underwritten as the ideological default position in general classroom pedagogy and activities, it has a most-favoured belief system status, so that in Adam Smith's terms, secularism has indeed become Australian education's established religion.

Though they still use the term 'religious' in a sense that excludes secularism, both Somerville (2014) with her concept of 'the secular sacred', and Waldron (2014) with her recognition of the belief-based foundation of secularism, approach the definition and perspective advocated in this paper. Wilkinson (2014, p. 59) reflects a supporting paradigm when she asserts that 'even this belief in a non-sectarian space is its own sort of religion'.

Award-winning writer Dr Elizabeth Farrelly (2014) repeats the mantra that 'Schools ... should be free, secular and compulsory. This is the key to civilisation.' (p. 3)

The drive to eliminate religions other than secularism from the school or university classroom is not a drive to eliminate religion. As Berg (2014, p. 2) writes, 'An ideologically neutral curriculum is a contradiction in terms.' The secularist paradigm is a drive to replace all other faith perspectives exclusively with its own—with the religion of secularism. Such an intolerant claim would be ridiculed if made in the name of Islam or Christianity—and it should be equally as inexcusable when made in the name of the religion of secularism.

How has secularism in education become so pervasive?

For an answer, we need to look for the key thinkers who have helped shape the contemporary Western approach to education. For example, consider the positions of John Dewey and Richard Rorty.

First, John Dewey (1859–1952). Once governments had taken control of education, they needed to deliver a product that was broadly

acceptable to most people. The retreat of many denominations behind the wall of dualism or the sacred-secular divide meant that religions like Christianity were ripe for the argument that schooling was religiously neutral.

Western education's most famous protagonist, John Dewey, was only too happy to fill this space with his own secular approach to education. Dewey has left a useful legacy concerning the value of discovery learning—an approach that Jesus demonstrated two thousand years earlier. However, Dewey advocated his enquiry-learning approach from the clear and determined perspective that reality has no supernatural aspect. Dewey, a signatory to the First and Second Humanist Manifestos, derided any belief in God or a heavenly being's influence on the world. For Dewey, a fictitious God and his way of looking at things was not the centre of the educational universe. In contrast, he claimed that the child was the centre around which the educational system must revolve. For Dewey (1899), real education was to be conducted to the exclusion of any other religious belief except for secularism. Consequently, decades of instruction in teacher training colleges, and decades of curriculum development and resource materials, have followed in Dewey's secularist philosophical footsteps.

Second, Richard Rorty (1931–2007). In recent decades, Rorty has been one of the most influential postmodern voices in contemporary education. He also has been very open about his abhorrence of every belief system other than secularism in the educational arena—even claiming that most American university professors in the humanities (including education) share his point of view:

> I try to arrange things so that students who enter as bigoted, homophobic, religious fundamentalists will leave college with views more like our own ... The fundamentalist parents of our fundamentalist students think that the entire 'American liberal establishment' is engaged in a conspiracy. The parents have a point ... [W]e are going to go right on trying to discredit you in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your fundamentalist religious community of dignity, trying to make your views seem silly rather than discussable. We do our best to convince these students of the benefits of secularisation. We are not

so inclusivist as to tolerate intolerance such as yours. (Rorty, 2000, pp. 21–2)

Implications of recognising the religious character of secularism

The claim that secularism is just another religion is a dangerous claim and will raise the ire of many secularists. It explodes the current myth that the secularisation of the classroom is a neutral removal of religious bias. It also means that we should desist from using the false dichotomy of 'faith-based schools' and 'non-faith-based schools', since all schools, secular, Christian, or whatever, are always faith-based.

(a) To teach science from a secular perspective, as if God is not relevant, is not neutrality. It is a secularist denial of the gospel and is offensive to Bible-believing Christians.

(b) To teach environmental studies without reference to the Genesis 1 principles of the cultural mandate and creational stewardship also is offensive to Christians, but even the mention of such a perspective in public classrooms has been seen as contrary to the *a priori* commitment to a secular religious agenda, and so is eschewed from the curriculum.

(c) To teach our Western history without recognising and celebrating the key role of Christian belief and practice in its development may be a secular approach to history, but it also is a revisionist perversion of that subject. Here's what the communist researchers concluded about the central key role of Christianity in giving the West its success—a factor that barely rates a mention in secularised Australian history classrooms today:

> One of the things we were asked to look into was what accounted for the success, in fact the pre-eminence, of the West all over the world. We studied everything we could from the historical, political, economic, and cultural perspective. At first, we thought it was because you had more powerful guns than we had. Then we thought it was because you had the best political system. Next we focused on your economic system. But in the past twenty years we have realised that the heart of your culture is your religion: Christianity. That is why the West has been so powerful. The Christian moral foundation of social

> and cultural life was what made possible the emergence of [sympathetic] capitalism and then the successful transition to democratic politics. We don't have any doubts about this. (David Aikman, 2003)

As Donnelly (2103) infers, any positive acknowledgement of Christianity's central role in shaping who we are as a nation, has been airbrushed out of most of history studies in our schools because of the secularist agenda.

Unlike the religion of secularism with its totalitarian claims to education, Christianity upholds genuine plurality of practice. We do not seek the replacement of hegemonic secularism with enforced Christianity in every classroom. Rather, in modern, pluralistic societies like Australia, and especially in our schools, we argue for the right of the organs of public life to be free from under the exclusive yoke of a secular religious ascendancy. This is the best way forward not just for Christians, but for people of all religious persuasions.

The Netherlands has shown a way forward with government endorsement for any social group to be equally supported (and held accountable) in devising educational approaches and institutions for their children.

Because parental choice in education is a God-given responsibility, we strongly endorse the UN Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26[2]) which states that 'Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.'

Christians in education invite those who choose our schools to join with us in exploring the world and our places and tasks in it from a hope-filled, God-centred perspective. To paraphrase Wilson and Dabney (2012), as we look at the physical world around us, we don't spend all of our time looking at the sun directly. Rather, we look at everything else in the light that the sun provides. Similarly, in the Christian school we don't spend all of our time looking at the Son (Jesus Christ). Rather, we look at *everything else* in the light that the Son provides. This is our key distinctive.

Though a few examples of Islamic madrassa schools do raise the issue of religious bigotry and antisocial radicalisation, research by the Cardus organisation (2011 and 2014) and Buckingham's research in

Australia (2010) clearly demonstrate that educational choice does not lead to the fracturing of society, but rather to more wholesome cultural awareness and interaction.

Echoing Paul's entreaty in Romans 12:2, Al Mohler (2015) implores Christians to be biblically faithful in their understanding of this issue as it applies to education:

> We don't believe in the possibility of the separation between secular and religious instruction, we actually don't. We don't believe that there can be a worldview distinction [in] which all of a sudden a teacher could say, 'Okay I'm going to teach in a secular mode for 6 ½ hours and then I'm going to teach in a Jewish mode or the Christian mode for the other hour and a half.' The fact is that we are just not made that way. We can't separate ourselves into a secular and a Christian sphere. And if we're actually teaching, in terms of the Christian worldview, that's going to be something that will permeate every hour, every subject, every book, every essay, every conversation ... If we are teaching from a Christian worldview that means we teach every subject from a Christian worldview. (Mohler, 2015)

Conclusion

Secularism is a powerful and persuasive religious force that dominates contemporary culture in an exclusivist and self-serving manner. In education, it is the established religion of Australia in the twenty-first century. It claims to not be opposed to Christianity or other religions, but in fact it is antithetical to a Christian worldview. Furthermore, secularism has as its primary goal the eradication of all other religious forces from the public domain other than itself. Through its enticing but false claim to neutrality, secularism has even entrapped many Christians who have failed to recognise the idolatrous nature of its worldview, and who, as Smith (2013, p. 141) puts it, have been 'unwittingly conscripted into [secularism's] stories'. As Edwards (2014) reminds us, Christian educators should re-examine their teacher training foundations and their consequential educational practice, to ensure that the beguiling attraction of state-endorsed secularism does not crush the hope and purpose of the all-of-life embracing gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our understanding of secularism as religion requires a gospel response that goes beyond passive acceptance of the status quo, something more energetic than a pre-emptive capitulation to mainstream public thought. A biblical concept of all of life's essential religious character, when seen in the light of scripture's missional challenge to Christians to reach out into the culture and bring every thought into subjection to Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5), empowers Christ's hope-filled followers concerned about education, to winsomely draw attention to the public misconception about secularism. It also empowers Christians, for the sake of democratic pluralism, to join with adherents to other theistic and non-theistic faiths and call for a re-examination of secularism's special established status in mainstream education. And finally, it calls Christians in education, as reflective practitioners who want to be faithful to the biblical narrative in all that they do, to collaboratively explore and apply a Christian worldview in the classrooms of schools that have a distinctly Christian mission and purpose.

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3 An unexpected shift in the Australian educational social contract

Recent research from NSW Protestant schools

David Hastie

> Australia does not have three schooling sectors. It has one: comprised of a wide and complex suite of differently funded choices, or what is called 'partial voucher system' in international taxonomies.

The recent angst reverberating around the public conversation about religion in Australian schools has left the Catholic sector more or less alone, and focused on two religious influences, the oft called 'fundamentalist' sub sector of religious schools, and Protestant religious presence in state schools through chaplaincies and Special Religious Education.[1] Low, in his recent PhD study of parent controlled schools, expresses it well:

> [For many critics of Protestant religious schools] secularity and liberalism function as general societal norms while the religious represents a particular and potentially dangerous anomaly. For these critics of religious schooling, the proliferation of the latter represents a perilous trajectory that serves to undermine the cohesion of the social order predicated on a liberal, secular education as opposed to divisive, sectarian tendencies ... a sectarianism that can only be mediated by the affirmation of

> secularism as a principle by the Australian Government and its institutions. (Low 2013: 27)

Indeed Jane Caro and Chris Bonner describe the 'dismantling of Australia's public education' system as the actions of 'the stupid country': 'Our current system of education is, quite frankly, unsustainable.' (Caro & Bonner 2007:3) That it is unsettling to the status quo, and those who control the public schooling discourse, is clear, but its social effect remains to be seen. The migration of enrolments from state schools is also occurring, but at a lower rate, into Catholic schools, and appears part of a massive shift in the Australian way of life: religiosity in education forming a new fulcrum of beliefs about capital, the state, society, and the citizen-negotiator. Marion Maddox depicts '... taking God to school' as '... the end of Australia's egalitarian education'. (Maddox 2014) However, many more forces and factors than just religion have been dismantling the social amalgamation of the compulsory secular comprehensive state school, over many years. Ross Gittins, in his support comment for *Stupid Country,* declares that 'Education used to be one of the great equalising institutions of a proudly egalitarian nation. Now in the name of choice, we are building a two-class education system.' (Caro & Bonner 2007)

My own recent research[2] of Protestant school English teachers has demonstrated that these concerns about change are far from groundless. The rise of such schools is measurably affecting education. There are discernible impacts, attributable to both religion and demographics, on education and the existing social fabric of communities. In my small single-researcher study I have been only able to measure a few of these impacts, many of which have been asserted for years, yet rarely if ever tested in empirical study.

Recent evidence of religiosity in Australian schools

Changes observed might be summarised as follows:

- Children from lower-middle and professional classes are concentrating into Protestant Christian schools.
- Students from committed Christian families are concentrating into smaller Protestant boutique schools, naturally reducing

the Christian family demographic in their local state schools.

- Protestant schools appear to have a particular rising presence in NSW regional towns/smaller regional cities.
- High volumes of conservative evangelical Christian teachers are gathering into a new 'congregational site' at the Protestant school, where students are intensively engaged with a wide variety of Christian programs and activities over a prolonged duration through formative years.
- Most Protestant school English teachers in the study verified that their school's public claims about Christian curriculum were actually matched in practice.
- The great majority of Protestant school English teachers in the study indicated that their personal teaching included integrated Christian faith perspectives throughout the English curriculum.
- Protestant school English teachers in the study were more likely to receive parent challenges to class texts than state school English teachers.
- Many more Protestant school English teachers reported that their personal faith perspectives had an influence on their class text *selections* than state school English teachers.

These impacts on education are likely to be received with satisfaction by proponents of Protestant schools, as they would confirm the success of many of their objectives and claims. Likewise, I expect they would validate some concerns of critics. Yet it is important for both to also consider—and include if quoting this research—some more complex findings, summarised as follows:

- The teacher sample did not demonstrate a Protestant separatist, intensified tradition-retaining outlook, but rather an evangelical, culturally engaged, intellectually rigorous and outward-looking approach to society and education.
- Even though English teachers appeared to be highly biblically literate, the biblical canon was more or less invisible in the Protestant school teaching of English language and literature.
- The personal reading preferences of English teachers in

Protestant schools appear just as erudite, wide, sacred and profane as those of state school English teachers.

- The qualifications of Protestant school English teachers in the sample were at the same levels as teachers in the state school sample.
- Almost all Protestant school English teacher interviewees indicated that they had 'never intended' to teach in a Christian school, and were in fact 'pro-state schooling', but the NSW Department of Education had not handled either their initial teacher appointment or existing appointment to their satisfaction. Their reason for commencing teaching in a Protestant affiliated school was industrial, rather than ideological.

These findings, furthermore, need to be placed in a much larger context:

- Australian parents/ students have the highest access to school choice in the world. (Musset 2012)
- The Australian education system has the fifth highest proportion of non-government schools in the world. (Musset 2012)
- Around 40% of all Australian secondary school enrolments are in Christian-affiliated non-government schools. This contrasts with less than 10% of Australian school-age children attending any variety of Christian church once a month or more. In total, around 1,250,000 students currently attend Christian affiliated schools, around 34% of all Australian enrolments at all levels of schooling.
- Conservatively calculating around three voting adults (siblings, graduates, parents, grandparents etc.) for each of these 1,250,000 enrolments, there is a potential voting base of upwards of 3,750,000 citizens around government education policies relating to Christian affiliated schools: around 30% of voters in both state and federal spheres, with some minor variance between states, and some slightly larger variance, both larger (ACT) and smaller (NT), amongst the two territories.
- If we include Catholic parochial schools, there is at least one Christian-affiliated school in every single Australian electorate,

often many more.

- Broad studies of non-government school choice have demonstrated that when choosing a non-government Christian-affiliated school, the majority of parents don't indicate religious reasons in the top four reasons, but always include values/morals in the top four reasons. (Beavis 2004; ISCA 2008; Campbell, Proctor & Sherrington 2009)
- The wholesale subsuming of Protestant denominational schools into the nineteenth century Australian state school system was not an embrace of secularity, but (along with boosting basic student enrolments) was a Protestant collaboration designed to include dissenting and nonconformist denominations, allied to Anglican evangelicals, into an organised, anti-Catholic social settlement. (Hastie 2016)

The social shift behind schooling changes

The specific religious effects measured in my research, understood within the context of these much larger social forces, suggest recent critics of the emerging strength of Christian-affiliated schooling have misunderstood a great social shift.

These social implications of these findings are not outlier. 'It's one of the great paradoxes of Australian education," says Dr Helen Proctor, from the University of Sydney. 'We're one of the least-religious nations in the world, yet we have this large and increasing attendance of children in religious schools.' (Tovey & Mitchell 2013). Marion Maddox has a more contemptuous explanation: 'This seeming paradox has a ready explanation ... the broader pattern of "outsourcing" public services to private providers' (Maddox 2014: 184). Yet this does not account for much deeper motivations, nor does it respect the intelligence of the Australian citizenry to act freely in the interests of their children. And this 'paradox' is not so recent.

In their accusation about erosion of equality, Maddox and Gittins, both justly proud of their families' dissenting Protestant heritages—and both children of the Protestant Manse, by the way, as I am—have overlooked a very long statistic. Australian society was never unified by the comprehensive state school: 780,000 children in systemic Catholic

schools today are a silent but loud testament to an ancient Australian disunity, a disunity about which millions of Catholics learned long to be silent, shrewd and patient.

Perhaps this narrative of public schooling as the only good public option has to employ a patronising tone toward the capacity of parents to make choices in education, to simplify the paradox. To do otherwise would be to impugn millions of Australian parents with wilfully destructive motives, as millions of parents are making these choices. To do this accurately, furthermore, would also impugn millions of Catholics, over several generations, with even nastier motives: the most recent critics of non-government education tend to simply ignore the Catholic school. It is all, frankly, starting to sound like a narrative that is simply broken, cracking at the seams: new wine into old wineskins.

Yet, in literary terms, a paradox always emits a third, intriguing power from the collision of its two incongruous elements. Far from the myth of a relaxed, simple nation, Australians seem driven by two great paradoxes: larrikin, yet hardworking; irreligious, yet spiritual. This cultural tension is perhaps captured most elegantly in Winton's great Australian novel *Cloud Street*, in the shared occupancy of the old house on Cloud Street by the Lamb and Pickles families: the sacrificially diligent Lambs, chapel Protestants who have lost their formal religion; the lazy larrikin Pickles family, profane and careless, yet for whom taking an Aussie gambler's chance is a matter of profound faith. The recent embrace of Christian-affiliated schools appears to be, in part, a manifestation of 'spirituality', not religion. The embrace of non-government fee paying schools is an artefact of a driven work-ethic, but (mostly) displays a larrikin aversion to class-consciousness, unlike so much of non-government schooling of the United Kingdom and United States.

Low argues that 'far from being a substantive religious threat to the secular social order, schools like those within the [Evangelical] schooling movement can be seen to express religiosity in ways that are commensurable with the prevailing non-religious rationality of neo-liberal discourse.' (2013:33) Indeed in his neo-Marxist study of Adventist education in 1978, John Knight presciently asserted that:

> Adventist [schools] and most fundamentalist groups tend to be essentially socially conservative, displaying typically

> middle class concerns with material prosperity, social respectability and political stability. The individual emphasis upon sin, responsibility and personal accountability ... relates to the Protestant ethic of hard work, deferred gratification and economic advancement. (Knight 1985: 32, 15)

Knight clearly intended a more Social Democrat Australia than is now attractive to the vast majority of us. Indeed the Wyndham/Whitlamesque Social Democratic vision of Australia has dwindled, along with its belief in the centrally delivered public school as the forum of social cohesion. Intended as critique, Knight's assessment of the civic-economic orientation of Adventist education in 1978 could now be argued to describe Australian neo-liberal society at large, particularly following the liberalising of the economy under the Hawke/Keating, Howard/Costello governments. The voices of Maddox, Caro and others are fearful of this change, harking for a bygone era that has long since departed.

Modern Australia's single schooling sector in a suite of choices

Perhaps the Anglo-liberal democratic traditions that were ensconced in the social settlement of state education are not so much disappearing as evolving. What we are now witnessing is not a deviation of private from public, but a hyper-neoliberal re-imagining of 'public', in school choice, religious orientation and many other aspects of social engagement. When 40% of the 'public' no longer use 'public' secondary education, this definition has become absurd. In pure demographic terms, public schooling is no more public than private schooling is private. Indeed, we have hardly any true private schools in this country. Almost all Australian schools take the government coin, study the government curriculum and suffer the government inspection. All teachers are accredited by the government, and all children in schools are under specific government protection.

Australia does not have three schooling sectors. It has one: comprised of a wide and complex suite of differently funded choices, or what is called 'partial voucher system' in international taxonomies. There will always be a need for fully publically funded schools, and alternatives to religiously affiliated schools. However, so long as the state school

continues to mainly define itself by how well it benefits the disadvantaged student, and how the public partial funding of non-government school is harming the disadvantaged by redirection of public monies, the state school decline will persist, and the citizen will not listen. For Australia is not a disadvantaged country. Most of its citizens, by any measure, are advantaged beyond the wildest imagination of most of the people on the planet. Our once poor nation needed to combat widespread cultural and economic indigence through centrally delivered government 'free, compulsory and secular education', but for the vast majority this need is long past, and the citizens know it. The fully government funded school needs to explain how it might *advantage* the vast majority of already advantaged, whilst generously providing for those relative few in our nation who are impoverished, in particular for remote and very remote indigenous children.

In this emerging social settlement, religion has become connected with consumerism, depicted as part of a broader suite of purchases and choices available to the deft citizen. Since the funding of Catholic schools in the 1960s, and the liberalising of the Catholic church after the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic school has increasingly become a part of this 'commodification' of education, a site of family social advancement rather than social separatism. Emerging Protestant schools are another manifestation of evolving Australian Anglo-liberal values, the very values that sustained the public school system throughout the twentieth century. The assumed nineteenth century 'civic Protestantism' (R Ely 2014) in the Anglo-liberal pact of state schooling is now being symbolically unravelled by a Protestant departure. Australian Catholicism was never a part of this settlement, but perhaps a non-Catholic citizen withdrawal is being subconsciously understood as a significant disruption of the Anglo-liberal values that stabilised society through public schooling, enabling the mercantile classes to prosper for more than a century.

Australian school systems are sibling—not ideological—rivals

The recent public opposition to Christian affiliated schools, I would argue, does not reveal a combat of polarised ideologies, secular versus sacred, but in fact a type of sibling rivalry. Religious liberty and

personal liberty are both natural offspring of Anglo-liberalism. Multi-sect Australian Protestant religious liberty was symbolically cemented into the nineteenth century state schooling Acts, at the expense of the (then) formally anti-liberal Catholic church. At the time it was broadly assumed that *personal* liberties would be moderated and civilised by a universal civic—and widespread confessional—Protestant morality. Throughout the twentieth century, and in particular from the late 1960s onwards, personal liberty has become a more central part of the public liberal social settlement, and religion increasingly relegated to the private sphere: indeed they cannot co-exist in concentrated degrees without destabilising each other, and hence the 'big secular' shouting around public education. Sensing dominance, or at least the possible loss of it, these voices have assumed an increasingly shrill and fanatical tone. However the destabilising of this creative educational tension between civic Christianity and secular humanism has, I would argue, propelled a mainstream migration of families into the new liberalised site of the non-government school. The more 'big secular' state schools have become, the more the citizens have voted with their money, and the lives of their children, by purposefully abandoning the old public school social settlement.

But it is not confessional Christianity that parents long for in this great social shift. Our churches are not brimming with new disciples. Rather, citizens are attracted to the familiar sounds and shapes of liberal democratic civic Christianity, its sense of family and social order, of personal enterprise, of social responsibility attached by something much stronger than vague civic sentiment. They long for the sense of liberty to choose, of an essential core of moral values in an ethically delaminated age. And they long for the merit of money as a measure of character, money which even the most egalitarian religious school is quite comfortable relieving parents of in the form of school fees.

In this new narrative of Australian education, we ignore to our peril this middle-class call to arms echoing across the suburban rooftops of the nation. They are finally awake. Whether we know it or not, or whether they believe in its God or not, to be a middle class Australian is to, in large part, embody Australian forms of civic Christianity. And they are sick of secular atheists shouting that Christianity has no place in Australian schools. To shout this is to misunderstand who Australians

are as a people, and to unbalance the long equilibrium of Humanist/ Christian in Australian Anglo-liberal democracy.

Stability of Australian state education has always been a foundational principle, and to keep it stable in the face of social change, an assertion of hyper-secularism had perhaps become necessary, despite this having never been found necessary in Australian law, and its bossiness being generally odious to laconic Australia.

The provision of religious liberty will always collide with the provision of personal liberty, and in the case of the public school, and the rise of the Australian religious school, this collision has been writ large across the social landscape for 30 years. Both are competing branches of the same liberal democratic tree. Australia is not—and never has been—a Judeo-Christian society. But it is an Anglo-liberal democracy, built of two great, often competing, historical branches of the mighty English oak: civic Christianity and secular humanism.

Civic Christianity & secular humanism, the keys to consensus education

We have a central paradox in Australian society. A recent example of this paradox would be the *Safe Schools Coalition* controversy. In this case, choice in religious schools comes into conflict with choice in personal sexuality and other personal liberties, as religious systems always have something to say about personal morality. The *Safe Schools Coalition*, with many (mostly government) schools declaring that they 'work together to create safe and inclusive school environments for same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and families'. (*Safe Schools Coalition Australia* 2016) On the other hand, most Australian religious schools argue for the retention of exemption from the anti-discrimination Acts on the basis of gender, as conservative religious teachings on sexuality promote monogamous heterosexuality. Differences such as these are artefacts of the inevitable contest between civic Christianity and secular humanism in a liberal democracy, limbs of the same ideological tree. We should be neither surprised nor alarmed when these branches bang together in the wind. To deny one is to deny the other, and both will make their noise.

I believe these are negotiable differences, but only if we embrace a *consensus model of education*. A liberation model, a *pedagogy of the oppressed*, will never bring quality education to the mass of Australian citizens, whether it be trumpeted in the cause of sexual liberation *or* religious freedom. A liberal democratic, choice-oriented model, based upon the mutual consent of parents, students, governing institutions, and society at large, will enable us to advance education with the two great elements of our democracy—secular humanism and civic Christianity—in creative tension.

The stability of the state school as social democratic norm, long eroded by successive government polices deregulating state school zoning, increasing selective schools, and partially funding non-government schools, appears to have reached a tipping point. The Protestant school in particular appears to have provided the softest target for a long-brewing catalogue of much broader complaints about a deep shift in Australian education. Certainly this shift has occurred, and teachers in all Australian schools are at the sharp end of its values contest. But these are no bold warriors in a divisive culture war. They are complex, caring practitioners, mostly unwittingly stretched out across a complicated mass civic readjustment, the actual ending of which is uncertain to everyone, but is not certainly bad. I believe—and hope—this readjustment possesses a deeply laconic gesture. I sense it is richly imbued with, to borrow Les Murray's marvellous patriotic descriptor (and warning), 'the quality of sprawl':

> Sprawl leans on things. It is loose-limbed in its mind.
> Reprimanded and dismissed
> it listens with a grin and one boot up on the rail
> of possibility. It may have to leave the Earth.
> Being roughly Christian, it scratches the other cheek
> and thinks it unlikely. Though people have been shot for sprawl.
> (Murray, 1983)

Endnotes

1 My research has been primarily in non-Catholic Christian schools. I am not in a position to make more than general comments on Catholic schools.

2 Hastie, D (2016). *The NSW Protestant school and religious effect. English teachers and beyond.* PhD thesis by publication. Macquarie University. (Note, a list of the various publications from this thesis can be found at http://www.dhastie.com/publications.html and David Hastie on LinkedIn.com)

Note

This paper is written for the purposes of reflection on broad social matters amongst a colloquium of educators, relating to education and citizenship. It should not necessarily be understood as representing the current beliefs or policies of the Anglican Schools Corporation

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4 Counter-cultural Christianity

Andrew Tredinnick

> ... a Samaritan, as he travelled, came to where the man was; and when he saw him he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the man thanked God that the Samaritan had shown no leadership qualities whatsoever.
>
> Michael Leunig, 'Samaritan'[1]

I teach in a Christian school. I'm asking myself as I do nearly every day, just what am I doing here? What is the purpose? Of school? Of this class? How can I do my best to help students to draw on their best selves and to learn constantly from their world? What am I for them? How do they connect to each other? How can leaders be encouraged to lead into good things?

Is servant leadership possible in a business world?

Leunig's Samaritan cartoon text confronts me as I reflect on the seemingly endless references to servant leadership in Christian communities and churches, and yes in schools. I praise my students on reports when they are good encouragers and servants of others, I say that they are showing leadership qualities. I attempt to steer lively mischievous younger students who have leadership skills and some charisma, but

who might want to lead their peers down darker paths—leadership, yes, but not of the servant kind.

Then I see and hear the National Press Club speech of the leader of the Business Council of Australia. She leads indeed in a stirring address on the needs of education in Australia—how we need to lift our game in the teaching of technology, especially information technology, but also in the sciences and mathematics. And then a questioner from the press asks her about what business response should be to that day's executions in Indonesia of convicted Australian drug smugglers Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran. And she backs right away from the question. The ethics of this, she says, has nothing to do with business. Of course we feel sad. But the only imperative is to maintain business relations between our countries, as this is the source of all human welfare. 'Next question please...'[2] But do we not have an ethical imperative to foster justice and compassion in schools?

Can we counter the culture?

If independent private schools are set up to counter the values of the secular world, as it seems they regularly are, we now have a dilemma. The founding documents of Christian schools often say that we need to set up a lifeboat to rescue the perishing. Yet what have we now likely become, some years later? As we chase the needs of our students in the world, and models of leadership in our world, do we not now espouse the very values that we were set up to counter in our founding vision?[3]

What sort of counter to the culture do we now offer in our Christian culture in school? Or do we simply offer a reiteration of the values of business?

We most often equate being twenty-first century to heavy use of computer technology with our learners, the so-called 'digital natives' in our charge. We are, however, often blind to the corporate money-making opportunities and opportunists linked to these technologies. While we breathlessly espouse bring-your-own-device we just may have omitted to notice that the devices aren't very transparent anymore and, being quite locked to certain paradigms, they bring with them their own world view. Our digital natives turn out to be even more clueless than we are of the internal workings and technical miracle that our devices

are, and their tech-savvy turns out to be facility with the interfaces, not facility with the workings of the devices.[4]

Paradoxically, in parallel to the movement to technologise is the continuing movement to measure everything, from the parents' so-called demand for high university entrance rankings, to various governments' desire to track and improve educational quality by testing students and ranking schools. The worst excesses of these measurement movements are seen in some states in the US, where teaching to the test is the only way that many schools can survive. Pressure to perform on school rankings in the UK leads to teacher discouragement and burnout.

Our 'outcomes' have come to mean the things we plan to do before we start to learn anything, and then we measure somehow whether we got there or not. Outcomes along the way seem to get reduced to that which is measurable. But the pursuit of outcomes came from a model that attempted to reform education, to encourage teachers not to hobby horse, but to cover a range of skills and various aspects of knowledge.[5] There was a time when there weren't any outcomes, and many current education systems (e.g. the International Baccalaureate) are not actually outcomes based.

How can we as Christians respond to overwhelming learning pressures? What might our educational practices mean for the growth and formation of our students, and indeed our own formation?

As Christians we learn to welcome our students hospitably,[6] learn to connect to the stranger,[7] to connect to the diversity and detail of creation, and become willing to form soil that will welcome seeds and bear fruit[8]—nurturing good soil and breaking rocky ground as it were. Christ's parables of the Good Samaritan,[9] the sower and the seed,[10] and his practice of connecting hospitably to the marginalised[11] must undergird all of our education practice, and finally be our success measures, as well as our being willing to take a long and deep view of 'success'.

The power of the ordinary—telling and dwelling

Many works of dramatic art remind us of the power of the ordinary. The artistry in telling a story involving a flawed character is that often it is their very flaws that enable them to be successful, exemplified in the richly portrayed lives of the fictional detectives of recent police

murder dramas. Whether it's the obsessiveness and spectrum behaviours of London detective Brian Lane in *New Tricks,*[12] or the brooding melancholy of Swedish detective Kurt Wallander,[13] or the chaotic and sometimes tragic domestic lives and relationships of Manchester detectives Janet Scott and Rachel Bailey:[14] it seems to be the empathy and understanding that they gain for the outsider, the underdog, the struggler with life's realities—all gained through their own desperate and messy life experiences—that enables them to understand the broken worlds of the criminals and other lost souls, which in turn enables them to pursue and realise a modicum of justice in the world. Or sometimes they may remain stuck and accepting of a broken or less-than-ideal reality, but be able to demonstrate grace, and love, and forgiveness, and mercy—and all the powerful qualities of humanity. Just like the (anti-) heroes of the Bible. Saul. David. Noah. These stories of flawed and broken characters enabling help and justice despite their own wounds and damage are parables for our complex times.

Henry Nouwen in *The Wounded Healer*[15] encourages us, following an old Jewish story, to bind up our own wounds while we still carry the wounds, but do it in such a way as to remain useful to the wounded souls around us. We empathise as we share brokenness, we know others and love others, and support others even while we struggle ourselves. Doesn't that describe the best sort of teaching and mentoring? Where our vulnerability enables our empathy? Yet we often shy away from vulnerability as teachers—understandably, as that interferes with our authority role and risks abuse and disrespect, and potential classroom disorder. Yet what a powerful entrée for relationship and authenticity is vulnerability, if only we can find a way.

The late Kenneth Bailey in his *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes* makes the point that in recent centuries Jesus' parables have been drawn on for our practice of ethics, but not for our practice of theology.[16] Christian theology in the Western world has tended to draw more on the writings of Paul, yet with a focus on his concepts. The metaphorical side of New Testament writings by Paul and others has been downplayed, and certainly not used to create statements of doctrine or faith practice. Bailey explores this as he leads us into a deeper understanding of the parables of Jesus:

> … the popular perception of Jesus is that of a village rustic creating folk tales for fishermen and farmers. But when examined with care his parables are serious theology, and Jesus emerges as an astute theologian. He is … primarily a *metaphorical* rather *than* a *conceptual* theologian.
>
> What precisely is a metaphorical theologian?
>
> A metaphor communicates in ways that rational arguments cannot. Pictures easily trump but do not replace abstract reasoning … When used in theology to create meaning, the parable challenges the listener in ways that abstract statements of truth cannot approach. Yet the two are often linked, and both are critical to the task of theology.
>
> … a metaphor … is not an illustration of an idea; it is a mode of theological discourse. The metaphor does more than explain meaning; it creates meaning. *A parable is an extended metaphor* and as such it is *not a delivery system for an idea* but a house in which the reader/listener is invited to take up residence.
>
> The listener/reader of the parable is encouraged to examine the human predicament through the worldview created by the parable… If the parable is a house in which the listener/reader is invited to take up residence, then that person is urged by the parable to look on the world through the windows of that residence. Such is the reality of the parables created by Jesus of Nazareth, a reality that causes a special problem.
>
> If theology is built on logic and reasoning, then all one needs to understand that theology is a clear mind and a will to work hard. But if, for Jesus, stories and dramatic actions are the language of theology, then the culture of the storyteller is crucial. Our task includes the responsibility of trying to understand the metaphors and stories from and about Jesus in the light of the culture of which he was a part. [17] [emphases in original]

If a parable is a place where you dwell, David I Smith has also pointed out that a *pedagogy*, usually defined as the artistry of teaching, is also a place where you dwell:

> Instead of seeing teaching as method or technique, a technology practised upon the learner, what if we adopted an image from thirteenth century France? In his history of the concept of schooling, Hamilton mentions in passing that the boys who studied at the nascent University of Paris were accommodated

> in hospices. These hospices, in which boys both learned and lived under a communal rule, were known, among other names, as 'pedagogies'. Here is an image to frame what follows: a pedagogy is a house, a holistic environment in which learners undergo both intellectual and spiritual formation according to a common rule. Being raised in a different house may (though not with technological efficiency or predictability) lead to developing a different character.
>
> ...Any pedagogy, if practised consistently over a period of time, includes an element of spiritual formation.[18]

Leonard Sweet has developed an intriguing angle on the abductive method of influential pragmatist philosopher and scientist Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914):

> Abductive method: Seize people by the imagination and transport them from their current world to another world, where they gain a new perspective. (Preachers use this method when they speak in parables...)
>
> There once was a man who had two sons ... a sower went out to sow ...[19]

Indeed this is how parables work.

If a parable is a place where you dwell, and a pedagogy is *also* a place where you dwell, what are the implications for our educational practice? If a story engages us and 'abducts' us from our current world to a new place of imagination, and if the learning environment thus gives us new windows to see through, perhaps this is actually what learning is. And real learning will inevitably break out if the conditions are right. The outcomes may be larger than those we planned, and may surprise us as much as the learning does.[20]

Participating in communities of practice

I have had a number of recent conversations with students on the overwhelming nature of knowledge and data acquisition in our world. Yet they must choose. They even talk of 'prioritising', having imbibed the business buzzword for dealing with a messy office work-world. Yet they are prioritising not just chains of trivial tasks, but meaning and value.

Everything trivial or not trivial becomes a task to be prioritised. And yes, to be assessed.

How do we know we've learned anything? Life holds the key. I am struck by how much our education systems seem trapped in the idea that if you haven't been taught something explicitly then no learning has taken place, and concomitantly if you haven't measured it in some quantitative way then no learning has taken place.

What if learning wasn't the result of teaching, and was actually a natural part of our social being? What then? And how would we foster it? asks Etienne Wenger:

> Our institutions, to the extent that they address issues of learning explicitly, are largely based on the assumption that learning is an individual process, that it has a beginning and an end, that it is best separated from the rest of our activities, and that it is the result of teaching. Hence we arrange classrooms where students—free from the distractions of their participation in the outside world—can pay attention to a teacher or focus on exercises. We design computer-based training programs that walk students through individualised sessions covering reams of information and drill practice. To assess learning we use tests with which students struggle in one-on-one combat, where knowledge must be demonstrated out of context, and where collaborating is considered cheating. As a result much of our institutionalised teaching and training is perceived by would-be learners as irrelevant, and most of us come out of this treatment feeling that learning is boring and arduous, and that we are not really cut out for it.
>
> So, what if we adopted a different perspective, one that placed learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world? What if we assumed that learning is as much a part of our human nature as eating and sleeping, that it is both life sustaining and inevitable, and that—given a chance—we are quite good at it? And what if, in addition, we assumed that learning is, in its essence, a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing? What kind of understanding would such a perspective yield on how learning takes place and on what is required to support it?[21]

And what would this mean for the measurement of 'outcomes' of 'learning' or instruction? How would we know that anyone has learned anything from what we have taught?

My strong contention is that we can only know this through long term connection. What happens five years, 10 years, 15 years, or 20 years later? Where do our students take their learning? We can only know in a quite limited way what they know and learn this day, this week, this month. But we can know in a deep way what they have learned after five, 10, 15 or 20 years. If only we ask and observe.

Frameworks for reflection, practice and further reading

I have endeavoured to open up some frameworks for reflection and exploring just what we are doing in our teaching and learning. I invite you to consider the following questions:

- Does the metaphor of the 'wounded healer' help us in our teaching and pastoral practice? What wounds do you carry? How does your experience in this way help you as a teacher or leader or carer?[22]
- To what extent are we building communities of practice in school? How successful are we at this? How do we know?[23]
- Consider and read more of 'practices' models of learning (as exemplified in the 'What If' learning paradigms of Trevor Cooling and David I Smith, and in the work of James KA Smith and others).[24]
- Respond to Leunig's challenge of the ethics of business in his Samaritan story retelling. Must business leadership and servant leadership be different? Are there other ways?
- Is it not the case truly, that if we chose to follow biblical values—Micah 6:8 and Luke 10:27ff—that we are at loggerheads with the values of our culture? Are material or professional success, and success in ethical and gospel terms on completely different planets? Just what sort of success do we value by our very existence? Could being an ideal educated Christian actually put you at a disadvantage in a world that values getting ahead? Where do we stand?[25]

- How should we consider real-life outcomes over tick-a-box curriculum document 'outcomes' or university entrance ranks? What are students doing at age 20, 25, 30, 35 in response to their schooling? What led them from their school days to be doing what they are now doing? What worked? What emerged for them?
- If people choose a life of mission or service, how might this in fact be under-the-radar success?
- How must we challenge students to be aware of their privileged status and its implications?
- If parables and pedagogies are both places where you dwell or take up residence, following Bailey (2008) and DI Smith (2009), what are the implications of this for your own teaching and learning?
- To what extent should we 'abduct' our students to encourage them to see things anew, and engage in new ways in the world?[26]
- Consider the constant refrain of Jesus in his teaching: 'Listen! Look!' (or 'Behold! Hark!) How does this relate to our ethical and theological teaching, and indeed to all of our teaching?
- Should we push students toward adult modes of learning (learning autonomously, informally and lifelong)?
- How can we build a stronger understanding and analysis of technologies? Just what are they? How can we move beyond being just consumers of new technology, but instead engage with meaning, value, purpose and all the possibilities of new (and old) technologies?[27]
- How should we respond to the current world's workplace changes and the dilemmas of disappearing long-term careers, globalisation, casualisation of the workforce worldwide, and the need for small-scale entrepreneurialism in a shifting unstable economy?
- Fewer people are seriously studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, ironically in light of the burgeoning need to manage and understand new technologies and big data, and not just be consumers. How can we

engage serious STEM and STEAM (STEM+Arts) learners?

- To what extent is engagement in the real needs of the world a matter of spiritual discernment? Is materialist culture allied to spiritual blindness? What are the implications of this for Christian education?

Endnotes

1 Text from the Michael Leunig cartoon 'Samaritan' (adapting the parable in Luke 10) http://www.leunig.com.au/cartoons/recent-cartoons/247-samaritan 14 February 2014.

2 National Press Club Address by Catherine Livingstone, leader of the Business Council of Australia, delivered in Canberra 29 April 2015: http://www.bca.com.au/media/national-press-club-address-by-catherine-livingstone. Press question following the address from David Crowe from *The Australian* newspaper: http://www.bca.com.au/media/national-press-club-address-by-catherine-livingstone-qanda-transcript

3 James KA Smith argues that Christian formation may indeed not often be compatible with secular models of success. See James K A Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2009, pp 217–223.

4 Consider the true breadth of technologies. Technology is emphatically not just internet devices, smartboards and death by PowerPoint. Don't neglect the established technologies: pencils, books, black/whiteboards, laser printers, copiers, film, video, pianos, violins, guitars, amplifiers, speakers, televisions, radios, recording media, flutes, harpsichords, podcasts, calculators, cars, bicycles, thermometers, rucksacks, saddles, shoes, spreadsheets, word-processors, aircraft, rockets, balloons, cupboards, databases, html, saws, overlockers, Geiger counters, clocks, compasses, boats, and so on...

5 'Outcomes-Based Education', especially as promoted and developed by William Spady, and widely adopted in Australia during the 1990s and early 2000s. Spady, W, 'Choosing outcomes of significance', *Educational Leadership*, 51(6), 1994, 18–22.

6 See Henri JM Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, HarperCollins, London, 1998.

7 David I Smith, *Learning from the Stranger: Christian Faith and Cultural Diversity*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2009, reflects on the core Christian practice of demonstrating hospitality to the stranger and sojourner.

8 Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, IVP, Downers Grove, 2008, analyses the significance of *cultivation* and *creation* of culture for Christians, moving beyond *critique* and *condemnation*, and eschewing mere *copying* and *consumption*.

9 Luke 10:25–37

10 Matthew 13:1–30

11 John 4:5–44

12 *New Tricks* (BBC TV series) http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0362357/

13 *Wallander* (BBC TV series) http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1178618/

14 *Scott and Bailey* (ITV series) http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1843678/

15 Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, Doubleday Image, New York, 1972.

16 Kenneth E Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, 2008. See also Kenneth E Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, 2011.

17 Bailey (2008, pp. 280–81).

18 David I Smith, 'Does God dwell in the detail? The daily grind of Christian teaching', lecture delivered at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 19 April 2001, pp. 8–10 (citing D Hamilton, *Towards a theory of schooling*, Falmer Press, Basingstoke, 1989, pp. 39–40).

19 Leonard Sweet, Brian McLaren & Jerry Haselmayer, *A is for Abductive: The language of the emerging church*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2003, pp 31–33.

20 Elliot Eisner discusses Dewey's 'flexible purposing', as a normative artistic practice, where goals emerge during the work of the artist's hands, and may differ greatly from initial aims. Elliot W Eisner, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2002, pp. 77–79.

21 Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 3.

22 Read further Henri JM Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*, Doubleday Image, New York, 1972. See also note 6.

23 See especially Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

24 David I Smith & James K A Smith (eds), *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2011. David I Smith & Susan M Felch, *Teaching and Christian Imagination*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2016. James K A Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, Brazos, Grand Rapids, 2016. James K A Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2009; and James K A Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2013. The 'WhatIf Learning' website of teaching resources, produced by international collaboration of Christian educators: http://www.whatiflearning.com/

25 See note 3 reference.

26 See note 19 reference.

27 See note 4.

5 Holding a Christian worldview

Jean Ashton

> A worldview is an 'all-embracing life system' founded on three fundamental relations of human existence: humanity's relation to God, humanity's relation to other humans and humanity's relation to the world.
>
> Abraham Kuyper

What does it look like to hold a 'Christian worldview'? And how should our worldview impact on the way we live and work in school? These are important questions for Christian educators at a time when followers of Christ are branded as outdated, out of touch with reality; not sufficiently tolerant, inclusive and embracing of diversity.

Educators in Christian schools have an untrammeled opportunity to impart the hope that the gospel of Christ brings to such a relativistic world, as we teach and interact with our students day by day. When faith underpins educators' lives it cannot help but impact on their teaching and relationships with students. The articulation of a Christian worldview must always be as a natural integration of faith and works, rather than as an addition to content or as a variation in pedagogy which has the potential to be tokenistic and lacking authenticity.

Defining worldview

Worldview has been defined as a complete and integrated framework through which to see the entire world. For believers in Christ, this means affirming the existence of an intelligent, powerful, loving, just God who exists in the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a triune God who created all things, and who sustains the world and all that exists in it (Genesis 1:1 & Hebrews 1:3a). From an ethical perspective, God's moral nature is absolute and unchanging. Belief in such a God impacts on not only morality, but psychology, sociology, economics, history, politics and the law, with all those aspects coming into play for educators in schools.

Translated from the German *Weltanschauung,* the term 'worldview' has had a long history in philosophy, theology, anthropology and education, and was first used by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) who believed that reason alone could help bring 'understanding of the meaning of the world and our place within it ... without reference to religion or tradition'.[1] The Idealist philosopher Schelling (1775–1854) saw 'worldview' speaking into humanity's longing for answers to the deepest questions of existence and the universe, and his focus on worldview influenced German Idealism and Romanticism where *Weltanschauung* was used 'to denote a set of beliefs that underlie and shape all human thought and action'.[2]

Since then, many philosophers have offered views of reality or how the world works, although in a world marked by pluralism and relativism, the idea of a single, or even a conflict of worldviews is untenable[3] because conflict can only exist if there is competition for an account of the same world. Because there are many conceptions of what constitutes the world and reality, there are many worldviews or any number of alternative universes.[4] For example, a deistic worldview might offer belief in a creator God who established a universe to run according to uniformity and order, but who otherwise plays no part in its function, and a naturalistic worldview holds that matter exists, but God does not, whereas New Age advocates may look to crystals or drugs for altered states of consciousness, thereby creating their own gods for their own purpose and pleasure.[5]

Most worldviews centre on several philosophical questions, including (a) what is the prime reality? (b) Where does it all come from? (c) Who are we as humans, and where are we going in the present and at death? (d) What is good and what is evil—is it possible to know right from wrong? (e) How should we act? (f) What is true and what is false?[6] In most cases in order to address these questions, we look to our finite minds, only to find unsatisfactory answers and little hope.

The Christian worldview

Worldview thinking was first introduced into Christian theology by James Orr in the 1890s[7] in the form of ideas that were Christocentric and able to address all major issues related to human flourishing. Orr's premise was that the universe is one; one set of laws holding it together under one reigning order. Abraham Kuyper[8] later defined worldview as an 'all-embracing life system' founded on three fundamental relations of human existence: humanity's relation to God, humanity's relation to other humans and humanity's relation to the world. This meant accepting Christ as the fulfilment of salvation history, and the account of creation at the hand of God as an authentic, coherent system of truth which alone addressed the concerns of the world, and provided a basis for decision making and activity. The pollutant nature of sin limits humanity's understanding of itself or the world without a biblical viewpoint, which by its nature is antithetical to all competing worldviews.

While the biblical narrative of creation says little about the process, it says much about the nature and person of God. It identifies one majestic, infinite and eternal God, and tells of God's sovereignty, goodness, kindness, righteousness and wisdom. It speaks of God's order and preparation (Genesis 1:2), and his supreme command eliciting an immediate response (Genesis 1:3ff). We see God's pleasure and delight in his creative handiwork, especially of his 'magnum opus', making humanity in his own image (Genesis 1:26), 'like' him, ruling as his emissary under his dominion and authority.[9] We also experience God's heart-rending response to sin and alienation of his 'beloved' from his fellowship.

As believers in Christ our worldview must reflect our acknowledgment that sin is offensive to God, an offence against creation, human life, health, prosperity, wholeness and human flourishing, resulting in

'cosmic conflict' with terrible consequences.[10] The world has replaced the Sovereign Lord with idols in images of its own making, which shape the structure of today's social and cultural life. Sin has stained creation which is groaning in response (Romans 8:22), yet God chose to remove the stain, sending his own Son to the cross to make reparation and reconciliation. Jesus overcame sin and evil at the cross, bringing an inauguration of his kingdom, which will be fully consummated when he returns, bringing a new heaven and a new earth. In the interim, God's people must live lives transformed by the Holy Spirit, and be filled with hope as we declare Jesus Christ as Lord (Philippians 2:11).

A personal appropriation of Christian faith

As we address those age old questions and appropriate responses from scripture, we develop our worldview. Firstly, we understand that the prime reality, the core of Christian faith, the central tenet of Christian theology is the infinite, transcendent, immanent, omniscient, sovereign, yet relational God! His existence is without beginning and without end; he is the *I AM WHO I AM* of Exodus 3:14.[11] God is personal, not merely a force or energy, who has passed many aspects of his being on to us. Furthermore, the God who shapes our worldview is omniscient, knowing the end from the beginning (Revelation 22:13), caring for sparrows (Matthew 10:29), and numbering our days according to Psalm 139. Nothing exists outside God's interest, control or authority; he is sovereign (2 Chronicles 20:6) over the earth. Secondly, while the way the world came into being and how it functions is empirically untestable, humanity exists in a universe redolent of a creator, governed by physical laws, unlikely to have ever come into being merely by chance.[12] Genesis 1:1 says: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*, ex nihilo, out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3) as an orderly but open system of sophisticated and elegant laws of physics; as the deliberate creation of one Lord for his purpose alone. Life is no accident, and life for individuals can only be truly meaningful when connected to God, the source of all life!

The question of humanity's identity and life beyond death has provoked much philosophical debate over time. Yet while it continues to perplex humankind and encourages discussion of life's meaning, the

issue has been addressed from the earliest account of creation when God made humanity in his very image (Genesis 1:26–27). As social beings (Genesis 2:18), we have been dignified 'with glory and honour' (Psalm 8:5), to rule over the earth under God's guiding hand (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8:6–7), and to worship the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:31). Moreover, as co-heirs with Christ, God's only true son (Galatians 4:4–7), in addition to life with him now, we also have a secure rest with him for eternity (John 10:28).

Although knowing right from wrong should be part of our DNA, inherent in all that was 'good' at the time of creation (Genesis 1:31), humanity chose to disobey the Creator, to go its own way. Since then our moral nature has been contaminated and humanity's close relationship with God, and the ability to reason fully without falling into error have been marred.[13] Accurate knowledge of the world is thus impaired; good and evil are less readily discerned; exploitation of others is commonplace; and reality has become less clearly defined. It is only by redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ that healing can begin, to finally be restored when Christ ushers in his new and glorious kingdom (Revelation 21:1) at the world's end. In the scriptures we glimpse a universe with an absolute standard who is God himself, by whom all moral judgements and activity are measured. We see too the person of Jesus Christ who alone is sinless, obedient to the will of his father, infinitely loving, who gave his life for us that we might be reconciled to God (Romans 5:7–8).

We accept as truth several turning points in documented history, singled out by biblical writers under God's direction as the basis of our theistic understanding of humanity over time. Biblical history reveals the fall, God's revelation to Abraham, his choosing of Israel, the exodus, and the giving of the Law and the prophets. History records the incarnation and life of Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection, Pentecost, the spread of the gospel via the church, and Christ's return and judgement. Today, time is irreversible and history is localised, yet it has meaning because God is behind it, upholding it (Hebrews 1:3) and working all things together 'to those who are called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28). Yet we know there will be an end to recorded history, 'because God has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in

righteousness by the man whom He has ordained' (Acts 17:31), when a new age will be inaugurated (Revelation 21:1).

Holding a Christian worldview as an educator

While holding fast to our hope in God, Christian educators must also be clear about the purpose of education which should shape individuals, foster the development of ideas and information and support well-being.[14] As God's emissaries, believers must be exemplary educators, highly qualified and always professional. Yet in his book, *Desiring the Kingdom*, James Smith says Christian educators must also encourage hearts, passions and desires for the kingdom, by transforming imaginations rather than saturating intellects! Our goal must echo Paul's when he says, 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds' (Romans 12:2) and our mandate follows the writer of Proverbs 22:6 who says, 'Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.'

While few young people attend church today, school is mandatory, and educators are well positioned therefore to share the gospel and nurture families and students alike.[15] Articulating a Christian worldview and embedding it in teaching does not necessarily come naturally, however, and support may be required to help staff develop and express a worldview reflective of the gospel of Christ in meaningful ways.[16] It is the responsibility of Christian heads and chaplains to equip educators in this task in order that it may become part of the primary culture of the school. If faith is seen as mainstream it gives it legitimacy to become part of the school discourse. When faith is held and shared unapologetically, any embarrassment associated with declaring faith in Christ is minimised.[17]

If Christian worldviews are to influence the pluralistic thinking of students, educators must firstly resist contemporary influences themselves and intentionally turn their hearts to the things of God. This may involve challenging current thinking, teaching both offensively and defensively, and consciously integrating theological realities with all aspects of life. Secondly, Christian educators must have a clear understanding of the relevance and importance of God's revelation and the overall story of scripture. Finally, they must be open to discussion

about life's challenges and how the Bible deals with these. Sociocultural pedagogies best encourage robust, interactional learning, and foster respectful and trusting relationships between peers, and between educators and students. It is in this kind of setting that formative learning can take place.

Attending to curriculum issues is a more complex matter, yet most subjects can be conceptualised in reference to the overarching biblical story about the created and material world and humanity's relationship to God.[18] As educators and students alike live in the world, it is not only to scripture, however, but to the surrounding culture to which we must relate, and to determine the way opposing belief systems interact. Although Christian doctrines are important to the way our worldview is conceived, theology should never be taught in isolation. Unless biblical teaching and theological issues are critiqued together they become merely 'propositional truth statements, rather than the very interpretative foundation and framework for thinking about reality.'[19]

Essentially, Christian educators need to understand the gospel, to have experienced its impact personally, and be clear about the reality that sin has corrupted human culture. Even so, teaching from a Christian perspective is not just adding a touch of moral integrity, devotional piety or biblical insight to issues as they emerge. When equipped with a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 26:36), and knowing 'the hope of His calling' (Ephesians 1:18), Christian educators are likely to feel compelled to share God's grace and salvation through faith in Christ[20] with their students, because the reality of sin alienates such students from God. This does not mean thinking uncritically or simply sprouting Bible verses, nor is 'relating the gospel to education simply a matter of putting religious icing on an otherwise secular educational cake'. Rather, confessing believers need to develop approaches to teaching and learning grounded in the Word of God, which takes account of 'creation-wide redemption', offering 'a brand new cake'.[21]

Holding to 'the ethos' of a Christian worldview

Although all members of staff in Christian schools would be expected to maintain a high degree of professionalism in their job and loyalty to their employers, irrespective of their personally held relationship with

the Lord Jesus Christ, the thinking and ideologies of believers and non-believers are largely antithetical to one another. It would be surprising, therefore, and a denial of one's personally held beliefs, if the 'ethos of a Christian worldview' could be maintained without faith in Christ. Furthermore, even if the non-Christian educator's intent was to teach with a 'Christian ethos', neutral, non-formative education does not exist. Every educator's personal culture, philosophy, upbringing, educational experience, aspirations and goals impact their worldview, and worldview impacts what is taught, and the way it is taught in every situation.

Conclusion

All people hold a worldview irrespective of their ability to conceive the way it looks, explain how it came to be adopted, or to articulate it before others. Everything said and done is value laden, shaped by the way people view themselves and the world, and developed through experience and learning. Worldviews impact the way others are viewed, and the way relationships are developed and nurtured. In short, a worldview impacts every area of life, speaking into work and social environments, colouring politics, and for teachers, the way they respond to a syllabus, a topic or an issue, and work with colleagues, parents and students.

As educators in Christian schools, our worldview should be integrated with curriculum and pedagogy, grounded in knowledge and understanding of God and his plan and purpose for humanity and the world. Communication with students needs to be authentic and relational, and based on genuine care and concern for their academic, social and spiritual welfare. As ambassadors of Christ, educators must be clear about the message of the gospel and to be able to present it in ways that engage the diversity of our students, especially in a post-Christendom era. Christian educators also need to recognise the limitations of didactic teaching, instead presenting the gospel with integrity, and always prepared to engage apologetically around issues. As people under close scrutiny, educators need to be models and mentors living out our faith, as well as exemplary practitioners, disciplined, thoroughly prepared, just and fair, and acting as disciples for those new to faith. Finally, Christian schools need to be prepared to support parents and to maintain contact with former students, through alumni or other

means, ensuring that faith is not seen just as school-based, but is relevant for the whole of life as students transition through school, then into the workforce or tertiary study.

Endnotes

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15 John Collier, Introduction, in Ken Goodlet and John Collier, *Teaching well: Insights for educators in Christian Schools,* Canberra, Australia, Barton Books, 2014.

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20 Louis Berkhof and Cornelius Van Til. *Foundations of Christian education: Addresses to Christian teachers,* Phillipsburg, HJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1990, p. 68.

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6 School cultures and student formation

Justine Toh

> You have created us for yourself, and our heart is not quiet until it rests in you.
>
> Augustine of Hippo

Emily[1] attended a private school that formally preached Christian values of charity, compassion, service and love. And yet, she said, in the playground it was clear that what really mattered was how much money your dad made, what expensive holiday you'd enjoyed over the summer, and how well you could perform in assessments with minimal effort or, at least, the appearance of it.

To be fair, the school in question may not be to blame for this informal curriculum. Emily may have been part of a particularly unruly generation. And any institution with a Christian ethos daring to challenge such reigning values as power, money and ego has a formidable task ahead of it.

Whatever the case, there was clearly a profound mismatch between a school's stated values and its actual practices. The lesson seems to be that if the culture of a school doesn't encourage rigorous examination of its practices in light of its principles, it risks baptising assumptions and beliefs as Christian that are anything but.

In this chapter, I want to address whether we have absorbed and been formed by practices of the informal cultures we operate in, and whether they set us at profound odds with God's new world. To what extent have we, the redeemed children of God, actually proved to be children of lesser gods? Have we given our hearts, attention, resources, energies and desires to something in place of God? In such lesser gods do we seek meaning and purpose? And if yes, then how can a recommitment to the Christian story renew our practices?

To answer these questions, we'll first consider character formation that draws (liberally!) on the work of James K A Smith; then, we'll examine the informal cultures of our educational environments; and finally, we'll explore one of our lesser gods, utility, or our tendency to seek our significance in our usefulness.

How character is (de)formed

Two points that James K A Smith's work teaches us about character formation are: that love is at the centre of how and why we become the people we are, and that such significant character growth and development (and its opposite) is an everyday affair.

Why did those girls in Emily's story grasp after such values as riches and achievement? Because the environments in which they were enmeshed communicated, in implicit and explicit ways, that these were fitting ambitions in life. Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom* offers an account of why this is so. Following Augustine of Hippo, Smith claims that humans are lovers whose identities are shaped by what we love. All of us, he says, are on a quest for the 'Holy Grail'—'that hoped-for, longed-for, dreamed-of picture of the good life' (2009, p. 54). Accordingly, such a pursuit shapes our common sense attitudes, deeply held commitments and values, and even our most (seemingly) intuitive actions. If this portrait of humanity is correct, then even the non-believers among us are natural born worshippers—if not of God, then of something else. The trouble is, however, that if we were made by God to worship him and him alone, worship of *anything else*—a lesser god—is deforming and disordering.

But such disordering is rarely a climactic experience that transforms us utterly from one instant to the next. Deformation is much more

likely to be the result of a steady drip of unremarkable moments that, over time, wears away at us until we are quite different from what we might otherwise have been. We may pride ourselves on being rational, autonomous individuals who make free and deliberate choices, but we operate on auto-pilot more often than not. In *Imagining the Kingdom*, Smith draws on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* to get us to attend to the unconscious quirks of habit and the repetitive moves we make because these small acts act on us profoundly, shaping us to become the people we are.

As a 'system of structured, structuring dispositions' (Bourdieu in Smith 2013, p. 81), *habitus* is an 'embodied tradition' and 'a handed-down way of being' (Smith 2013, p. 81) that conditions and constrains the meaning we make of the world. *Habitus* orients our perception, automatically ruling out some choices and rendering others instinctive. But there's nothing natural or innate about the operations of *habitus*. It is entirely acquired. Think of it this way: we are not born native to any country or language or culture—rather, we *become* native through the rites of *habitus* (Smith 2013, p. 93).

Those small, everyday acts of *habitus* are important because they 'can instil a whole cosmology, through injunctions as insignificant as "sit up straight" or "don't hold your knife in your left hand"' (Bourdieu in Smith 2013, p. 96). Smith explains thus:

> While a child is learning to sit straight or hold her knife she is unconsciously absorbing a social imaginary, a picture of social order, a vision of the good life—even if her 'teachers' might not realise they are passing it on. To learn how to stand or how to walk is to learn how to comport oneself to the world, which is, in turn, to learn how to *constitute* one's world (Smith 2013, p. 96)

So how we are taught to be in the world is, simultaneously, teaching us about that world—what it holds dear, what it ignores, who matters and why, and what kind of person I will need to become in order to thrive. Seemingly insignificant acts, then, are anything but. And while Bourdieu's example might prompt us to primarily attend to the formal environments where learning takes place, we should note that we are *always* being schooled—for better or worse. So that sexy selfie pose,

the pre-game ritual performed by anxious athletes, the good-natured giving up of your seat on the train to someone who needs it more than you: all these acts deposit in us something far grander than we might realise: a 'whole cosmology', a vision of ultimate reality. The magnitude of what is at stake is belied by the tiny, mundane act. The lesson is that there is no small thing: *everything* is weighty with significance.

How 'the small stuff' of character is formed

The small stuff smuggles in the big stuff. In this section I'll provide examples of a school's informal culture(s), using as a rough guide the four activities of culture that Kevin Vanhoozer outlines in *Everyday Theology* (2007).

Two caveats, however, are necessary. Firstly, there are likely to be multiple informal cultures at work in a school depending on whether one is a student, teacher or parent—and even then you can expect much diversity within these subgroups. Clearly, teachers don't have total control over what students value, but they can at least demonstrate a different set of values that at least present students with another option. Secondly, life—and the analysis of it—is messy. A multitude of interpretations are available. So think big picture: we're looking for broad, unifying themes, though these will often be expressed in the small, everyday moves of *habitus*. Educators' experience of different school environments will be of help here.

1. Culture communicates a vision of the world

Cultural statements are *vision* statements, and cultural texts have the ability to seize our imaginations, (original emphasis, Vanhoozer 2007, p. 29). That is, culture communicates the meaning of life, and proclaims what is worth aiming our lives at and what should shape our commitments.

In order to understand what vision of the world is being communicated by a school's *official* culture, observe the school when it's 'on show'. What values are proclaimed? Think of school assemblies and other ceremonies: what traditions and rituals are employed? What impression is it important to make? How are students expected to conduct themselves—are there comparable injunctions for them to 'sit up straight'?

To get a sense of whether a school's informal culture lives out its formal convictions, it's vital to ask: what are the penalties for deviating from these norms? How does the school manage its problem kids? The nature and severity of punishments, and whether or not a difficult student is supported or expelled can reveal a school's deeper commitments. That is, a school may tout a 'Christian ethic of care' (whatever this might mean), but its dealings with troubled students may instead suggest that it is only willing to tolerate behaviour within a narrow band of acceptability. Of course, expulsion may be the most appropriate course of action, but is such a step regarded as a last resort? Has every reasonable effort been made to counsel the student? Could a Christian school's actions leave the impression that Jesus is only interested in uncomplicated people? If so, it's not exactly an inspiring (or accurate) vision of the world!

2. Culture orients us in relation to the world

This activity of culture provides mental, moral and affective maps that enable us to navigate the world. We learn right from wrong, likes and dislikes and what is important and what isn't (Vanhoozer 2007, p. 29). To appreciate the extent to which culture guides us in our convictions about the world and orientations toward it, consider Smith's account, in *Desiring the Kingdom*, of George Orwell's visceral summary of middle- and upper-class prejudice against the poor: 'the lower classes smell' (original emphasis, Orwell in Smith 2009, p. 30).

According to Orwell, such snobbishness was never formally cultivated by his elite education but it so pervaded his formative years it left an indelible impression:

> You forget your Latin and Greek within a few months of leaving school—I studied Greek for eight or ten years, and now, at thirty-three, I cannot even repeat the Greek alphabet—but your snobbishness, unless you persistently root it out like the bindweed it is, sticks by you till your grave (Orwell in Smith 2009, p. 30).

Orwell's story is unnerving. It demonstrates that a school's informal education can prove so enduring that it sets up a lifetime of habits and attitudes and persists long after students can recall what they were

actually taught. What might your students remember long after they've left school?

3. Culture reproduces beliefs and values

Culture produces and reproduces shared social meanings, and dominant assumptions, attitudes, values, ideas and beliefs (Vanhoozer 2007, p. 29). If it's hard to get critical distance from a situation in order to spot its values, it may be helpful to consider the experience of minority students and/or teachers—those on the fringes of the school population. How are they treated? What's their sense of the school's informal curriculum? And don't rely on your interpretation—ask them!

For example, a friend who attended a private, rural school some years ago said it was clear that sporting success mattered above all else. Why did he believe that? Because teachers were lenient on star athletes—communicating through their words, gestures and shining admiration that assessments didn't matter as much as their game, and tolerating the bad behaviour of some of those boys winning accolades for the school.

Additionally, the kind of masculinity prized at that school was one that valued physical dominance and aggression since these contributed to the school's sporting prowess. Boys who didn't fit that mould (like my friend) were targeted with impunity. This school's informal culture, then, tolerated bullying, failed to support vulnerable students, uncritically upheld rigid definitions of masculinity and conveyed that popularity and achievement mattered far more than character—and it was a Christian school.

4. Culture cultivates character

According to Vanhoozer, culture is a means of 'spiritual formation' inasmuch as it 'forms our spirit so that we become this kind of person rather than that kind' (2007, p. 31). Culture, then, does the vital work of making people, and schools may employ a variety of different tools, curricula, and resources to formally influence this process. But if a faith-based school isn't aware of how that faith could impact its practice, then it may not maximise the opportunities at hand to shape its students.

For example, a leadership program offered in a Christian school included a lecture that exhorted students to believe in themselves. Harmless enough, perhaps—especially in the context of other features

of the program that dispensed otherwise sage advice on leadership. But what should be made of the fact that there would seem to be little difference between this program and one offered in a public school? In other words, a fair assessment of the program could only conclude that it wasn't distinctively Christian.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the program was of little value. But you could argue that it presented a missed opportunity to present the wealth of Christian wisdom on leadership—servant-leadership, humility, calling, etc.—that may have gone on to shape students' understanding and practice of leadership, even if they didn't identify as Christians. The point is: character cultivation need not necessarily be a toxic affair—but nor may it be a Christian one.

The lesser god of utility

In this part we will bring together our analysis, focussing on a lesser god that monopolises the worship of many today: utility, or usefulness. When we seamlessly link our identity and abilities to our performance in any field, we reveal our belief that we have value because we are useful, or because of our achievements or the contribution we make. It becomes very easy for thoughts of our utility to consume us and become the basis of our meaning and significance.

We need to dethrone this lesser god because utility is the informal culture of our educational system at large and it can infiltrate Christian and public school alike. Students from backgrounds that place a high premium on academic success may be particularly devoted to this false god. (Believe me, I should know). Even aside from such students, however, it's a reality today that performance is everything. It is used to rank pupils, rate teachers and compare schools with each other. We may officially tell students (and now even teachers and schools) that what matters most is that they've done their best but the dominance of metrics-based performance monitoring says something quite different.

Indeed the *habitus* of the school environment cannot help but link achievement and value. The pecking order of Emily's experience was determined according to status, material riches and academic success. Aside from the politics of that playground, think of the distribution of marks along that bell curve, the furious pursuit of scarce As, teachers

having to break classroom silence by calling upon (again!) the more engaged students to advance discussion, the adulation of sporting stars, the role of the report card in tracking student progress against expectations. And students are feeling the pressure. Anxiety and/or stress about school routinely features in the top three concerns of young people in Mission Australia's annual youth survey.

Of course, such a preoccupation with usefulness extends well beyond school. You might even argue that the years spent in formal schooling that ceaselessly assesses our performance sets us up perfectly for life in a meritocratic society. A friend who has risen in the ranks of the public service once observed that its habit of rewarding high performers wouldn't be out of place at a school presentation ceremony. Her bosses, she said, knew who worked for them: the conscientious, former high achievers of school who 'like getting good marks'. Her experience resonates with David Brooks' (2015) observation in *The Road to Character* that Western educational institutions spend more time and resources developing 'resume virtues'—the skills we bring to the marketplace—than our 'eulogy virtues'—the ones worth eulogising: kindness, loyalty, honesty, devotion and courage. We care more for career success than character.

Which is another way of saying that we demand that people are useful more than anything else. Thomas Reynolds (2008) argues that at the centre of the 'cult of normalcy'—a set of practices and values that articulate the 'normal' body—lies a 'productive imperative' that obliges individuals to be competitive, independent, efficient and innovative, and to have high earning capacity and spending power (Reynolds 2008, p. 88). Indeed, satisfying the demands of this productive imperative, either by producing capital or consuming goods and services, is what it takes to be a 'normal' and valued member of our market-driven society—among the Federal Government's 'lifters' (those who contribute to the public purse) and not the 'leaners' (those who take from it, though this group is separated into the worthy needy and those who game the system).[2] In such an environment, how can people *not* believe that their worth is bound up with their productivity, their achievements, their contribution to society? How can they *not* worship utility?

The problem with utility, however, is that it fails us—as do all lesser gods. A worldview based upon it is geared towards exclusion:

of the individual who fails to measure up to impossible standards, and of those—people with disabilities, the very young and the very old, unpaid carers, and so on—who cannot satisfy market demands for usefulness. And this lesser god will eventually catch up with all of us. It shuns dependence; we will eventually find ourselves dependent. Being socialised to link our worth with our usefulness leaves us in no position to cope with life experiences that directly challenge our culture's measures of success. Our identities will be injured when our jobs and livelihoods, our health, are threatened.

But there is more at stake than a crisis of identity. Lives hang in the balance. You can tell the *habitus* of an achievement-oriented society has done its work when people at the frail end of life view themselves as 'burdens'—and on this ground, argue for the legalisation of euthanasia. Regarding a person in such terms is dehumanising and deforming, and represents the internalisation of market-based thinking since if someone can no longer contribute they're a drain on resources, time and money. But we can hardly expect those who've run on the performance treadmill all their lives, who've been trained to link their worth and value with their ability to achieve, to suddenly reorient their identities around something else. And while the worship of utility impacts ethical matters arising at the end of life, obviously the frail beginnings of life, particularly in relation to practices aimed at screening out foetuses with disabilities, are similarly implicated.

If we're going to lose our religion, it might as well be in this false god of utility. But how? Elizabeth MacKinlay, a specialist in aged care, spirituality and disability, says, '... the challenge is to revalue life, so that *being* is valued as much as *doing*' (original emphasis, 2006, p. 147). This is a radical statement in a culture that often treats *being* and *doing* interchangeably. The Christian doctrine of the *imago dei*, however, accomplishes such a revaluing of life. The image of God is bestowed on all, regardless of function, ability or usefulness, and entails that everyone possesses an intrinsic dignity and value that remains constant despite all the changes experienced throughout life.

This status severs, once and for all, the link between worth and achievement, identity and ability. In claiming that all were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), the Bible writers rejected the beliefs of their pagan contemporaries that held that only a few (kings or high

priests) could bear a divine image. In doing so, they ushered in a new social order where everyone could flourish, not simply the powerful at the expense of the weak (Middleton 2005:195).

The invaluable worth of everyone, regardless of the strength or feebleness of their efforts, will both humble the (secretly relieved) high achievers and encourage those whose accomplishments are more modest. It should also (in theory at least!) take the sting out of competition since others aren't threats competing for scarce resources but are neighbours who similarly bear the image of God.

As such, the *imago dei* is a distinctively Christian offering that has the potential to transform the formal and informal cultures of a school. In light of the pervasiveness of utility-based thinking in our society, can I encourage you to think of habits that can become part of your daily practice that can affirm in students their precious standing before God—one that isn't dependent on their abilities but is wholly a result of God's grace? What practices can you establish that will encourage the sports star who's just blown a significant game, or a diligent but average student whose achievements can't live up to their expectations? What small moves can you make, and what new habits as an educator can you establish, that can show your students and colleagues that you regard them as a neighbour who bears the image of God? Even something as small (though admittedly, it's no minor task) as knowing students (who aren't in your class) by name can impress upon them your recognition of their worth beyond their achievements. And not only students: what about the maintenance staff? Are they known by name?

I remember a time in kindergarten when the teacher said whoever could sit up the straightest would be allowed to erase the chalkboard. (When you're 5 and on the way to becoming a model student, this kind of task counts as a treat.) It's only now as I imagine my younger self—sitting on the floor with legs crossed, arms at 45 degrees to the floor, straining so far backward I would have toppled over had I not had my knees in a white-knuckled grip—that I ask what was impressed upon me by this trivial moment. Perhaps a belief that those who try really hard are the ones who deserve to be rewarded.

If such a small act can smuggle in a 'whole cosmology', then perhaps establishing new habits may wind up making a world of difference. There

always remains the possibility that an attachment to lesser idols—like that of utility—can be overcome by devotion to the real God.

Endnotes

1 Not her real name!

2 Former Federal Treasurer Joe Hockey used this terminology. See an abridged version of his Budget speech in 2014 at http://www.afr.com/news/policy/tax/joe-hockey-we-are-a-nation-of-lifters-not-leaners-20140513-ituma (accessed August 24, 2016).

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7 Bible knowledge

Stephen Renn

> The specificity of our identity as Christian religious educators is clear when our role is seen as a ministry of the Word and even more particularly as a service of sponsoring people in their ongoing formation to live the Word.
>
> T H Groome, Christian Religious Education

I have chosen to focus on the process of teaching the Bible in such a way as to maximise high quality learning outcomes for students. These outcomes, ideally, should not only be concerned with the cognitive processing of biblical content, but also with the transformation of the students' world and life view, along with the transformation of their lives. In order to rightly orient such a pedagogical approach, we need to address two questions: How do students acquire and internalise knowledge of the Bible? And what does it mean to 'know the Bible'? Building on this foundation, we'll then consider how best to put these principles into practice in the classroom.

Some philosophical assumptions

Our philosophical starting-point is self-consciously grounded in scripture. The fundamental truth about human identity is defined by scripture in terms of the so-called 'Creator-creature' distinction, derived from the accounts of God's creative endeavours in Genesis 1 and 2. At the core of this distinction is the affirmation that human beings are totally

dependent on God for all their knowledge—including knowledge of God's Word, the Bible.

By way of contrast, the non-Christian world view is that humankind is autonomous. Cornelius Van Til, the renowned apologist of classic Reformed theology in his work, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, concludes that, even if the unbeliever were to acknowledge the existence of God, he is convinced he does not need God to discover any truths about the universe, whether they be physical, rational or ethical. This anti-theistic view is coupled with the conviction that God is subject to the laws of human reason and logic.[1]

Van Til argues that the only legitimate system and source of knowledge available to humankind is an 'analogical system', whereby God is acknowledged as 'original' and man as 'derivative'.[2] This is another way of describing the 'Creator-creature' distinction: that human beings, made in the image of God, are totally dependent upon God as the source of true knowledge and understanding of the world they inhabit. This includes the acquisition and understanding of the special revelation God has given us in the Bible.

Reflection point:

These ideas need to be meaningfully and appropriately communicated to students, without the teacher resorting merely to authoritative pronouncements. For example—assuming the target students have the developmental capacity to handle such questions—the teacher might ask the class something like this: Just for the sake of this exercise, suspend any scepticism you might have about the worth of the Bible, and ask yourself the following question: If the Bible really did originate with God, and God is indeed the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and everything in it, how should I respond to this book?

In *The Sufficiency of Scripture,* Noel Weeks complements and reinforces this perspective of Van Til, when he makes the following claim about the role and function of the Holy Spirit in the communication of biblical truth to human beings: 'It is the Spirit who removes the veil of misunderstanding and enables a man to understand the scriptures (2 Cor. 3:14–18).'[3]

The implications of these assumptions about the source and nature of human knowledge and understanding are profound and have powerful

ramifications for the teaching of biblical knowledge to children and young people. Such meaningful teaching and learning will be impossible without the ministry of the Spirit of God. And such presuppositions will significantly shape the pedagogical assumptions we make, and the strategies we adopt for the way the Bible is taught in the classroom, and how our students learn and process that biblical knowledge. We will now turn to consider some key elements of this strategy.

Reflection point:

As students can only gain a full and transformative understanding of the Bible's teaching via the ministry of the Spirit, the teacher is no longer to be seen as the *sole* factor in whether or not students learn the content of the Bible effectively, and have it transform their lives. Rather, the teacher is at best a *facilitator* for optimal learning in such a process. To put this another way: no amount of high quality pedagogy—by itself in teaching a Bible curriculum—will result in a life-transforming spiritual experience for the student. So, as teachers carefully and prayerfully prepare their Bible lessons, it will be with the realisation that this process is *primarily* a spiritual, rather than simply an intellectual, pedagogical exercise.

What does it mean to know the Bible?

Is our aim simply to instruct our students in Bible content, to develop learning outcomes that involve merely the academic processing of biblical doctrines and events? Should the end result of our Bible teaching constitute the mere transferring of a body of knowledge, in the same way one might teach the fundamentals of, say, economic theory, or scientific method? A genuine knowledge of the Bible goes hand-in-hand with a personal knowledge of God. One cannot be divorced from the other. To truly know the Bible involves one in an encounter with the God of the scriptures. How one responds to such an encounter will have lifelong and life-changing consequences.

Knowing the Bible: the significance of 'story'

In his book *Christian Religious Education*, Thomas Groome emphasises the fundamental importance of 'story' or 'narrative' as the foundational element of knowledge and understanding of divine revelation in the

scriptures. To illustrate his point, Groome turns to the account of the risen Christ's journey on the road to Emmaus with two of his disciples, as recorded in Luke 24:13–35. Groome offers the following observations:

> I ... see the risen Christ portrayed here as the educator par excellence. He begins by encountering and entering into dialogue with the two travellers. Rather than telling them what he knows, he first has them tell the story of their recent experience and what their hopes had been. In response he recalls a larger story of which their story is part, and a broader vision beyond what theirs had been. We might expect the typical educator to tell them now what 'to see', but he continues to wait for them to come to their own knowing. He spends more time in their company. Surely the dialogue on the road carried over to their table conversation. Eventually, in their table fellowship together, they 'came to see'. Thereupon they set out immediately to bear witness to what they now knew.[4]

First, Groome's comments refer to Jesus' own summarising of the prophetic testimony of the entire Hebrew scriptures to the coming of the Messiah, with whom Jesus consistently identified himself throughout the Gospel records. We know that Jesus was referring to the entire body of sacred scripture, for he uses a typical Jewish shorthand phrase to designate it, viz. 'from Moses to the prophets' (cf. Luke 24:27). Groome is arguing for an overarching narrative from the scriptures that contains a consistent message that lends a hermeneutical and theological unity to both the Old and New Testaments. Second, it may be reasonably inferred from the statement in verse 31 of this passage—'their eyes were opened'—that this was a phenomenon not of their own making. They were enabled to see, know and understand the true identity of their mysterious companion only via the enlightening ministry of the Spirit of God.

Groome goes on to argue:

> By story, I do not mean simple narrative. Narratives are indeed part of our story, but our story is much more than our narratives ... I mean *the whole faith tradition of our people however that is expressed or embodied.* As our people have made their pilgrimage through history, God has been active in their lives

> (as God is active in the lives of all peoples). They in turn have attempted to respond to God's actions and invitations.[5]

In other words, the term 'story' denotes a whole body of divinely-revealed historical events with a clearly-defined and coherent theological matrix. This phenomenon has been designated in relatively modern times as the 'biblical metanarrative', which in expanded terms refers to the total panorama of human redemption initiated and implemented by God alone as revealed throughout the Old and New Testaments. This 'metanarrative' is characterised by a series of covenant stages, progressively revealed throughout the Bible. They begin with the covenant of creation, and conclude with the revelation of the New Covenant, supremely manifested in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Son of God.

Louis Berkhof, in *The Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, underscores the importance and significance of biblical metanarrative in strengthening the conviction that the Bible embraces a theological and conceptual unity. In opposing the notion that the Old and New Testaments bear no organic relationship to one another, Berkhof asserts:

> In opposition to these views, it is necessary to emphasise the unity of the Bible. Both the Old and New Testament form essential parts of God's special revelation. God is the author of both, and in both has the same purpose in mind. They both contain the same doctrine of redemption, preach the same Christ, and impose upon men the same moral and religious duties. At the same time, the revelation they contain is progressive, and gradually increases in definiteness, clearness, and spiritual conception. As the New Testament is implicit in the Old, so the Old is explicit in the New. Therefore we say that the Old and New Testaments constitute a unit.[6]

Armed with these two notions of metanarrative and the unity of scripture, the Christian teacher is in a much better position to be able to offer a clear, concise summary of the Bible's essential message to his/her students. Popular, superficial conceptions of the Bible as a totally random and disparate collection of writings can thus be dispelled, when the force of these two concepts is fully appreciated. Approaching the Bible as an organically unified body of writings will make it much

easier for students to acquire a viable overview of the Bible's message from the very outset of their study.

Reflection point:

This raises a number of important practical considerations for the way Bible curricula ought ideally to be constructed. The provision of a detailed sample curriculum lies outside the brief of this article. However, I offer the following series of questions as suggested approaches for classroom teaching that I trust will provide pedagogical food for thought. I admit these are leading questions; but they are deliberately designed as such:

- Do you consciously try to weave the theme of God's plan of salvation through each of your lessons, rather than simply present a random sequence of Bible stories?
- Do you attempt to present the Bible as a unified and interrelated collection of writings with an underlying and consistent theme?
- Do you take seriously the theme of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe in your lessons?
- Do you consistently depict the narrative accounts of Bible history as being under God's sovereign control?
- Do you consciously seek to help your students understand the importance of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament that point to Jesus?
- Do you present the person of Jesus and his work of atonement on the cross as the fulfilment of the entire Old Testament?

What does it mean for students to know?

Groome writes, 'Educators usually pose the epistemological question as: How may knowing be promoted? But the answer to that question is shaped by our understanding of a prior one: What does it mean to know?' (Groome, 1980, p. 139)

How do we, as Christian educators, effectively communicate the knowledge and understanding of God's Word to the students in our care? And there is a corollary question to that inquiry: How do students optimally acquire and process such knowledge in the classroom? However, in this section of our discussion, it is the second, underlying

question above, that rises to prominence: What does it mean to know? In a strict sense, the starting-point for any such inquiry like this is an epistemological one. But focus is squarely directed to the *application* of such a question in the pedagogical arena of the classroom. Groome offers the following response to such a question:

> In attempting to find such a way of knowing, it is fitting to begin with our scriptures. The Bible offers nothing like an explicit epistemology in the sense of an articulated theory of knowledge. Yet it speaks constantly about 'knowing the Lord' and about how such knowing is promoted. Thus we can detect the way of knowing it proposes ... by investigating what it means by knowing the Lord and how it describes that knowing process. ... the way of knowing we choose as a bedrock for Christian religious education must be consistent with and capable of promoting a knowing the Lord as that is understood in Scripture.[7]

For the next stage of our inquiry, it is appropriate to approach this question from a semantic perspective, and ask the question, What terminology does the Bible use to convey the sense of 'knowing'? We shall take two key terms - one from biblical Hebrew, and the other from New Testament *koine* Greek. Groome undertakes his own detailed discussion of these two terms, but we shall limit our analysis to a summary overview.[8]

Arguably, the most profound notion of 'knowing' in the Hebrew scriptures is denoted by the Hebrew word *yādaʿ*. The semantic field of 'knowing' denoted by this verb is broad, but one of its applications is distinctly relational in denotation. In contexts where this connotation applies, *yādaʿ* means 'to know' in the sense of 'to have a personal experience of'. And this relational sense clearly implies the existence of an interpersonal relationship between God and humans—in both directions, so-to-speak. Examples of man's personal knowledge of God—including 'not knowing' him—are found in Exodus 5:2; Judges 2:10; 1 Samuel 2:12; Hosea 2:22; and Psalm 79:6. And texts that refer to God's intimate knowledge of man include, for example, Hosea 5:3; Job 11:11, and particularly 1 Kings 8:39. It is also evident from these texts—and others—that the initiative of divine-human knowledge emanates exclusively from God.[9]

In relation to the usage of the Greek term, *ginōskō*, in the New Testament, there is a formal equivalence with the Hebrew term *yāda'*. I make the point in my *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* that this verb denotes personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, and God, based on the expression of faith and trust in both Father and Son.[10]

Then, with reference to God as the object of one's personal knowledge, *ginōskō* refers to knowing him personally in John 17:3; 17:25; Galatians. 4:9; 1 John 4:7. 1 John 4:2 speaks of knowing God as 'the Spirit of truth'.[11] Furthermore, Groome argues persuasively that it is in the Gospel of John and his letters that we find the richest understanding in the New Testament of what it means 'to know the Lord'. In short, it denotes to love, obey and believe in him.[12]

There is one other meaning in the semantic field of 'know' in the usage of both *yāda'* and *ginōskō* that is worth pointing out. This denotation encompasses the notion of 'knowledge' in relation to sexual union. For example, Genesis 4:1,25 and Numbers 31:18 both reflect the meaning of sexual intimacy, a sexual 'knowing', in the use of *yāda*. Then similarly, in the New Testament, *ginōskō*, refers to the act of sexual union in Matthew 1:25 and Luke 1:34. In summary, therefore, it is clear that in certain contexts, 'knowledge' is grounded in the sphere of intimate human relationships.

John Frame, in his groundbreaking volume on *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, distills this motif further: 'To summarise: knowing God is knowing him as Lord—"knowing that I am the Lord". And knowing him as Lord is knowing his control, authority and presence.'[13]

One practical outworking of this knowledge, by way of illustration, is to convey to our students the notion of 'servant knowledge', which Frame defines as follows: '"Servant knowledge" is a knowledge *about* God as Lord, and a knowledge that is *subject* to God as Lord.'[14] In other words, true knowledge of God is never academic, but always involves and implies a commitment of faith towards him.

This observation, I believe, has a pedagogical implication that can lead to a more effective teaching of the Bible for the Christian teacher. In communicating this 'knowledge of God' to students, the teacher can utilise the illustration of his/her own relationship with the class. The teacher can express the following attitude to his charges by, for example saying something like: 'Simply knowing *about* me, is not sufficient to

truly know me. In order to do that, I need to show you who I am—hopefully, a human being who genuinely cares about you, and is willing to devote time and effort to help you learn to the best of your ability.' This, however, will only ring true if the teacher really does care about his/her students, and shows them genuine love and compassion inside the classroom as well as outside. In short, this necessitates the teacher being willing to cultivate a *meaningful relationship* with students in the class. And it must be said, of course, that such a teaching strategy and learning outcome requires time and effort to initiate, develop and maintain throughout the entire time the teacher spends with a group of students.

It has become clear, I trust, that the direction of our discussion has led us to the point of emphasising that what lies at the heart of effective Bible teaching is the focus on developing meaningful interpersonal relationships between teachers and students. In such an environment, the effectiveness of a curriculum that centres on the Bible and its message will be enhanced by two key teaching and learning strategies. These strategies will focus on the effective communication to students of:

- the Bible's 'big story' - the metanarrative of scripture
- the central importance of not simply knowing *about* the Bible, but knowing *personally* the God of the Bible through Jesus Christ his Son.

In conclusion, here is a quote from Robert Hoffman, the one-time Director of the West African Christian High School in Liberia, cited by Edlin in *The Cause of Christian Education*:

> Education, relationship and discipleship are all interwoven concepts. They are not completely synonymous terms, but are so tightly connected in their foundations that it would be meaningless to discuss them as separate and unique entities. Teachers are disciplers. Disciples are created through relationships. Relationship is necessary for true and complete education.[15]

Reflection point:

In the light of this final section of our discussion, the following questions are offered as a means of stimulating reflection on the way you relationally approach your students in the classroom:

- How well do you personally know the students in your class?
- How much of your personal life do you share with them?
- How do you answer students' questions that indicate personal struggles in their lives?
- How do you react when students fail to grasp what you are teaching?
- Do you allow your emotions to come through in your lessons? Are you a 'real person' to your students?
- Do you consistently strive to empathise with your students?
- Do you ever pray with your students, either individually, or with a group?
- To what extent do you consider yourself as a loving, compassionate teacher?

Endnotes

1 Van Til, C, *A Christian Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 12–13.

2 Ibid, p. 16.

3 Weeks, N, *The Sufficiency of Scripture*, p. 82.

4 Groome, TH, *Christian Religious Education*, p. 136.

5 Ibid, pp. 191–192.

6 Berkhof, L, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*, p. 135.

7 Groom, ibid, pp. 140–141.

8 cf. Groome, ibid, pp. 141–145.

9 Brown, F, Driver, SR & Briggs, CA, (eds), p. 394.

10 Renn, SD, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, p. 569.

11 Ibid.

12 Groome, ibid, p. 143.

13 Frame, 1987, p. 18.

14 Frame, 1987, p. 40.

15 Hoffman, 1993, p. 1, cited in Edlin, 1999, p. 67.

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8 The threat to better learning in Christian education

Trevor Cooling

The practice of hospitality constitutes the way in which Christians should respond to moral disputes in a context of deep diversity.

Luke Bretherton

What is the chief threat to better learning that Christian educators should worry about? There could be a lot of things: Indifference on the part of the Church? Clergy who regard preaching from the pulpit as the primary ministry of God's people and see schools as a distraction? Biblical illiteracy on the part of teachers? The increasing pressure from parents and government to focus primarily on results? These are all worthy of consideration; however, I am fairly confident that if I conducted a survey, the main threat identified by Christians would be secularist opposition to the notion of biblical education. We have examples of that in the battles that are being fought over Special Religious Education (SRE), chaplaincy and funding for Christian schools.[1]

I am going to be provocative and suggest a threat that is closer to home. For the last five years I have led a university-based research

project that examines how teachers in three church secondary schools in England responded to a Christian approach to pedagogy called *What If Learning*. That research has led me to believe that the main threat to Christian education is a phenomenon that I shall call positivism. I am going to argue that this is a threat to better learning in Christian schools that comes from within as well as without.

What is positivism?

Positivism is not, to my mind, a belief system like atheism or Judaism. Rather it is a mind-set, a way of holding beliefs which can be manifested by atheists and believers alike. It's a particular approach that people take to the knowledge that they believe they have gained in their life. A clear example of the positivist mind-set is manifested in the debates around the teaching of biblical creationism in English state-funded schools.

To cut a long story short: since 2015 teaching creationism is banned. The government position is that the requirement on schools to provide a broad and balanced curriculum prevents the teaching of creationism 'as evidence based theory in any academy or free school'. In a nutshell, publicly-funded schools are not allowed to teach creationism as a scientifically valid theory. The British Humanist Association claimed this as a victory for its *teach evolution, not creationism* campaign.[2] This is an example of a positivist mind-set, which assumes that what it regards as truth (in this case an atheistic brand of evolution) is true for everyone and can therefore be legitimately enforced on everyone. There is no room for disagreement. In this mind-set, the purpose of education is to convey true-truths to children and not to distract them by introducing them to scientific error. In this example of atheistic positivism, creationism, being considered to be a form of pseudo-science, is considered to be such an error. For positivists, the educational task is to make sure everyone knows 'the facts'.[3]

The previous paragraph dealt with an example of atheistic, scientific positivism that treats concepts such as objectivity, certainty and universally acknowledged knowledge, proof and facts as the normative ideals. It is a model of better learning which regards the scientific approach as the gold standard and thinks that education should be about promoting pupils' understanding of rationally-justified, established

knowledge. In relation to what we understand by learning well, it is a 'one-size-fits-all' approach that sees the professional task as identifying the pedagogy that works using scientific research. The notion that educational approaches should embrace a diversity of ideological viewpoints is anathema.

A popularised example of this mind-set is illustrated by the BBC documentary series *Chinese School*, screened in 2015. In the advertising for the program, it was claimed to be an experiment to prove whether the British or the Chinese approach to education works best. The experiment was constructed around five Chinese teachers who came to England to teach a group of 50 British teenagers in one school in the 'Chinese way'. The other students in their year group were the control group in the experiment and were taught by their usual teachers in the 'British way'. All the students took the same test at the end of the experiment. The final program featured the announcement of the results. The Chinese school won! The implication was that this scientific experiment *proved* that Chinese teaching methods worked best. The British government is now talking about introducing Shanghai maths into primary schools. This desire to prove by 'scientific' measurement that there is the one way to teach that works for everyone, is a classic feature of a positivist mind-set. Diversity is anathema. Positivism can be summarised as a mind-set that knows without doubt what is true and wants to ensure that everyone else's learning is controlled so that they come to know those truths. For positivists that is what secures better learning.

By now you may well be wondering what all this about atheistic, scientific positivism has got to do with learning in a Christian school. The clue for me came when I read a book review in a Christian newspaper around a year ago. In it two books were compared, one by a leading atheist and one by a leading Christian. The reviewer's main conclusion intrigued me. Basically he argued that these two books were pretty well the same except for their respective content of atheism and Christianity. Both authors were convinced of the rightness of their own position and the wrongness of the other. Both used evidence and argument to prove their position was correct and their opponent's was incorrect. Both derided the intellectual failings of the other. The reality was that these two authors were both operating within the same mind-set, albeit

from opposite ends of the belief spectrum. They were both playing by the rules of positivism, which neither questioned.

Positivism and Christian education

In order to see the relevance of this insight for Christian education, I will return to the research project mentioned at the start of the chapter. This involved a year's work with 14 secondary school teachers representing a range of subject expertise from three church schools in England.[4] The research was designed to explore how the teachers interpreted the challenge to teach in a Christian way having been given a brief introduction to the *What If Learning* approach, which is designed to support teachers in developing a distinctively Christian pedagogy.[5] The researchers worked with the teachers for an academic year, observing them teach, holding focus group discussions with their students, reading the logs that the teachers kept and interviewing them on several occasions. The result was 14 rich case studies of teachers' joys and struggles in their classrooms that are documented in a book.[6] In the research we observed many fine examples of teachers reshaping their classroom approach in creative and successful ways in response to the challenge. But we also unearthed a fundamental issue.

The issue was encapsulated by Dawn, a maths teacher who described what she was being asked to do in the project as 'weird', using the word to introduce the *What If Learning* lesson to her class whilst also commenting to them that what they were about to do was 'not proper maths'. Further on in the lesson, she told the students that she preferred 'just teaching you maths'. She displayed a palpable sense of discomfort at the idea of introducing Christian ethos into mathematics. In her final interview, she described her experience of *What If Learning* as 'shoehorning' and 'strong-arming' God into the mathematics lesson in a way that is 'not natural', violating what she regarded as her core professional task, namely teaching mathematics. Her fear was that the approach will degenerate into 'just banging in a plenary'. Fitting Christian ethos 'with something as abstract as linear equations' did not seem possible or justifiable.

This reaction was nothing to do with antipathy on her part to the idea of Christian ethos permeating school life as Dawn was the senior

teacher responsible for this aspect in her school. Indeed, she was very positive about the Christian pastoral and liturgical life of the school and advocated, for example, that all lessons should begin or end with prayer. Her hesitations were, it appeared, down to a sense that the integrity of mathematics was being violated by seeking to teach it in a distinctively Christian way.

This sense of weirdness was also expressed by Charlotte, a geography teacher. In her case this did not appear to derive from concern about violating the integrity of geography; rather for her there was an issue of professional *pedagogical* integrity. The heart of the matter seemed to be that normally she would lead what she described as 'completely open conversation that takes whatever course it takes' but in being asked to teach in a distinctively Christian way she felt constrained by an obligation 'to direct the conversation' and felt uncomfortable that she was to her mind 'pushing Christian values'. Possibly lurking beneath her discomfort was a sense that she was required to indoctrinate Christian values in a search for conformity rather than teaching to promote autonomy, which was her professional commitment.

Another dimension to this sense of weirdness relates to the perception that some of the teachers appeared to believe that teaching in a Christian way requires *telling* students Christian truths in all subjects of the curriculum. This felt over-the-top for most of our teachers; almost too Christian amounting to, so to speak, levering in a Christian sermonette on sin and salvation between algebra and trigonometry. On the other hand, we also unearthed a concern in the teachers' minds that their teaching might not actually be 'Christian enough' to satisfy the designation of being distinctively Christian. As physics teacher Paul pondered, 'How explicitly Christian does the lesson have to be to qualify as not tokenistic?', adding that '... there's a sense in which anything that doesn't see people becoming Christians isn't fulfilling the ultimate mission'.

My conclusion from studying the research data was the reason for these teachers' difficulties with being asked to teach according to a Christian ethos was that they assumed that Christian faith had to be taught in a positivist way. In other words, that it was all about telling true-truths to pupils with a view to persuading those pupils to accept these true-truths. In this view the perception appears to be that calling

of the Christian mathematics teacher, for example, is not to teach maths Christianly, but rather to use the secular activity of teaching maths to proclaim Christian truth. In the end the teachers were deeply uncomfortable about operating within this positivist paradigm because they regarded it as poor teaching and unethical to behave in this way in a classroom. It neither honoured the significance and integrity of their subject nor did it respect the pupils' rights to freedom of belief or recognise the diversity of viewpoints amongst the pupils, their families and in the wider world. But for some reason they felt they were being disloyal to the Christian faith if they didn't put an emphasis on the positivist goal of persuading pupils to accept Christian true-truths. They seemed to feel that they had to attempt to control what pupils thought if they were going to honour the school's Christian ethos. For some reason they assumed that to be faithful Christian teachers they had to be positivist Christians. This is to think in the same controlling way as the atheists who want to ban any teaching which they perceive as anti-scientific.

This led me to conjecture that the influence of Christian positivism might be widespread, if the teachers in our project are in any way representative of teachers working in English church schools. It seems that they perceive it to be the normative, required position. This led me to wonder where this perception comes from.

Where did Christian positivism come from?

A recent letter published in *IDEA*, the bi-monthly magazine of the English Evangelical Alliance, may provide a clue.[7] The correspondent wrote: 'If God is as revealed in the Bible and the Bible is the Word of God, then the Bible is by implication inerrant. God is the God of truth and cannot lie, so He is not going to give us as His revealed word something that is untrue.' The implication of this assertion is that the correspondent's interpretation of what any passage in the Bible means can be assumed to be exactly what God intended; indeed, that it is not an interpretation because the Bible always has a plain meaning. In other words, the Bible gives us direct access to Christian true-truths.

When I was a teenager I used to attend a marvellous Christian camp with a leader determined to be faithful to scripture. So he used

to insist that all of us boys had a short-back-and-sides haircut on the grounds that Paul had written in 1 Corinthians that it was a source of shame for a man to wear his hair long. No argument. Now this was in the 1970s when everyone looked like hippies but, in his positivist understanding, what the text said was plain. So you had your hair cut or you were sent home. For me the difficulty as a young Christian was not with being taught to live under the authority of the Bible, but with the assumption that the meaning and significance of the text was never open to debate. There was no room for diversity. In this case positivism led to inappropriate authoritarianism. As young Christians, we were simply told the truth we should follow. Those who obeyed were seen to be the excellent learners. Those who didn't went home. Unfortunately, we were not taught how to be good biblical interpreters ourselves. To learn was to be told true-truths.

Christian positivism first emerged as an issue for me when I was studying for my PhD.[8] As a teenage undergraduate, I had been inspired by the writings of Francis Schaeffer, an immensely influential Christian apologist who, in the second half of the twentieth century, challenged the modernist assault on biblical Christianity. I owe him a huge debt for his emphasis on the importance of Christian scholarship and for his challenging of the secular modernist worldview. However, in returning to his writing as a doctoral student of Christian education, I became troubled by his approach to learning. As I understood it, his philosophy of education was that if Christians argued hard enough, the evidence for conversion to Christ was compelling. Our task as Christian educators was, metaphorically, to get the non-believer with their back against the wall so they had no option but to convert or despair. He called this 'loving confrontation'. Diversity was not to be acknowledged. Excellence in learning was achieved by persuading our students of the true-truth. Different interpretations were to be resisted, not accommodated.

When I reviewed the data from the research with our 14 teachers, it took me back to my unhappiness with Schaeffer's Christian positivism that was, I felt, reflected in the teachers' anxieties about how they thought they were being asked to behave as Christian teachers. Like them I wondered how one can be distinctively Christian without a sense of weirdness being generated through compromising one's integrity as a teacher. The important question is, then, 'To be faithfully Christian by

living under the authority of the Bible does one have to be a Christian positivist?' Not surprisingly, my response is a resounding no!

Honouring the Bible as a critical realist

There are many biblical scholars who are determined to live under the authority of the Bible, but who do not take this positivist line.[9] Loosely they can be described as critical realist in orientation, meaning that one of the key features of their work is that they recognise that living under the authority of biblical truth entails the fallible activity of human interpretation. So God certainly speaks through scripture, but sometimes humans do not hear so well. The appropriate response is then, according to critical realists, not to treat my interpretations as being of the same status as God's word. Christopher Wright argues that this shift also means no longer treating the Bible's authority as like that of a military sergeant major barking orders at us. The Bible is not primarily a source of true-truths for Christians to extract and impose on others. Rather it is primarily a narrative of God's dealings with humans from which we learn how to live as people of God.[10]

This change in perspective has huge implications for how we conceive of better learning in Christian education.[11] They can in part be briefly illustrated from the story of one of the teachers in the research project. Angela teaches Christian studies with 16-year-old students who take a public exam at the end of the course. One of the modules is on social issues around the end-of-life. In the research she focused on teaching a topic on assisted suicide. The usual question format in the exam is for students to be asked to give three arguments for and three against assisted suicide. Angela's past practice had been to teach her students to construct these arguments with the assumption that the Christian view was against assisted suicide and that a secular view was supportive of it. The three Christian arguments were supported by biblical text.

In the course of the project Angela started to reflect on the perception that her students were gaining of Christian ethics through this approach. She didn't like the conclusion she came to, namely that Christian ethics is primarily concerned with winning arguments by 'machine-gunning' one's opponents with Bible proof texts. Inspired

by the work of theologian Luke Bretherton on the Gospel's teaching on how Jesus handled ethical debates, she decided to take an entirely different pedagogical approach.[12] She took Bretherton's key argument that the Gospel writers' primary response to ethical dispute was to seek to offer Christian hospitality to one's opponent and asked how this biblical insight might shape the way she taught this contentious topic. Instead of having students develop 'three arguments for, three arguments against', she sought out video material from individuals who had first-hand experience of these very challenging decisions and set students the task of explaining each of their points of view. The rule was listen before you argue. In that way she hoped that students would take away the idea that Christian ethics is not primarily about winning arguments, but is primarily about showing hospitality to those we dispute with in an attempt to reach a God-honouring conclusion. Only then did she allow them to undertake the 'three arguments for, three arguments against' exercise.

Angela's change of heart on her pedagogy exemplifies a shift from learning framed by positivist Christianity to learning framed by critical realist Christianity. Both approaches seek to teach in a way that honours the authority of the Bible. However, the positivist way uses it as a source of 'true-truths ammunition' for proving others wrong with the intention that the students should agree with the presumed Christian line. In contrast the critical realist approach recognises the different ways in which scriptural teaching can be interpreted on a contentious issue and prioritises a biblical approach to how we behave in the midst of ethical disputes. Above all, the critical realist pedagogy does not seek to control the students' conclusions, whilst still acknowledging that the Bible is an authoritative source of God's truth. However, it does frame their learning experience within a biblical approach as to what it means to learn well in Christian ethics. This transition enabled Angela to honour the diversity of viewpoints in the wider world and changed the focus of her lesson from persuading students to accept Christian true truths to enabling students to think for themselves. Furthermore, it offered her a way of being biblical in her teaching through reframing her pedagogy rather than through levering-in Christian content. For Angela, teaching Christianly no longer felt 'weird'.

Endnotes

1 E.g. Marion Maddox, *Taking God to School*, Allen & Unwin, 2014 and Cathy Byrne, *Religion in Secular Education,* Brill, 2014.

2 https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/schools-and-education/school-curriculum/science-evolution-and-creationism/

3 I am not intending here to imply either my acceptance or rejection of creationism. I only use this particular reaction to it as a good example of positivism.

4 Church schools in England are state-funded schools founded by Christian churches. The schools we studied were either Church of England or Catholic.

5 See whatiflearning.co.uk

6 Trevor Cooling, *Christian Faith in English Church Schools: Research Conversation with Classroom Teachers*, Peter Lang, 2016.

7 Neil Campbell, *Biblical Inerrancy—Continued,* IDEA Magazine, July/August 2016, p33.

8 Published as *A Christian Vision for State Education,* SPCK, 1994.

9 Examples of writers who have helped me greatly are Alister McGrath, Anthony Thiselton, Kevin Vanhoozer, Tom Wright and Christopher Wright.

10 Tom Wright developed a wonderful analogy to illustrate this which I recount in my chapter on 'Enabling the Bible to Control Learning' in John Collier & Ken Goodlet (eds), *Teaching Well*, Barton Books, 2014.

11 For a more detailed discussion see my chapter 'The Formation of the Christian Teacher: the role of faithfulness to the Bible in conceptualising learning' in *Re-Imagining Christian Education for the 21st Century* edited by Andrew B Morris, Matthew James Publishing, 2013 .

12 Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness Amid Moral Diversity*, Routledge, 2010.

9 Enhancing school culture for better learning

Ruth Edwards

> If there is a contradiction between what's taught by the formal curriculum and what's taught by the hidden curriculum, people always believe the hidden curriculum.
>
> J Ortberg

What students learn is not what the teacher has in the lesson plan, but what they experience as real. At times, that may correspond to formal curriculum content, but more often it does not. This experiential learning is known as the hidden curriculum, which arises from the culture of the school. Culture is the context, the hidden curriculum is the learning. Culture is constituted of the unstated assumptions, beliefs and values of all participants, leading them to act in certain patterns, which are made visible through organisational structures, relationships, programs, routines and physical spaces. [1]

The hidden curriculum has been defined as the 'socialisation process of schooling'.[2] The important point to recognise is that the hidden curriculum is *hidden*. It is not the explicit rhetoric of teachers or mission statements. It is the learning that is inferred from the actions and attitudes that students experience.

The design of a formal curriculum is based on beliefs about what knowledge a society considers worthwhile. Of course, this varies across

place and time. Since curriculum reflects values and aspirations, it is usually political and contested.[3]

The hidden curriculum likewise reveals what a school values. In this case it is implicit, not articulated. Because it is learned through lived experience, it is more powerful and the learning is more permanent than learning based simply on words or exhortations. Ortberg talks about the hidden curriculum 'leaking out' through unplanned and unpremeditated actions. He asserts that: 'If there is a contradiction between what's taught by the formal curriculum and what's taught by the hidden curriculum, people always believe the hidden curriculum.'[4]

Therefore, if a school community wishes to teach students to honour Jesus Christ, it is of utmost importance that its culture is authentically Christian and truthfully reflects the articulated theology or Christian perspectives formally embedded in syllabuses or school structures such as chapel or pastoral care. Similarly, if a school has a denominational identity such as the name X *Christian College,* or *Y Anglican School* or *St Z's Catholic Primary School*, what students learn from the culture, that is, the hidden curriculum, will be interpreted by them as Christianity, giving them false concepts of the faith if the culture is inconsistent with genuine Christianity.

The purpose of education

The central role of schools is education. At its heart education is *leading* into a way of life.[5] It develops skills and knowledge that equip students to live in their world and, Christians may add, to live in God's eternal kingdom. For Christian educators there are two levels to education. The first is to facilitate students to become competent adults in their society. The second is to facilitate them to recognise Christianity to be a relevant and meaningful way of life.[6] When these two aims conflict, dilemmas are created.

Both the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum are based on values:

> Before curriculum builders can answer 'What's most worth knowing?' we have to know 'For what?'... Most of us would come to similar conclusions as our great philosophers and

> spiritual leaders: education should help us become wise and good people.[7]

The Bible gives Christians a definition of 'wise and good' people. That definition must guide all Christian teachers. It should be explicit in the educational philosophy of Christian schools.

'Wisdom' is the fear of the Lord. This means having a right understanding that we are creatures in God's world and responsible to him for how we live in it. Godly wisdom is interwoven with faith. Faith is always expressed in actions, as the classic reference to Abraham shows: 'By faith Abraham obeyed ... he went out.'[8] This means that Christians *do* (i.e. behave and act) what God wants because they have faith in him. So wisdom intrinsically means putting knowledge into action; it is not an intellectual state but is 'exercising (doing) discernment'.[9]

'Goodness' is loving God with heart, mind, soul and strength and loving our neighbours as ourselves. It is treating others as we would like to be treated ourselves.[10] To do these things effectively entails knowledge, not just theological knowledge but knowledge of the world into which God has placed us. So all knowledge disciplines in schools have value because they enhance the ability to be good and wise.

If we wish the end result of our educational efforts to be wisdom and goodness, made effective through having a sound knowledge of the physical, social, creative and spiritual worlds, then it is important that the hidden curriculum teaches this. That means that the culture of the school must be consistent with these aims.

Shaping a Christian culture

Culture is not the explicit mission statements that school managers talk about. Those are what Alvesson calls 'hyperculture'.[11] We could simply call it the 'hype' which makes people feel good about their educational choices. Actual culture is what really happens away from the rhetoric. The actions that shape culture are closely linked to people's educational priorities, their specific interpretations about school routines and colleagues, and their views about students and pedagogy.

Culture is self-perpetuating and therefore it is difficult to change. When people join an organisation they are moulded into conformity to its culture, often without any conscious decision. If the culture

seems to be working or matches some of the newcomer's own beliefs, s/he will behave in ways that fit in and even will modify previously held beliefs which appear to be inconsistent with his or her current mode of professional operation. This applies to school leaders and to other employees in equal measure: it is myth that a strong leader can march in and transform a culture.[12]

Cultural change requires that a critical mass of participants simultaneously alter their beliefs, values and habitual actions. The lever which may precipitate such a change is touching even deeper beliefs. Two potential such levers are teachers' professional beliefs and teachers' Christian beliefs. When there are clashes between the school's articulated public values and actual experienced culture in these two realms, teachers are liable to be frustrated, either professionally or spiritually, and so will be open to making changes. Indeed, they will be actively pushing for change, if the message of the hidden curriculum undermines commitments they hold deeply.

Of course, there is a strong argument that best professional teacher practice corresponds to applying Christian virtues to education in all the areas of epistemology, pedagogy, management and relationships. Such virtues are integrity, altruism, justice, truth, honesty, respect, diligence, humility, discernment.

At the very least, the two realms of professional beliefs and Christian beliefs interrelate with each other, each provoking and stimulating the other. Committed Christians can use this nexus to help others to consider changes which will bring school culture into better alignment with Christian ideals.

I have identified ten domains of school life in which there may be conflicts between a purportedly Christian identity, with its goal of learning goodness and wisdom, and the message of the hidden curriculum.

1. Christian culture & values

It is usually assumed that in schools with a denominational or Christian identity, good values based in Christianity will be practised and inculcated into the students. However, in many cases, there is nothing particularly Christian about the values at all. Most schools, including state ones, share some universal values which may historically have

derived from Christianity, but which now have evolved into generic democratic values of respect and decency.

Problems really arise for a so-called faith school, though, when its culture endorses values which are actually unchristian. A common one is associated with charity drives which, unlike true Christian generosity that gives in secret, are promoted as competitions to earn house points or earn prizes. 'School pride' can encourage snobbery and conceit. Families may treat education as an instrument of blatant materialism, a means to gain money and power. Pastoral care can be reduced to programs, while the more weighty markers of Christian love, such as individual care, understanding and encouragement are neglected. Students may perceive favouritism given to church families or to peers who identify as Christians. Then it can appear that honesty or spiritual doubt excludes them from God's love.

In addition, often independent schools expect much of teachers, but give them little in the way of Christian care in return, an inconsistency with significant ramifications for their interactions with students.

Of course, many denominational schools live out Christian values very well; it is one of their most attractive qualities. But not all do. When secular and humanist values take over or, even worse, are presented as if they are the essence of religious faith, what students take from the school is a hidden curriculum presenting a deficit model of Christianity.

2. Christian culture & the academic curriculum

As previously noted, Christian educators have two broad educational goals. The goal of encouraging students to respect Christianity as a relevant and meaningful way of life can easily be neglected. If a dichotomy develops between spiritual knowledge and the claims that only knowledge in the academic disciplines is valid and provable, then religious understanding is marginalised into the category of feel-good superstitions.

Academic knowledge itself can be subordinated to the technical success of passing exams so that students never internalise their studies to develop personal meaning. Academic success can be so glorified that holistic human development is suppressed. Sometimes schools swing to the opposite extreme: they do not meet the goal of equipping their students for mainstream society, but instead indoctrinate them into

narrow religious views, or emphasise social or spiritual aspects to the detriment of good academic outcomes.

By contrast, a consistently Christian school culture will value high quality education, integrating all aspects and subjects holistically, stimulating students to think, equipping them to critique popularist assumptions, valuing *all truth as God's truth* and encouraging a faith which is expressed by loving God with their minds.[13]

3. Christian culture & religious education

Religious Education needs to be well taught, meticulously programmed like other subjects, integrated into the curriculum, rational in its emphasis, assessed rigorously, resourced properly and taught by committed Christians with strong pedagogical skills who themselves are immersed in Christian thinking. Otherwise, inevitably, students will consider that Religion is second-rate knowledge, irrespective of how many public pronouncements are made about the importance of faith. Religious Education also needs to be given the same time allocation as other subjects, as Roman Catholic schools always manage to do and as Protestant ones, for some reason, always fail to do.

If students are not to be turned off by non-educative indoctrination, they should be encouraged to explore varied religious and non-religious interpretations of life, presented within the framework of a clear Christian worldview, which values truth, is self-critical and is respectful.[14]

There are different theological views about salvation, but the classroom is not the place for using positional power to force faith commitments which will later evaporate.

4. Christian culture & chaplaincy

Schools have differing models of chaplaincy, with local ministers, dedicated ordained chaplains or even the whole staff filling the role.

What is essential, regardless of the model, is that those publicly identified with the Christian church live out the faith authentically and challenge unchristian priorities. Chaplains should be publicly endorsed as Christian leaders and contribute to executive decisions. They should be effective educators who win respect and are able to make meaningful connections between Christianity and contemporary life, both in their personal interactions and in public worship services.

Christian worship is a fraught area because most of the student participants will not have a faith commitment. Therefore services need to be appropriately missional without forfeiting the opportunity to expose students to the richness of Christian liturgy, an experience even more central in this visual and experiential era, and which has been a pathway into active Christian engagement for many.

Unthinking repetition of the formulae of the past, sermons which do not clearly articulate the Christian gospel, moralistic talks ignoring the person of Jesus Christ or reinterpreting Christian worship as a social celebration of school cohesion or of sporting triumphs will all give a message that Christianity is merely an irrelevant ritual. Conversely, dense doctrinal theologising will pass over students' heads or lead those who understand and are approved to self-satisfied Pharisaism.

Finally, if Christianity is important, chapel will be compulsory for all members of the school. Once people can opt out, the message of the hidden curriculum is clear: our principles about religion take second place to yours.

5. Christian culture & socialisation

Ideally a Christian worldview will richly inform all policies, daily practices, organisational structures and relationships. When this happens, while there may be little directly religious talk, everyone is socialised to Christian ways of thinking and living, unobtrusively but meaningfully applied.

But positive expression of Christian spirituality can be undermined in many ways. Instead of faith being a relevant and meaningful way of life, it is too often the case, especially in long-established schools, that it is a marginal activity, confined to arcane chapel rituals, or used as an embellishment to ceremonial occasions. Frequently truths about Jesus Christ are rarely referred to, leaving the impression that spirituality is no more than 'being decent'. Sometimes references to Christian morality are used to shore up purely expedient local regulations. Supposedly Christian schools may so conform to this world, that materialistic, self-centred, secular philosophies of life dominate their culture.

Then there are those ultra-Protestant or conservative Catholic schools where the presentation of faith is uncompromisingly dogmatic

and rigid, with religious references forcibly inserted through simplistic proof-texting or formulaic doctrinal assertions.

Both of these extremes teach a hidden curriculum of spirituality which is far from the balance, beauty and incarnational engagement of Jesus Christ.

6. Christian culture & community

Independent schools present themselves as places of belonging. When Christian ethics underpin communal life, a sense of community is a strong, attractive and powerful witness. It binds students and their families in loyalty to the school, opens them to considering the claims of Christianity and is a valuable marketing tool into the bargain. Such genuine community will be marked by the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.[15]

It is, however, very hard to achieve when non-Christian members of the school do not value these qualities, or when Christians themselves, especially those in leadership positions, do not exhibit them. If such attitudes are only demonstrated selectively, divisive and fragmented subcultures arise between departments or between different religious factions.

There is a fine balance to be achieved between respecting divergent religious opinions and allowing non-Christian ideas to undermine communal Christian virtues. All dealings with families should be respectful and caring, engendering a genuine experience of community and inclusion. The Christian basis of community should be explicitly articulated to them.

7. Christian culture & enrolment policies

It is important that enrolment policies confirm the Christian character of the school and enable families to participate in it. This is an area of contrasting approaches among Christian educators. These are due to different educational philosophies, such as whether the school is seen primarily as an extension of the Christian home, a place for outreach into secular society or as a valid social institution in which Christians should engage.

Nevertheless, some principles can be applied to all schools. Expectations need to be clear before enrolment forms are signed; participation in Christian activities must be compulsory if the school is to

maintain its distinctive identity; personal beliefs of enrolling families should be treated with respect; and there should be consistency and transparency with no special deals. If a student cannot be enrolled in good conscience, this should be explained clearly and helpfully. Once a student is accepted, what has been said must be acted upon so that the honesty and integrity of the school is upheld.

8. Christian culture & principalship

If the principal of a Christian school is not committed to following Jesus Christ there is little hope that the hidden curriculum will endorse Christian wisdom and goodness. The role is absolutely critical in determining priorities, managing staff and modelling Christian behaviour. Knowing Christian doctrine and talking about Christian faith is not enough. It is imperative that the principal also implements a sound Christian-based educational philosophy, treats people well, encourages chaplains and Religious Education teachers effectively, chooses staff who can implement Christian goals and demonstrates winsome servant leadership in all aspects of the work.

When schools choose principals who do not have these priorities, it is not long before the culture is marked by religious nominalism, managerialism or sterile professionalism, with Christian proclamation, virtues and relationships taking second place. While principals cannot change an entrenched culture easily, they are the single biggest influence on it.[16]

9. Christian culture & staff

While gender is often the preoccupation of research on the hidden curriculum, even more important is the hidden curriculum of religion. It will 'leak out' through the actions and attitudes of teachers. If staff members are to encourage students to respect Christianity as a relevant and meaningful way of life, both employment policy and professional development need consideration.

First, the ideal is for every staff member to be an excellent teacher and a committed, well thought out Christian. Of course, in reality, schools have to employ human beings who, by definition are sinful and who are in various stages of spiritual growth. This should not prevent them giving strong positive weighting to applicants who can understand and advance Christian goals. There are drawbacks to mandated

theological treatises for applicants, which can put off capable Christians or be manipulated by shrewd applicants, but more than vague references like 'supporting Christian ethos' is required. Perceptive questioning at interview is an art which Christian leaders need consciously to develop.

Conversely, employing fine Christians who are poor practitioners is counter-productive. If a school is good at proselytising but poor at educating, it misleads those who entrust their children to it.

Second, teachers need ongoing formal and informal opportunities to better understand Christianity and the practice of Christian education. They should be explicitly shown how to deal with diversity within a Christian worldview and should collaboratively explore positive ways of modelling Christian behaviour and explaining Christian concepts.

10. Christian culture & mission statements

One opportunity for enhancing school culture which is too frequently neglected is the school motto and mission statement. While these remain as ornaments on crests or links on websites, they have little impact.

Instead, a meaningful Christian motto and mission should be the guiding basis of all school life and used as the measure of all policies and everyday actions. A good, usable mission statement is not bland motherhood assertions, but is clearly related to Christian theology and principles, is relevant for contemporary life and is incisively worded.

To have impact it will be referred to frequently, applied clearly and used in all strategic planning and publicity.

Conclusion

When a school culture is marked by positives in each of these ten domains, overt Christian messages will be positively reinforced by the hidden curriculum.

To move Christian schools closer to this cultural ideal, leaders will engage in informed change management. This is a complex, nuanced process of awareness raising, which addresses deep levels of organisational assumptions. Effective change agents listen carefully, enunciate meaningful narratives and model new behaviour, all of which unite coherently to build different corporate attitudes and actions. Through listening they understand what resonates with stakeholders' dearly held

professional or Christian beliefs and can make connections between these and the desired cultural shift.

Ultimately, culture and its corollary, the hidden curriculum, change when all participants change the beliefs which inform their habitual actions and attitudes. That happens when change agents are authentic, consistent and 'appeal to hearts and minds'.[17]

When both explicit and implicit learning is genuinely Christian, then learning will be transformational through the renewing of minds.[18]

Endnotes

1 For a full explanation of school culture see R Edwards, *Challenge and Choice,* Barton Books, Canberra, 2014, pp. 55–56.

2 FD Kentli, 'Comparison of Hidden Curriculum Theories', in *European Journal of Educational Studies 1(2), 2009, ISSN 1946–6331,* http://www.ozelacademy.com/EJES_v1n2_Kentli.pdf, accessed 9 May 2016.

3 P Hughes, 'Foreword', in M Print, *Curriculum Development and Design.* 2nd ed., Allen and Unwin, Australia, 1993.

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5 See entries around 'education' in *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2002.

6 I am indebted for this phrase to the Radford College mission statement, which was formulated in these terms by Dr David Mulford.

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8 Hebrews 11:8.

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10 Mark 12:30, 31; Matthew 7:12.

11 M Alvesson & S Sveningsson, *Changing Organizational Culture: Cultural change work in progress,* Routledge, London & NY, 2008, p. 119.

12 L Morford, *Learning the ropes or being hung: Organizational socialization influences on new rural high school principals.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, *LA, 2002,* http://eric.ed.gov/?q=Morford&ft=on&id=ED464783, accessed 26 June 2016; K Morrison, 'Complexity theory, school leadership and management: Questions for theory and practice', in *Educational*

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15 Galatians 5:22.

16 F Geijsel, F Meijers & W Wardekker, 'Leading the Process of Reculturing: Roles and Actions of School Leaders', *in The Australian Educational Researcher,* 34, (3), December 2007, http://dare.uva.nl/document/2/54214, accessed 5 July 2016.

17 Alvesson & Sveningsson, *Changing Organizational Culture: Cultural change work in progress,* p 108. See particularly Part 3 of this book.

18 Romans 12:2.

10 Evaluating your school's culture: practical applications

Ruth Edwards

Culture by its very nature is implicit and nuanced, so it is not susceptible to statistical analysis. Black and white figures may mislead through assumptions about their meaning. The following suggestions are based on qualitative research methodologies which are at the heart of cultural research.

Those interested in investigating the hidden curriculum need to be careful not to define it through the interests and prejudices of a few individual students. Only when perceptions of normal behaviour are consistent across a group is there any certainty of a reliable trend.

The following are some suggestions as to how a teacher or school may audit the hidden curriculum. I focus particularly on ideas which an interested teacher may wish to explore, before perhaps requesting the school leadership to look into it more deeply.

How intensively can you inquire into culture and the hidden curriculum?

I suggest three levels of inquiry:

> **First, anecdotal inquiry.** This could be undertaken by an individual being intentional about conversations and observations.

The danger is that data may not be extensive enough for valid conclusions. However, anecdotal inquiries are a starting point which often identify areas for more intensive research, and which can be used as leverage for encouraging leaders to undertake the next level.

Second, informal inquiry. This is a more extensive investigation with a large enough number and variety of participants to establish valid trends. It may consider a whole year group or target a representative sample of different ability levels, interest levels and age levels. It will use at least two methods for collection of data, perhaps student comments and staff observations, or questionnaires supplemented by focus group or individual interviews.

Third, systematic inquiry. Inquiry at this level will need to be actively driven by the school leadership. It involves comprehensive data collection across all year levels, and input from students, parents and teachers. It is best undertaken by an outside analyst or team who can conduct interviews and focus groups without appearing to represent any particular position or power group.

How can you bring to light what is hidden?

The simple answer is to ask! Ask students, ask staff, ask parents. But not so simple, is *how* you ask. This is critical for getting accurate, valid information.

First, ask students about themselves in a way that gets accurate information. Student responses to surveys are notoriously unreliable because the kids are often simply not interested in doing the survey seriously and frequently are presented with it in compromised, rushed or incompatible settings. Moreover, in respect to culture which is a corporate phenomenon, individual responses may be misleading and only reflect the idiosyncrasies of the particular participant. Honest, thoughtful answers will be given only if participants trust those requesting information and trust that their responses will not be used against them.

Therefore, my recommendation is that student responses be gained through indirect questioning in a natural setting, and preferably in

a group situation. Pastoral care groups, home room groups or civics or values lessons are places where questions about students' experience of the culture and hidden curriculum would appear natural. It should be treated as seriously and given as much time as any normal comparable classroom activity. Ideas and explanations need to be as fully explored and clearly documented as possible. Students could present their ideas in formal oral presentations, reports or graphs which draw on skills required by curriculum, thus integrating the knowledge and also giving it seriousness and validity in their eyes.

Second, ask teaching staff about students without extraneous matters being involved. Intentional elicitation of their observations about student responses and interests, about their own priorities and about how they perceive Christianity being expressed at the school, reveals much; sometimes what is not said is as significant as what is said.

Staff members will only respond fully if there are no power relationships involved. This can be done through talking within your own network, with the obvious disadvantage of possible bias. Parental complaints or comments can be seen as trigger points to explore why teachers have acted in certain ways, and what assumptions or misunderstandings on both sides may underlie conflict. When assumptions are articulated, you are getting close to real culture.

Anonymous surveys can be useful to identify areas of tension or disharmony. They are most useful when Professional Learning time is given to fill them in, so that a good take-up rate occurs. Surveys should give opportunity to comment and explain. Follow up discussion in safe circumstances where teachers can explain their perceptions without danger of disapproval is invaluable for both understanding and gaining ownership of any changes. A template is suggested below.

Third, listen carefully for reasons behind presenting parental comments. Listen to what they say in P & F settings, parent-teacher interviews, complaints, suggestions and informal discussions. Look for the reasons underneath the presenting comments. This shows where they are 'coming from', and indicates assumptions, beliefs

and cultural expectations or experiences. Especially consider any descriptions of how their children react to school situations. Surveys and focus groups can be informative, but sample size and breadth of representation are critical.

How can you find out what students experience?

In this section I deal only with students, but the ideas could be adapted for other groups.

First, anecdotal inquiry. An approach at this level would be for a teacher to raise some of these issues with students with whom s/he has a good relationship, perhaps when the content of a lesson lends itself to the issues, or simply in informal conversation. Supplementing this would be thoughtful observations of how teachers act and the preoccupations they talk about, and student reactions to the sort of situations raised in Chapter 9. For example, discussions about academic attitudes might spring out of preparations for standardised testing or school exams; discussion of specifically Christian ideas could take up comments students make about chapel or RE.

Second, informal inquiry. One approach would be to encourage groups of students, preferably those who feel comfortable together, to discuss scenarios that reflect the overt values of the school. Some samples are given below, but variations are best developed in the context of the school, perhaps focusing on potentially controversial areas already identified through anecdotal inquiry.

Third, systematic inquiry. A systematic inquiry would build on the suggestions for the other levels, but be a whole school or whole section project, with time allocated to it, and teachers with the skills and interest, given time to prepare groups sessions and questionnaires, to brief participating teachers and then to analyse results. It would also include perspectives from parents and staff and possibly school governors.

Sample scenarios for informal or systematic inquiry into student perceptions

These sample scenarios are based around the ten domains identified in Chapter 9. These should be adapted to fit the priorities of the school and of the teacher doing the inquiry.

Allow students adequate time for exploring each scenario. *It is the discussion around the 'why'* which is most likely to yield insights into what students see as normal behaviour at the school. Any teacher running this sort of inquiry will need to concentrate hard, take notes and gently probe students to bring out exactly what they mean and examples that influence their views.

> **Running a scenario-based discussion.** Give students some background about the purpose and importance of the discussion. Explain that they need to discuss each scenario (or the ones the teacher determines to be focus areas), work out what most of the group think and the reasons for this.
>
> **Inquiry question for each scenario**: Would this be an odd or a normal thing to happen *in this school*? Why?

Values

- A class member who is not a Christian talks positively to his mates about a Christian teacher.
- A class member with family problems shares them with adults or senior mentors who are not part of his/her friendship group.

Academic

- A class member gets very depressed or feels bad because s/he doesn't do well in the exams.
- A class member feels confident to ignore teasing from his/her mates and spend extra time with staff getting on top of difficult topics in a subject.

Religious Education

- A class member prefers to attend Religious Education (RE) class to having their music lesson or setting up for assembly.
- A class member spends as much time on an RE assignment as a maths one.
- A class member argues an atheist viewpoint in an essay and gets high marks.

Chapel and chaplains

- Some class members defend the chaplain and what he said in a chapel service when others criticise it.
- Class members argue together about the value or purpose of the Christian teaching presented in chapel.

Socialisation

- Class members bring up Christian views in a History, English, Sports or Art lesson.
- Some class members pretend to attend church often at the time of prefect elections.
- Some class members say that the most important thing in life is to earn heaps of money.

Community

- Class members act kindly in the playground to someone whom they don't know.
- Class members are keen to share with their pastoral care group something important that has happened in their family.
- A teacher apologises to a student for a mistake s/he made disciplining him/her.

Principalship

- The Principal teaches Religious Education.
- The Principal leads or preaches at the chapel service.
- A student complains to the Principal because there was too much talk about Christianity in a history class.

Staff

- A teacher of a non-RE class makes comments about Christianity that the student finds interesting.
- Some students make fun of a Christian teacher because s/he is hopeless at explaining the work.

Motto/mission

- The school motto or mission is referred to by house leaders.
- The school mission is discussed and explained in civics lessons/ chapel/pastoral care group.

Some open-ended questions for student discussion

- What teacher here would you want to be like? Why? (This indicates the image the teachers project, values and behaviour that students find admirable, and may indicate who has what influence.)
- Is time spent on chapel the best use of time? Why? (This should bring out student priorities and whether chapel engages them at all, or what aspects do, if a proper discussion gets going.)
- Which students get treated best at this school? What makes you think that? (This shows any implicit favouritism.)
- In this school, would it be better for a student to cleverly download some material for an assignment and get a good mark or to slog through it himself to only get an ordinary mark? (This shows attitudes to the academic curriculum.)
- Would you feel like recommending your friend/cousin be a Christian like the Christians in this school? Why not? (This shows how they perceive Christian students and staff.)

Questionnaire for staff

These are sample questions for a simple Yes/No questionnaire based around behaviour and values of teachers. Vary and develop further questions for your context and priorities. Then use the results as a springboard to probe further.

- Do you talk informally with students about their family, friends or interests at least once a week on average?
- Do you feel confident that there are people among your colleagues who understand your stresses and support you practically?
- Are there certain types of students here who receive particularly positive treatment?
- Are there regular connections between chapel ideas and your own interactions with students?
- Is a high ATAR and a good career the main aim of this school for its students?
- **Concluding open-ended question**: Are there any comments or explanations you would like to make about the values or culture of this school?

Conclusion

There are few simple answers to the hidden curriculum but if you don't ask, you will not even begin to know. Please contact me if you would like me to facilitate a cultural review of your school.

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11 The uncommitted and a school's Christian stance

John Collier

> … whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.
>
> Philippians 4:8

Any educator in Christian schools can assume that many of those whose children come to our schools have this question in mind: Why bother engaging with the school's Christian stance? This chapter suggests what might usefully be conveyed to them.

What thinking might be behind this question?

The question may proceed from the notion that religion is outmoded, irrelevant clutter. To many, religion is mostly about being good, and as one can be good without religion, it seems to them to have no place. Others see religion as a collection of boring liturgies and rituals, which may have been meaningful in the eighteenth century, but have little to say in the twenty-first century. Others, perhaps influenced by the New Atheism of Dawkins, Dennett, Hitchens, Harris, Onfray and Grayling, have accepted the proposition that religion is toxic; after all, it starts wars, doesn't it? (My answer as an historian, is no, it doesn't, or not very much – the causes are mostly political, economic and social, although

these can be masked because factors can coalesce around the veneer of religious tribal loyalty!)

Some argue that within a pluralistic society, to advance the notion that any belief system is true is offensive. This relativistic position is not one by which any of us can actually live; maintaining and living in accord with some beliefs is necessary to actually function in the real world.

Still others maintain that religion is essentially a private matter, which has no place intruding into the public square. Some take the ostensibly noble position that children should decide these things for themselves, forgetting that without information and perspective, children are simply left with the default secular humanism which is the mainstream, often unexamined, cultural norm of our society. In fact, secular humanism presents itself as neutral, whereas it is anything but, posited on a host of assumptions, which are often unexamined by we moderns.

What place does scholarship have in authentic Christian education?

Christian schools vary considerably, so it depends a lot on the school under consideration. For argument's sake, let us assume it is not a fundamentalist Christian school, but rather an open and inclusive school that welcomes students and families of all Christian denominations, of other faiths, and of no religion. This comprises many Christian schools. Such schools generally accept and respect that ideas are contestable, and that different people will form different views. They do not seek to indoctrinate, but rather to engage students in deep questions about meaning.

A few people may still argue that the role of schools should be restricted to teaching the '3 Rs'. This view is outmoded. Increasingly, schools are village centres, marketplaces for discussion of ideas in shaping the young. Their mission is more than producing disconnected intellectual achievement, vital though that be. Rather, it is to seek to invest holistically in young people's lives.

Such schools have a deep respect for scholarship. For this reason, their presentation of Christian faith seeks to be robust and well informed by biblical scholarship. Their use of the Bible relies on an understanding that it comprises various genres; their approach to historical works will

differ from an application to poetry, metaphor, allegory and symbol; they will not force the latter categories through the grid of literalism. Hence, they seek understanding, meaning and valid, considered application.

What of other religions? Such Christian schools are open, not closed. The curriculum at various points explores other faiths, and other philosophies. In doing so, they seek to present them in their fullness, not in caricature.

Such schools want students to think deeply and to critique ideas. Some will adopt a Christian position, while others will not. That in the end is their choice. Such schools want their experience of Christian thinking to be authentic, in the sense that the ideas presented are well thought through, allow students the opportunity to examine conflicting ideas, and to respectfully put contrary arguments in an appropriate manner.

Schools so described have a high view of learning and the exalted place of the study of the whole universe, broken down into the academic disciplines, in a sweeping conception of what it is to be human. This is expressed beautifully by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians: '... whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things'. (Philippians 4:8). This is a veritable charter for quality education, flowing from a Christian epistemology and a Christian aesthetic.

What place do values have in authentic Christian education?

Central to such schools' ethos are our Christian values. These are well expressed in the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control. (5:22). Who indeed does not want these values upheld? An important aspect, then, of Christian education is character education. However, contrary to the expectations of some, such schools do not sever Christian values from Christian beliefs, believing that the values without the beliefs will not thrive for long. My view is that history supports this contention.

Christian education is therefore about rather more than simply being 'nice'. At its best, it encourages the development of a world view which seeks to think coherently about the whole cosmos. It encourages

students to think for themselves, as the apostle Paul urges so strongly in Romans 12:2:'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.' Applying this to the world of the teenager is an encouragement to think outside the strictures of peer group conformity.

Part of our quest to make Christian education authentic is to ensure it is grounded, that is, it is expressed in more than words; in fact accompanied by actions. For this reason, such schools seek to equip and encourage students to serve, knowing there is a great lineage of those who have served as an expression of Christian faith, right through from the Salvation Army, Wilberforce and the slavery emancipation movement, Elizabeth Fry and Lord Shaftesbury in prison reform, Florence Nightingale and the provision of medical care to soldiers and, on our own shores, Caroline Chisholm and the shepherding of convict women. While those of us who know our history will be aware of such 19th and twentieth century antecedents, and of the Christian social work of Anglicare, Caritas, World Vision and the Salvation Army, to name just four of them, many will not be aware that the largest providers of social welfare in our society are still the Christian churches.

What place does knowledge of culture have in authentic Christian education?

Authentic Christian education assists our students to understand the culture from which they have emerged. Although Western society is now very secular, this is a development which has only been predominant since the second half of the twentieth century. Prior to that, Western civilisation for 2,000 years has been shaped by Christian concepts. It is not possible to understand a vast range of literature, history, philosophy and scientific endeavour without understanding Christian doctrine and its impact on civilisation. Any failure to acknowledge this impact is akin to developing cultural amnesia.

In conclusion …

Many of our students bring to school considerable negative feeling or even prejudice against Christian faith. When unpacked, their views are often reactions against the failings of organised religion, atrocities

committed in the past in the name of God (Medieval Crusades feature largely) or a response against what is often a stunted understanding of Christian teaching. Rarely is their reaction against properly understood Christian teaching or against the life, work and teaching of Jesus; more commonly, it may be against the failings of individual Christians or institutional Christianity. What we hope they will do in their journey through the school is to examine these assumptions. If we expect that of them, those of us who are entrusted with teaching them, whether teachers or parents, can hardly do less.

Part B

Over-viewing the nature of Christian schools and Christian communities

12 Integrating academic knowledge and life experience

The twin classrooms of deep learning

Peter Wilson

> You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you.
>
> C S Lewis

I stood before an expectant group of over one hundred teenagers, average age 16 years old. This was my first opportunity to share with them publicly since my wife's death. With some trepidation but a deep sense of conviction I had chosen to reflect as follows on that journey with them:

> Over the last twelve months I have been in two different classrooms. One has been here at school and the other has been the Cancer Care Centre. In class we have been exploring the big questions that every religion and indeed every human being seeks to answer.
>
> Questions such as:
>
> - What is the meaning of life?
> - Why is there evil and suffering in the world?
> - Is there life after death?

- Is there a God?

At one level such discussions can be simply philosophical and academic. But for me they have become acutely personal and compelling.

Author CS Lewis wrote two books around the theme of pain and suffering. The first, *The Problem of Pain*, addresses these issues from a theological and philosophical point of view. The second, *A Grief Observed*, addresses them in the context of the death of his wife from cancer. They are very different works. One is intellectual and analytical. The other is gut wrenchingly frank in its wrestling with the depths of grief and loss.

Today, I want to examine these questions in the light of my own experience of grief and loss.

To begin, I offer you a quote from CS Lewis's *A Grief Observed*: 'You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you.'

As your chaplain, it is perhaps rightly assumed that I am 'paid' to believe. In a sense it is my job to be a person of faith. But the reality is that my faith has been and is tested just like that of any other person. In the context of current events it is not enough to pay lip service to a set of intellectual ideas. Such an approach is insufficient and unsustainable in the light of deep pain and great loss. It is precisely at this point that some people abandon their faith as simplistic or inadequate. If it is unable to stand the test of such agony and anguish then what substance does it really have?

Twin classrooms

Each of us learns in two classrooms. Whether we are a student or a staff member this is the case. In an age of globalisation and terror this reality increasingly impinges on our educational endeavours in many unprecedented ways. Basic features of this world are rapid change, increasing complexity and rising uncertainty. Modern media and technology contribute to a blurring of the boundaries between our private and public worlds and between our personal and global worlds.

The 'big questions' mentioned above are not simply 'religious' questions to be limited or relegated to a course such as Christian Studies or Studies of Religion. They are questions which underpin the whole human quest for knowledge and understanding. As such they are constantly present in the two classrooms in which students and teachers spend their lives. As such we do well to be aware of them in the directing and shaping of student learning experiences. For example, it is commonly acknowledged that students are more motivated to learn when they have some sense of the relevance of what they are learning to their lives. This is a question of meaning.

The question of meaning is foundational to a sense of human hope and future but is under significant challenge in contemporary society. In a student survey which I conducted the top question students wanted answered was, 'What is the meaning of life?'

If you are a fan of *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* you will know its answer to this question is 42. The number represents the sum of the dots on two die. It is a play on words suggesting that life has no meaning. We simply live then die. We live 'to die'. This is a view commonly held by many teenagers. It is also popularly presented in numerous pop songs. In the words of the apostle Paul it plays out as: 'If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die"' (1 Corinthians 15:32). It is the way that many people choose to view and live their lives.

In contrast, Jesus Christ offers a very different view of life. It is a view which is foundationally relational. It can be summed up in the response of Jesus to a rich young man wanting to know what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus responded by directing him to the two great commandments of scripture, which are to love God and to love people (Matthew 22:37–40). Love is at the centre of our reason for being alive and the reason for which we were created.

Yet contemporary society offers us a range of alternative answers to this question. For some people, there is no meaning. Life is futile and pointless. It is to be endured or enjoyed but ultimately it comes to nothing. For others, it is about the pursuit of personal pleasure: 'If it feels good, do it'. For still others it is about material success and achievement. While we cannot prescribe an answer for our students we can make them aware of the biblical understanding and the alternatives, which

are presented. These questions about meaning-making are present in subjects as diverse as English and Environmental Science, Music and Sport. They shape the priorities given to the natural environment, to unborn children and to the political and economic philosophies which shape our governments.

I have been confronted at a profoundly personal level by the question, 'Why is there evil and suffering in the world?' But I am not alone in this. Many of the students whom we teach have also been confronted with this question either personally or through the media onslaught which presents human suffering to us on a daily basis.

Traditional Christian teaching identifies the answer to this question in terms of human sin and separation from God and the presence of evil incarnated in the Devil and systemic human structures. I believe that such teaching is truthful in so far as it goes. But it tends to be offered from the safety and limitations of an academic or intellectual framework, which is detached from a current and intimate acquaintance with suffering. Simplistic answers to this question are likely to alienate or isolate students who observe the complexity of a world in which children are the victims of terrorism and war with sickening monotony.

In addressing students on this subject my short answer to the question is, 'I don't know'. My longer answer is, 'I *really* don't know'. Now before my fellow believers disown me, I am not suggesting that the traditional answers are untrue. But I am suggesting that the way in which they are offered does not necessarily answer the deep and heartfelt questions, which are below the surface of that which is asked.

Like CS Lewis, I know and can articulate many of the explanations for the existence of evil and suffering. But when the person suffering is someone that you love deeply and you feel utterly helpless to stop the suffering, it is a different matter. Similarly, for anyone with a sense of justice, the unfairness of the modern world is glaringly obvious to the point of being obscene.

It is therefore important to help students to pursue 'deep knowledge' across the curriculum rather than offer or expect simplistic answers. In the case of suffering I suggest that students need to consider, 'Where is God in the midst of this suffering?' This offers space to examine the power of God's presence in our lives and the importance of our presence in the lives of others in times of distress and difficulty.

So, the opportunity and challenge for contemporary Christian educators is to engage students both academically and experientially in reflecting on the complexity of the world in which they live. There has been a growing awareness of the need to do this in terms of interdisciplinary study across subject areas and faculties. But an even broader approach is needed. Student learning needs to facilitate an ability to integrate and make sense of academic, experiential and religious knowledge in a way that empowers students to live with and engage in the complexity of modern society.

Without it we face the danger of polarising or disintegrating the academic, experiential and religious dimensions of knowledge. This is not simply a better approach to learning: it is also a better way of living. The learning frameworks, which we offer students, will shape the way in which they perceive and engage with the world.

A fragmented or segmented approach will be reflected in disintegrated people whose lives echo the cognitive dissonance of the knowledge which they have acquired. In contrast, a biblical approach to knowledge is that it gives us an integrated perspective on ourselves, our Creator and the world around us. This is sometimes referred to as a Christian worldview, although it is generally agreed, such a worldview has many versions.

Expanding our understanding of the 'hidden curriculum'

For many years, educators have acknowledged and discussed the nature and importance of the hidden curriculum which is part of every educational institution. This covers the range of informal learning experiences which occur outside the classroom and beyond the scope of the mandated academic curriculum. It also encompasses the various aspects of a school's culture and ethos.

However, there is an increasing need to broaden our understanding of the hidden curriculum, which shapes our students' knowledge, interpretation and synthesis of information and integration of it into their academic pursuits, consideration of faith and life values and choices.

This can be illustrated by examining how students' accessing and processing of knowledge has changed from that of a decade or so ago.

Previously, the school acted as a gatekeeper for much knowledge through the choice of textbooks, library acquisitions and media choices viewed within the school environment. The growth of the Internet and digital media saw the rise of school based software to ensure the safety of students in accessing content within the school setting.

The advent of smartphones, Facebook, YouTube etc. have created a constantly changing world in which the variety and scope of information students can access is beyond the practical control of even the most diligent school or parent. Increasingly, student "knowing" is shaped and informed by a range of personal and global factors, which go beyond the school and previous notions of hidden curriculum. But just because we cannot control them doesn't mean that we should ignore them.

Factors such as globalisation, refugees and asylum seekers, climate change, terrorism etc. are dominant realities which influence the implicit and explicit assumptions our students make about the nature of the world and its future. They also shape their hopes and fears, aspirations and apprehensions and their formed or unformed responses to the big questions of life mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

An increasing number of people in the Western World declare themselves to have no religion. Traditional religious notions of believing in God to avoid Hell and enter Heaven have little appeal or connection. This corresponds with levels of doubt about the reality of any kind of life after death or the supernatural in general. Fundamentalist religion is often viewed as the source of much violence and terror in the world.

But at the same time our whole society is confronted on an almost daily basis with the fragility and uncertainty of life. This may be reflected in another terror attack, refugee drownings at sea, the casualties of war or a natural disaster. Similarly, within our families and school communities we experience the consequences of a broken and sinful world in the lives of those around us. However it comes to us, we cannot escape or deny this broken world.

So, how are we to respond to it in ways which will empower and guide student learning?

Responding to the hidden curriculum

Christian schools have long struggled with the tension between being educational institutions committed to academic excellence and places of Christian nurture and evangelism. At one end of the spectrum the confessional approach takes the authority of the Bible and the Christian teaching as a given. The faith is taught and students are encouraged to respond with personal allegiance to Christ. The inclusion of alternative viewpoints and especially teaching about other religions is either avoided or framed in terms of the absolute claims of Christianity.

At the other end of the spectrum is the treatment of religious faith as a set of phenomena to be observed. This approach claims a degree of neutrality and objectivity by suggesting that it is possible to independently observe religious faith. This approach frowns upon any attempt to engage students in a personal response as inappropriate for an educational setting. However, in the context of our complex and rapidly changing world both approaches are inadequate.

The concept of life after death may appear to have little relevance to many students who adopt a nihilistic worldview, which assumes that 'once you're dead that's it'. But matters of life and death related to war, terror, refugees, suicide etc. are significant and confront them regularly.

What we need to establish and work within is a 'contestable' framework where the validity of Christian worldview(s) and truth are not assumed to be accepted by students but nor are they denied. The truth claims of Christianity are unapologetically presented alongside the alternative truth claims of modern society and other religious ideologies. These claims need to be tested not simply in terms of religious education but as a part of the inter-disciplinary dialogue and the broader social, political and cultural context of the world in which students participate.

There is also a need to reframe the conversation in terms of contemporary questions without abandoning eternal truths. For example, issues of meaning, hope and freedom are major concerns for most students but are not often defined in terms of heaven, hell and sin as traditionally expressed. This is not to deny these basic Christian truths. But it is to say that they may not be perceived as relevant entry points for discussion or debate.

The rise of new forms of fundamentalism, which suggest or request unthinking allegiance to ideologies based around ecology, gender identity, 'the war on terror', refugees, climate change etc. are also noteworthy. Political correctness and reactions to it may both suppress genuine dialogue and debate. It is important that Christian educators are not complicit in fostering an unthinking support of any ideology, religious or not. A thoughtful ownership of one's beliefs and values and respectful dialogue with those who differ is much more likely to produce an integrated and productive person and contributor to society.

The place of wisdom

Knowledge without wisdom can be burdensome. The weight of 'knowing' without the wisdom or discernment to make an appropriate response can be overwhelming for both adults and children. Compassion fatigue is an acknowledged phenomenon resulting from the detailed presentation of human suffering which confronts us through the media and not-for-profit organisations. It can result in increased levels of anxiety, cynicism and paralysis. We 'switch off' both literally and metaphorically to the plight of refugees, victims of war or the homeless in our own back yard.

Knowledge without wisdom can also be seductive. It can produce a confidence in the capacity of humans to manage and control our world, which is unwarranted and deceptive. The promotion of science and technology as the ultimate 'gods' of our society can suggest or imply that we no longer need God. A recent poignant example is that of a stranded Everest climber who could speak to his wife via satellite phone while dying but couldn't be rescued.

Knowledge with wisdom and humility can be empowering, both personally and corporately. This is an important balance to achieve. As Christians and educators we are not called to create a dichotomy between the pursuit of knowledge and the pursuit of God as if they were mutually exclusive. Instead, we are to foster an educational ethos in which our minds are renewed and transformed by our knowledge of God (Romans 12:1–2). Within this context, all truth is assumed to be God's truth (Psalm 24). Thus, we can pursue truth fearlessly across all fields of study and encourage our students to do so as well.

Alongside this approach we need to understand and discuss the ways in which students acquire and prioritise the knowledge they access. In particular, we need to assist students to evaluate the often unthinking levels of authority which are given to sources of truth and knowledge which are questionable.

Similarly, we need to encourage and equip students to develop a framework for engaging with the globalised and terrorised world in which we live which avoids and addresses the following unhelpful reactions:

- Narcissism—typified by the 'selfie culture' which leads to a self-indulgent lifestyle and limits its pursuit of truth to trivialities
- Nihilism—the cynicism and despair that is overwhelmed by too much knowledge with too little hope
- Nationalism—whether to a nation or a caliphate etc. which fears and rejects 'the other' in the name of a nostalgic return to 'the good old days' or a fear based siege mindset.

The ultimate purpose of Christian education

Finally, we need to examine and interrogate the underlying assumptions which shape our priorities and processes for engaging students in acquiring and processing knowledge in our information rich world. What are our underlying assumptions about the place and purpose of knowledge and learning in the bigger picture of students' lives and futures?

Some of the common reasons for education include:

Academic success. This is an inevitable and valid assumption held by parents and educational authorities. However, it can become the dominant or exclusive purpose under the pressure of the market driven challenges faced by some private schools. Parent expectations and educational integrity in delivering outcomes make this a central and essential factor.

Economic contribution. Productive participation in broader society is also a part of enabling students to make a meaningful contribution and gain useful employment. Personal fulfilment and social contribution are both consistent with a biblical understanding of work. This perspective can be distorted when high

academic achievement is promoted primarily on the basis of pursuing the most financially lucrative professions.

Global citizens. Living as members of a globally connected and fragile world is a further valid perspective to incorporate into student understanding and the framework which shapes their pursuit of knowledge.

Agents of God's Kingdom. While not all students will embrace faith during their time at school (or even afterward) it is possible to present them with a vision of biblical *shalom* as a reflection of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All students can be encouraged to understand and pursue the kingdom values articulated by Jesus in the Gospels and summarised in Luke 4 and Isaiah 61. Such an approach needs to go beyond moralising or social activism to a deep understanding of the character of God as both a God of justice and love.

It is important to note the validity of the tensions associated with balancing each of the above educational purposes in the shaping of educational strategies and philosophies and the resultant practices.

Conclusion

The greatest challenge for learning in the twenty-first century is not the acquisition of knowledge, either academic or religious. Nor is it just the evaluation and synthesis of this knowledge. Beyond both is the challenge to live as integrated persons whose knowledge and beliefs shape our response to the 'life and death' realities of our personal and global world.

The way in which knowledge is pursued within the school's framework will in itself be an educational exercise. It will either model an integrated approach to the complexities of academic, experiential and religious realities or it will suggest a fragmented and compartmentalised approach to life and learning. Identifying and engaging with the hidden curricula of student lives can assist them to grow into confident and compassionate contributors to society and potential reflections of Christ's love and service.

13 Human knowing and the disciplines

Tony George

> Ours is a culture in which there is the sharpest of contrasts between the rigor and integrity with which issues of detail are discussed within each specialized discipline and the self-indulgent shoddiness of so much of public debate on large and general issues of great import.[1]
>
> Alasdair MacIntyre

This chapter explores the relationship of the disciplines and the concept of worldview to our understanding of human knowing and the practice of education. It also explores the relationship of religious knowing and wisdom and the significant role of Biblical Studies as an academic discipline for Christian education.

The disciplines

The academic disciplines that form the basis of knowledge with which our school curriculum is concerned are collectively known as science (from the Latin *scientia*, meaning knowledge). While we tend to think of science as referring specifically to the natural or physical sciences, the general term 'science' simply refers to knowledge, including the process by which knowledge is constructed, within the context of any academic discipline. This is because science is a particular approach to human knowing that emphasises evidence and experience, and is

different from either religious or philosophic knowing that tend to emphasise faith and reason respectively.

The rise of the disciplines has assisted greatly in the organisation of knowledge and has contributed to the significant growth of disciplinary based knowledge as expressed in specific disciplinary based language, methods, theories and models. This growth in disciplinary, or scientific, knowledge has resulted in a plethora of new and varied disciplines, together with their associated educational programs and courses. While this has enriched the educational offerings of schools, colleges and universities, it has also contributed to the compartmentalisation of scientific knowledge and the emergence of academic silos with epistemological barriers between them.

Further, while we might order our scientific knowledge within the context of our academic disciplines, reality itself is not so ordered. While our modern practice of education is simplified with its reliance on disciplinary based knowledge, our experience of reality is far more complex. A significant challenge for educators is how to integrate knowledge from across the disciplines to form a coherent whole while respecting the integrity of each discipline. For example, while neuroscience, psychology, education and theology all have an interest in the notion of 'mind', each discipline has a different understanding (construct) of 'mind'. Christian education as a philosophy or perspective that attempts to bring a unifying Christian emphasis across the various disciplines will inevitably and frequently encounter this cross disciplinary tension.

Christian education, with its interest in Christianity and the Bible, has a rich history in seeking to understand the relationship of religious knowing to the disciplines. While this has resulted in various attempts to integrate Christian perspectives and biblical content with disciplinary based curricula, ranging from science to history to literature, we do well to remember that the disciplines are scientifically constructed human knowledge.

Worldview

As social beings we construct meaning in the context of others, within our communities. Consequently, our individual internal working models and worldviews will no doubt be influenced by, and bear considerable

resemblance to, those with whom we live. Further, it is natural for us to develop narratives with those around us as we seek to make sense of our world together. This is our natural religious activity as humans, our propensity to construct shared belief. We develop narratives, rites, rituals and symbols to provide explanatory power for our experience of reality, our world and each other. The purpose of religious knowledge is to construct a shared sense of meaning and belonging. Thus, the development of our own worldview will never be completely individual or alone; it will carry the marks of the community in which we live.

As Christians, we have our own narratives that inform our own particular worldviews. However, just as there have been many Christian communities over time and in various places, so too there are many Christian worldviews. This presents a challenge for Christian education as we enculturate one generation to the next, for any Christian worldview will be specific to its particular Christian community.

This is not to deny the importance of developing a Christian worldview, for a person's worldview provides a significant explanatory narrative for integrating our religious, philosophic and scientific knowledge. Worldviews are never static, but dynamic and shifting. Thus, teachers play a significant role in the development of a child's worldview, but perhaps more from a 'bespoke' approach than a 'cookie cutter' approach, in that each worldview is uniquely and personally constructed within the mind of each student.

At the very heart of worldview thinking is that of identity and our particular community's common wisdom. This kind of knowledge is of who we are and how we relate to one another. It is religious knowledge, and this becomes all the more important as we experience the increasing societal pressures of globalisation. Consequently, worldview thinking is far more relevant in today's heterogeneous cosmopolitan world than it was in the homogeneous village world of our ancestral past.

Christian education

Human knowledge exists in the mind and is constructed, primarily through narrative, in response to God's revelation, both direct and indirect. God's direct revelation, also known as special revelation, comes to us through the person of Jesus Christ and the scriptures, while

God's indirect revelation, also known as general revelation, comes to us through God's creation, including human culture. This is not to say that human knowledge is invalid or untrue, but recognises that it is human and therefore prone to error, even though it has been constructed in response to divine revelation.

A significant tension for Christian education is that while human knowledge is constructed in response to God's revealed truth it is also fallible. As we seek to understand the relationship of our religious knowing with our philosophic and scientific knowing, attempts to integrate our faith with either the disciplines or our worldview ought to experience this epistemic tension.

However, religious, philosophic and scientific knowing should work collaboratively in the enterprise of human knowing, each from its own particular frame of reference or perspective. Religious knowing functions from the perspective of faith, philosophy from that of reason, and science from that of evidence.

Our attempts to integrate our Christianity with disciplinary knowledge and our worldview for coherence is important. This is the iterative nature of the relationship between religious, philosophic and scientific knowing. Should either disagree with the other, we do well to explore and reconcile the differences from the respective frame of each.

Thus, it is not that we subject philosophic and scientific knowing to the espoused truth of our religious knowing, but that our religious, philosophic and scientific knowing ought to work together coherently and collectively under the authority of God's revealed truth. For all truth is God's truth, wherever it is to be found, whether religiously, philosophically or scientifically, and so it is important that we recognise and affirm the collaborative roles that religious, philosophic and scientific knowing play in the enterprise of human knowing.

Human knowing

Knowledge is fundamentally the human phenomenon of belief that exists in the human mind for the purpose of enabling us to navigate our world socially, physically and spiritually. Yet, while we are born with a capacity for knowledge, we are socially dependent upon the community into which we are born to develop a competency of knowledge,

including our language, beliefs, values and attitudes. It is the relational context of our attachment to our parents, teachers, and others in our community that enables us to become knowledgeable.[2] We have all been pre-programmed with the culture into which we were born with its presuppositions, biases and paradigms. This is the basis of the human cultural phenomenon of religion—our collective beliefs, values and attitudes as expressed in rites, rituals, symbols and behaviour.

Thus, human knowing begins with faith, in our relationships with those in whom we trust.[3] This is the reality of being a dependent social being. We may have all the potentiality of becoming a knowledgeable human, but we do so *a-posteriori*, not *a-priori*. We come to knowledge after the fact of having been enculturated into a particular human culture, with its particular language and presuppositions. We approach the enterprise of human knowing, including philosophic and scientific knowing, having been pre-programmed religiously. Human knowledge, then, begins religiously, as a religious phenomenon. We may then reason such knowledge philosophically and seek to validate it scientifically, however it begins religiously in the cultic beliefs and practices of the particular community into which we were born.

However, having asserted that human knowing begins with faith, we need to clarify what we mean by faith. While opponents of religion may deride faith as superstition, the term is better understood as a relational term, to have faith in someone. For example, if we say we have faith in our students, we are making a positive statement that we trust them, and presumably because we have good reason to do so. Few teachers would offer to express their faith in a student or colleague if there was good evidence to the contrary. Thus, faith is a positive relational expression of trust, not mere superstition or vain hope. Scientists demonstrate faith in this way when they cite the work of colleagues, for in doing so they are making a public statement of trust in someone else's work. Consequently, religious knowing is characterised by trust, by faith in others. Hence, we are more inclined to believe someone if we trust them. This is the nature of religious knowing, our human propensity to construct shared belief based on faith.

The modern tendency to define religion in terms of a belief in God or gods confuses religion with theism. Religion is a human cultural phenomenon, as is philosophy and science. While a religion may include

theistic beliefs, there is more to religion than simply its belief content, such as rites, rituals, and laws. To define religion merely in terms of its belief content is also problematic with respect to our understanding of philosophy and science. For neither philosophy nor science is defined in terms of their content but in terms of their function in the enterprise of human knowing. Therefore, if we are to consider religion in terms of its relationship to philosophy and science, we would do better to define it in terms of how it functions in the enterprise of human knowing.

Consequently, consider the relationship between religious, philosophic and scientific knowing as follows:

- religious knowing as the human propensity to construct shared belief with respect to faith and trust;
- philosophic knowing as the human process of framing and critiquing our beliefs with respect to logic and reason; and
- scientific knowing as the human activity of investigating and validating our beliefs with respect to evidence and experience.

From this understanding, humanity is essentially a believing creature, and it is our commonly held beliefs within our various communities that identify who we are and how we relate to each other and the world in which we live. This is the common functional characteristic across all human religions. Religious knowing is the default epistemological standpoint of being human; we believe stuff, which in turn allows us to form internal models of our world and to form groups beyond our immediate family based on a common identity rather than merely genetics. Consequently, religious knowing with its priority on faith has a distinctly relational approach to human knowing, philosophy with its priority on reason has a distinctly cognitive approach to human knowing, and science with its priority on evidence has a distinctly experiential approach to human knowing.

Wisdom

While truth is an essential goal of human knowing, it is not necessarily of primary importance. Wisdom is of primary importance.[4] For in the pursuit of truth, as in the absence of truth, we need wisdom. It is the common wisdom of a community that regulates its affairs, including

its laws and practices, whether or not its beliefs are true and justified. Truth seeking is important for wisdom, but as its faithful servant, not its taskmaster.

With the development of philosophic and scientific knowing, priority has shifted away from that of wisdom, to that of truth seeking. Whether or not this trend in post-classical Western philosophy is a result of its growing anti-theistic prejudice, the shift has left our understanding of wisdom greatly impoverished. Indeed, post-classical Western philosophy needs to deal with this anti-theistic prejudice if it is to meaningfully engage with the human reality of religious knowing and its role in wisdom setting.

Some philosophers and scientists, with their assertion that knowledge must be justified true belief, invariably characterise religious belief as superstition. Yet, *Aesop's Fables* were written in order to learn wisdom and arguably constitute a form of knowledge, though perhaps not philosophic or scientific knowledge. This is also true of the Bible, as evidenced, for example, in Jesus' use of parables—whether or not there really was a Good Samaritan is hardly the point. Jesus' teaching in the parable is not voided if it were demonstrated that the Good Samaritan was a fictitious character. This is not to say that the events and people of the Bible are fictitious. It is to say that the Bible is important for human knowledge, even though it may not present as philosophic or scientific knowledge.

Science provides us with a rich and varied toolbox of disciplines for investigating and validating human knowledge. However, science is no more the determinant of human knowledge than a plumber's wrench is of repairing a leaking faucet. The tool is only useful in the hands of a skilled craftsperson. The more tools available, the greater the choice and nuance of skill. However, if a plumber has only a screwdriver, they will be significantly limited despite their skill. Similarly, when it comes to investigating and validating human knowledge, we need to use the right discipline for the job. For example, using the physical or natural sciences to look for an immaterial God is like using a flashlight to look for an idea—it's the wrong tool for the job.

Consequently, wisdom exists *a-priori* to philosophical knowledge. Further, philosophy with its predilection for knowledge as justified true belief has struggled to define wisdom, for it attempts to do so

with respect to knowledge. This is rather ironic given that philosophy is the 'love of wisdom' and yet philosophy has become enamoured with knowledge at the expense of wisdom.[5] Rather than seek wisdom, philosophy seeks knowledge.

Yet, herein lies the contradiction. Philosophic and scientific knowing in their pursuit of knowledge as justified true belief have convinced our ever believing world that our problems are to be solved with knowledge rather than wisdom. Yet, despite the ever driven quest for the mastery of scientific knowledge, the solutions to our ever present complex problems, such as poverty and climate change, continue to elude and frustrate us. Christian educational communities, however, as religious communities engage with God through his Word in the power of his Spirit to seek wisdom (*sapientia*). Then, from a perspective of Christian wisdom, Christian educational communities as philosophic and scientific communities engage with the world to seek knowledge and understanding (*scientia*).[6]

Biblical Studies

The Bible prioritises wisdom and relational knowledge with very little, if any, attention being given to philosophic or scientific knowledge.[7] Further, any attempt to use, apply or integrate the Bible with a purpose for which it isn't intended would seem misplaced, and potentially divert or distract attention from its intended purpose. Thus, it is important that our students are encouraged to understand and use the scriptures for the purpose for which they were intended and to see that modelled in our school communities. Unfortunately, too many school communities and practitioners of Christian education, while well intentioned, invariably misuse or misappropriate the scriptures in their attempt to integrate the Bible with their curriculum or worldview.

If we are to include biblical references in our curriculum, then we need to be prepared to handle the scriptures well. For while a teacher's original intention may have been a limited engagement with the scriptures, in my experience, students are capable of taking class discussion into areas that continue to challenge biblical scholars and theologians. Thus, educators who include biblical references in their curriculum need the wisdom to refrain from expertise extrapolation (going beyond one's

area of expertise) and encourage students to follow up on their enquiries with those who have the relevant disciplinary expertise. Otherwise, they would do well to clearly distinguish between their religious opinions and the reasoned and validated views of biblical scholars. This, however, is not unique to the use of the Bible in the various disciplines, as all disciplines at some point will stretch across the disciplinary divide and transgress other academic tribes and territories. Economics, for example, can easily move into geography or history or psychology.

This is the tension of disciplinary knowledge. While we might want to integrate knowledge from across the disciplines, that they are humanly and fallibly constructed will inevitably frustrate our attempts to do so. Hence, it is perhaps better to embrace the fragmentary nature of the disciplines and hold them together in tension but with integrity, and to seek wisdom rather than presume mastery.

We do well to remember that the authority of scripture stands alone, independently of human enquiry and validation, for the purpose which God intended, namely, that we would know and worship him as God through a personal relationship with God in Christ. Let us allow the scriptures to speak for themselves and to heed their wisdom. It is this wisdom that frames our understanding of our experience of reality and the knowledge we construct in response. Thus, the knowledge we construct is human knowledge not divine knowledge, even though it may be divinely inspired. When we come to God and read his Word, let us seek to do so on his terms rather than our own. Let us allow God through his Word to set his own agenda and purpose rather than seek to appropriate God and his Word for our own agendas and purposes.

In practice, a priority on Christian wisdom may simply be the provision of a Biblical Studies program that encourages and equips students to engage directly with the text of scripture. As Christian educational communities, Christian schools may best seek to articulate a clear, biblical meta-narrative that members of the community are able to reflect upon as they develop their unique worldviews in the context of the various disciplines they have chosen to study. Rather than attempt to prescribe a particular worldview or formal curriculum, Christian education may simply honour God and his Word through a Biblical Studies program that inspires students to engage with the Bible and equips them to understand its historical, social, literary and biblical

contexts, regardless of their own personal faith perspective. Further, we might help students recognise their human propensity to construct a worldview and the importance for it to be coherent in framing their understanding of the disciplines.

However, as Christians, we believe that it is God through his Word and Spirit that transforms minds, so let us do our best not to get in the way but encourage our students to seek wisdom. Let us focus on providing an open and inclusive biblical literacy program for all our students, allowing them to encounter the claims of Christ in the Bible and to make up their own minds, for which they will need both the knowledge and language to do so. While such a program may be experienced at the disciplinary level of Biblical Studies, it will inform the educational community of the school, just as Mathematics informs numeracy and English informs literacy. In this way, the Bible may be presented with integrity and on its own terms, rather than being framed by another academic discipline, such as Biology or Geography or History.

Conclusion

We do not come to the truth unsullied, but belief stricken. The process of learning is not so much enquiring of something new and strange but of recalibrating, critiquing and validating that which we already believe, at least in part. For any learning of knowledge requires that we have the language to encounter and engage with such knowledge. Thus, learning is an expanding from what we know to what we do not yet know, rather than being teleported to a foreign land. We move from the known to the unknown, from the believed to the reasoned and verified. The very nature of presuppositions is that they are beliefs. Only the bold would suggest that we come to knowledge as an unbiased blank slate. However, rather than see this as an impediment to knowledge, it is the natural way by which humans come to knowledge.

Consequently, if we understand that we arrive at philosophic and scientific knowing after the fact, *a-posteriori*, the default epistemic frame of any community is a predominantly pre-suppositional frame. Hence the need for wisdom. For the danger of a pre-suppositional frame is that of either ignorance or arrogance, and yet the community is in need of epistemic self-regulation as it both reasons and validates its beliefs,

moving from a position of epistemic humility to one of possibly epistemic confidence. What we are saying here is that wisdom is necessary for knowledge, and that religious knowing is necessary for philosophic and scientific knowing. Beliefs precede knowledge; we need to believe stuff before being capable of knowing stuff. Thus, it is important for any community's beliefs to be regulated by its common wisdom as it seeks to reason and validate its beliefs as knowledge, justified true belief. Our philosophic and scientific communities would not be possible if it were not for the religious communities of faith and wisdom, which give rise to them in the first place.

The goal of Christian education is to create and foster an educational community of Christian wisdom in which our students may engage with their teachers and each other in the study of the various scientific disciplines of their curriculum in order to construct a biblically informed coherent Christian worldview for the purpose of engaging wisely and knowledgeably in God's world. Thus, we grow people; wise and knowledgeable people.

Endnotes

1 Alasdair MacIntyre, (2006), 'The end of education: the fragmentation of the American university', *Commonweal*, Vol 133, No. 18.

2 For a more detailed discussion on the role of attachments, attributions and self-regulation in the development of one's worldview, see George, T, Miner, M, & Dowson, M, (2012), 'Human Flourishing in Education', in M Miner, M Dowson & S Devenish (eds) *Beyond Well-Being*, Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, pp. 109–126.

3 As Quinton observes, 'A curious feature about epistemology is the very slight attention it has given to the source of by far the greater part of our beliefs, namely the testimony of others: parents, teachers, textbooks, encyclopaedias. There is an interesting problem here. If we depend on them for the principles by which we check the reliability of what we are told, how do we ever achieve cognitive autonomy?' (in T Honderich (Ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, (2005), New York: Oxford University Press, p. 704).

4 Proverbs 4:7; 9:10.

5 John Kekes observes in a brief entry on Wisdom in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2005), that 'although wisdom is what philosophy is meant to be a love of, little attention has been paid to this essential component of good lives in post-classical Western philosophy. It is perhaps for this reason

that those in search of it often turn to the obscurities of oriental religions for enlightenment' (p. 959).

6 'Christian education brings wisdom to a faithful understanding of the secular' (George, T (2010), 'Social Justice and Critical Thinking', in M Dowson & S Devenish (Eds), *Religion and Spirituality*, Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, p. 71.

7 The consistent claim of scripture is that it is fundamentally concerned with wisdom and right relationship. Eg. 2 Tim 3:14.

14 Bible-shaped learning

Ruby Holland

> If one story can judge another through its contrasting shape, then the distinctive contours of biblical narratives may call into question the stories of life which implicitly underpin the school curriculum.
>
> DI Smith & J Shortt, *The Bible and the Task of Teaching*

I once led a group of English teachers from four Independent schools in their development of a model unit to demonstrate the application of Christian thinking to the teaching of English. As their chosen short story involved angels, one of the participants had scoured the Bible for every text on the subject in preparation for incorporating at least some of these into the unit. I was then presented with a dilemma: how to respect the young teacher's desire to use the Bible in her teaching while guiding the group into a rather more sophisticated use of the Bible. What she was suggesting appeared to me to cross the boundary between English and Biblical Studies, probably involving decontextualised quoting of verses and a diminution of focus on the text of the short story.

This is a dilemma faced by many teachers in Christian schools and their solution is often to restrict the role of the Bible to the formal aspects of the school's 'religious education': Biblical Studies, chapel, community service etc. Unfortunately, students are likely to learn from this dichotomy that belief and religious faith are not relevant to

the 'real work' of school and hence life. But there are other ways that are not so marginalising of faith and undergird the claims of a school to be 'Christian'.

For I contend that a school is 'Christian' to the extent that it allows the Bible to govern it in every aspect of its practice. This understanding extends Cooling's 'A Christian school should be a gospel community' with a method for nurturing that community[1]. It recognises that the whole educational offering, including core beliefs, values and vision, contributes to the formation of a school culture. In turn, students are formed by this culture in accord with that view of human flourishing. For the Christian school, that vision of 'the good life' is based on the Bible, the proclaimer of the gospel. That of course leads naturally to the question of how we relate the Bible and our school in the most valid and effective way. If quoting decontextualised Bible verses is neither educationally acceptable nor effective for promoting student learning, then how do we allow the Bible to 'govern' a school's practice?

How does the Bible shape the educational process?

Any exploration of this question involves certain hermeneutical assumptions, grounded in a belief that the Bible is God's Word and the ultimate authority for Christian belief and practice. However, there are few direct references to education in the Bible generally and none to schooling as we understand it in the twenty-first century, so how to do this has proved quite problematic for Christian educators. Confronted with anti-Christian sentiment in the mainstream culture, schools are increasingly recognising that dualistic approaches, with their secularising tendencies, are insufficient to educate resilient leaders, confident in the (often anti-Christian) public square.

A key hermeneutical debate influencing attempts to allow the Bible to govern schooling relates to the Bible as either propositional or narrative truth. It can be seen in the sort of questions we pose as Christian educators. Emphasising principles and propositions may lead us to ask: To what extent can we align our purpose in Christian education with biblical principles, given the role of the State? What role should repentance, forgiveness, retribution and mercy play in student discipline? What values can we derive from the Sermon on the Mount for our school community? Lovers of narrative hermeneutics might ask:

How can we follow the model of Jesus as teacher? What role does the school have in the Kingdom of God? Is a theological framework such as Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation a sufficient and valid framework for curriculum? How can a student's identity and character be formed by the story of Jesus Christ? Such questions will give us very different answers as to the link between the Bible and the school. However, both are necessary if we are to apply the Bible to the educational process with any validity, as theological concepts and propositions are always embedded in narrative, namely the 'big story' of Jesus Christ.

Smith and Shortt pursue such issues in their analysis of how the Christian school might be 'biblically informed'.[2] They go beyond Greg Clarke's observation, 'If you have grown up in a Western culture ... you will be walking around in something of a fog unless you have some basic grasp of the Bible.'[3] They contend that having the Bible as an object of study (as perhaps our young English teacher was suggesting above) while of value, does not allow it to authoritatively influence the educational process itself. But the Bible is not a literary text like any other. It is as dangerous and demanding of commitment as its central character: the living Son of God. To open it as a cultural-heritage artifact may allow the Holy Spirit the opportunity to develop faith in those who study it. Smith and Shortt's emphasis, though, is on a more general 'shaping' function of the Bible, suggesting four ways in relation to teaching:

1. **The Bible can form people who are spiritually mature and incarnate the gospel.** This is essentially a devotional use of the Bible, aimed at the affective aspect of the teacher. It is of primary importance that we support the spiritual maturity of our staff. As Smith and Shortt state, 'The Bible shapes people and it is people who educate.'[4] However, it is not in itself adequate to shape other aspects of the school and often results in a dualistic approach that erodes the attempts of those incarnating the gospel to live it out faithfully in their classrooms.

2. **The Bible can form propositions by exploring the links between the Bible and the disciplines.** This is essentially a theological use, aimed at the cognitive, understanding aspect of the teacher and subsequently the student. Focused on theological

concepts, it can tend towards the cerebral and abstract. However, John Hattie's work on the most effective interventions for boosting student achievement may offer some encouragement for the effectiveness of this shaping of education by the Bible.

Hattie found that the average effect size of all the interventions he studied was 0.40, his 'hinge point'. Any factor that rated above this point was considered as 'what works best' for student learning. 'Metacognitive strategies' and 'concept mapping' both scored above 0.57 and are focused on abstract thinking and deep understanding of subject matter. His findings on concept-based interventions affirm the effectiveness of teaching specifically to this aspect of each subject, yet in a way that is focused on the self-efficacy of the student and the teaching of specific thinking skills. This might include the skill of knowing how to bring the Bible to interrogate the conceptual framework of each subject, especially perhaps in relation to its understanding of people, as suggested by Graham Cole.[5]

3. **The Bible can provide a framework for interpretation by means of its metanarrative**. This perspectival use focuses on story 'shape' according to Smith and Shortt:

> If one story can judge another through its contrasting shape, then the distinctive contours of biblical narratives may call into question the stories of life which implicitly underpin the school curriculum.[6]

This critique does not seek to promote a triumphalist hegemony of the Christian grand story. Rather, the Christian story is how the school interprets the world, setting all beliefs and facts in context. The central focus on student meaning-making in curriculum documents such as the NSW BOSTES Syllabus for English K-10 should alert us to the importance of this emphasis on interpretation. However, taken alone it does not seem to give rise to strategies for teaching.

4. **The Bible can suggest metaphors that promote transference of their web of meaning into educational situations.** This imaginative use includes metaphors of 'map, story, garden' and

> perhaps, 'centre, leader, compass, yeast, shaper, foundation, perspective, soil, director'.[7] Smith and Shortt claim, 'Metaphor can join faith to practice through the medium of imagination'.[8] This is a rich conceptualisation, helping us to see 'what this (Christian education) looks like'. However metaphors and stories can involve us without the necessity for rigorous conscious thought. To effectively shape teaching requires rigorous thinking that explores the cognitive claims of metaphor.

We see above devotional, theological, perspectival and imaginative applications of the Bible to teaching. Each of these has strengths and weaknesses as a means of shaping. Each is complemented by the rest. To consider in more depth what exactly is shaped by the Bible, we will go beyond teaching, while keeping the holistic learning of students in mind. In accord with a biblical account of the person, the spiritual nature at the core of their being is a priority. A recent analysis of their spirituality by Australian sociologists will be used where relevant to evaluate the possible impact on our students. Given that our practice is driven by vision, the shaping of our purpose in Christian schools will be examined in some detail. Examining these different visions should alert us to the responsible freedom we have in Christ as culture-makers. A broad range of factors will influence us to develop different theories but within what Wolterstorff calls 'control beliefs', which are in turn derived from the principles and metanarrative of the Bible.[9]

What are the key objects of the Bible's shaping process in education?

1. **The Bible trains for service in the Kingdom of God: educating for shalom.** The cultural mandate to steward the earth in Genesis 1:28ff provides a purpose for education as cultural formation; although it has been criticised for a tendency to triumphalism. When taken with the other two propositional 'mandates' (the evangelistic mandate of Matthew 28:18–20 and the moral mandate of Matthew 22:37–40) it provides an holistic sense of purpose, centred on the priority of living justly and promoting God's shalom, ushered in by the Resurrection

of Jesus Christ. It may not be a relevant purpose, however, for non-Christian students.

2. **The Bible nurtures in a primary culture.** Deuteronomy 11 and Ephesians 6 paint a rich picture of the nurturing of one's children into a relationship with the one true God, done with respect for their personhood. It is an articulated faith lived out in daily life: nurture in the primary culture of the family.

   This is in no way negated by the state's control of schooling in a pluralist secular democracy; but it does present some challenges. In particular, accusations are often made by secularists of brainwashing and intolerance in claiming truth as originating in Jesus Christ. Increasingly, the right of parents to educate in a faith tradition is being called into account and therefore the schools that act 'in loco parentis'. Mary Eberstadt in *How the West Really Lost God* affirms the essential role of the family in a way that is relevant to this purpose in education. She claims that family and religion form the 'double helix of society', depending on each other for strength and reproduction. 'The decline of the family has contributed to the decline of Christianity in more ways than one.'[10]

   In his masterly analysis, Elmer Thiessen refutes liberal charges of indoctrination and supports the view of sociology that it is inevitable and necessary to nurture children in their primary culture. It is from that perspective that one learns to critique both one's own culture and that of others. According to Thiessen, nurture in a faith has as its goal commitment to 'a reasonably plausible and morally efficacious worldview'. The result is an individual well able to contribute happily to a civilised society.[11]

3. **The Bible provides guidance in character formation**. References abound in the Bible to training in wisdom and general moral development. Trevor Cairney: 'Education as its key purpose must seek growth in wisdom that is evoked by God's wisdom, a challenge to the foolishness of worldly knowledge.'[12] This approach is more often focused on pedagogy rather than curriculum content and therefore can tend to minimize Christian educational distinctives. However, it has been complemented

recently by an assertion of the priority of affectivity by JKA Smith, that certain cultural practices form students into a particular pre-theoretical attunement to the world and their purpose in it.[13] Student character is thus formed by the 'liturgies', school practices that are focused on a particular understanding of the good life.

This approach may present a balance for the Gen Y understanding of 'spirituality'. Defined as 'a conscious way of life based on a transcendent referent', they hold it to be self-constructed and self-nurtured and appear to be oblivious to the formative nature of many of their cultural practices.[14] However, as an object of biblical shaping, this purpose would seem to address only one aspect of education, its moral purpose.

4. **The Bible can educate for informed belief or unbelief.** A particular version of the moral purpose of education is worth considering separately, namely that of Nel Noddings, Professor Emerita of Education at Stanford University. For her, education is 'for intelligent belief or unbelief' and involves a consideration of the big existential questions of life, along with narrative approaches that help form 'moral people'.[15] It is important to note that her recommendations refer to education generally within both secular and faith-based schools. The metanarrative of the Bible is crucial to this purpose in the Christian school and its strength is in the recognition of student autonomy and freedom of response within the educational setting.

5. **The Bible provides criteria from which to evaluate a philosophy of education.** Christian education is grounded in philosophical and theological commitments. This is especially so in the area of anthropology. A clear, Bible-based understanding of students will radically affect how we conceptualise and practise education in all its aspects but especially our teaching and learning. The enormously influential instrumental/pragmatic views of John Dewey present a contrary example. He rejected the transcendent, ultimate, fixed reality of the creator God, replacing it with person-focussed social experience as the ultimate, ever-changing reality. Thus knowledge is socially constructed and ever-changing and pedagogy is inquiry into

problems, beginning with student interests and conducted with student-focused activity. Without allowing the Bible to shape our understanding of people, we assign them a meaning-making role that goes beyond responding to the meaning inherent in a created universe and thereby places too much responsibility on our students.

Alternatively, we might describe students as:

- created, not a 'god'
- 'religious', seeking order and meaning in life
- fallen from grace, but potentially redeemable
- valued and purposed to live in an imaging relationship with the Creator/Redeemer God
- serving by living justly with others
- gendered male or female
- both an individual and a member of community
- a steward of the earth as God's representative.

This rich biblical anthropology counters the 'individualisation' that has 'transformed human identity from a given into a task' with its consequent uncertainty and insecurity for our students.[16] It should also provide criteria by which to develop and evaluate our pedagogy. If we are not seeing real understanding of the issues and a maturing of student identity, warning bells should ring for us as educators.

6. **The Bible provides the plausibility structure for a coherent curriculum.**
   The biblical metanarrative contains a sub-text suggesting a vision of the flourishing life while maintaining its main focus on Jesus Christ, the meaning giver. Its vision of reality is at once beautiful, rational and comprehensive, inviting our appreciation, understanding and commitment. It accommodates Frankel's 'fundamental human drive' for meaning, an understanding of which correlates closely with life satisfaction.[17] And it should be evident as the cohering story of our curriculum offering, for every curriculum promotes a worldview. Although it involves a

subjective commitment, the Bible claims that the meaningfulness of human life is objectively true and holds ethical implications. With God as the source, students uncover and respond to their meaningful world, developing 'a frame of reference within which I can assign meaning to my experiences'. This life story is infused with ideas and beliefs that frame our interpreting of experience. If shaped by the biblical metanarrative, it provides a cognitive structure of intelligible order and meaning, security and significance.

We have seen previously how important 'meaning-making' is to (mostly constructivist) twenty-first century syllabi. Mason et al helpfully couple worldview with ethos, the feeling and deciding that infuse knowing. It involves tone, character, quality and aesthetics, expressed in values, attitudes, motivations and habits. Although usually by self-evaluation, it is important to track student ethos, both individually and corporately, for its interaction with student worldview and impact on learning.

The necessity of attending to curriculum as well as pedagogy can be further understood by the concept of 'plausibility structure'. This is 'a structure of assumptions and practices which determine what beliefs are plausible and what are not.'[18] Increasingly, Independent schools operate in a culture that no longer accepts Christendom as this structure so that the default position of students is incredulity and scepticism. It can also be seen as an opportunity to bring the Bible to bear in a way that forgoes hegemony and elitism and focuses on engaging every student in examining the validity of biblical assumptions and practices. The story that your curriculum tells will either support the plausibility structure that is the biblical metanarrative or deconstruct it, leaving students with a curriculum structure that lacks a coherent, imaginative, hopeful and captivating heart.

7. **The Bible provides the values that ground the school as a community.**
   It is sufficient to state at this stage that biblical instructions (eg. to love one another), biblical accounts of personal experience and the overarching story of Jesus Christ are amongst the many sources of values for the school as a Christian community. It has been said that story takes us from rules to virtues and so figures largely in promoting a Bible-governed culture. Please see other chapters in this book for a more comprehensive coverage.

8. **The Bible prompts us to ask key questions about our practice.**
   It interrogates us as we read it and as educators we need to be open to its posing of challenges such as these:
   - To what extent is a secular agenda driving our philosophy, policies or practice?
   - What role does prayer for my students have in my daily practice?
   - Are the difficult questions of truth and belief overlooked in our subjects? How is my pedagogy catering to the spiritual core of students?
   - What is the role in education of the Holy Spirit and/or conversion? How do we balance nurturing with critical thinking at each stage?
   - What impact does our school have on student identity? How can teachers truly critique secularism while living within a perspective-forming secular culture?
   - What strategies effectively address the tendency for students to view issues of belief as being marginal to their aspirations, concerns and lives? How might we educate effectively in a pluralist, secularised society without appearing to support authoritarian, sectarian and fundamentalist claims to truth and morality?
   - What does it mean to teach in a Christian learning community?

Conclusion

The different purposes that we have examined are not mutually exclusive nor do they preclude purposes from other sources such as the state-sponsored economic purpose in education. They do however represent work by Christian educators who are personally formed by the Bible, see the world through the gospel story and seek to have its grand story and principles impact on their professional life.

The objects of the Bible's shaping represent key areas for rigorous thinking and planning if we wish to accord the Bible its rightful place in the Christian school, for the impact of these areas spreads widely in the school community. The means by which this is done will vary according to area and issue, although I suggest that none of these objects of biblical shaping is exclusively linked with any one means of shaping. The Christian school that aims to be faithful will seek other opportunities to creatively extend and develop biblical wisdom over every area of its activities for the sake of the inevitably holistic learning of those entrusted to our care.

Endnotes

1 Cooling, T 'The Diversity of School Culture' in *Teaching Well, Insights for educators in Christian schools,* Barton Books, Canberra, 2014, p. 152.

2 Smith, DI & Shortt, J *The Bible and the Task of Teaching,* The Stapleford Centre, Nottingham, 2002.

3 *The Briefing*, Feb. 5, 1997, p. 7.

4 Smith and Shortt, 2002, p. 37.

5 Cole, G 'Scripture and the Disciplines: The Question of Expectations', *Zadok Paper S142,* Summer 2005, pp. 3–7.

6 Smith and Shortt, 2002, p. 87.

7 Thompson, R 'The Bible and the School' in *The Christian Teachers' Journal,* 11.2, p. 15.

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15 Finding an effective model of Christian proclamation in schools

John Collier

> The habit of teaching religion in a separate compartment from secular knowledge fail(s) to create a natural relationship between Christian belief and the routine of daily life.
>
> Ronald Conway

The classic model in long established church schools is one where the spiritual enculturation of young people was the responsibility of the Chaplain. His (it was invariably a he) main instrument was the preaching and liturgy of school chapel services, conducted in the physical chapel. This was closely associated with a catechal understanding, where students were in effect taught incontestable Christian credal truth. Christendom was intact; the tacit assumption was that all believed, apart from the rare renegade or dissident who challenged this orthodoxy. This transmission model was posited on effective listening to oral teaching, unembellished by PowerPoint presentations and multimedia! It was aided and abetted by a similar model in the local church, Sunday school or youth group, to which most young people in church schools, it was with good reason, were assumed to belong.

Do these models and these assumptions work post-Christendom, in the twenty-first century? Can we afford to put all our eggs in the basket of the Chaplain's weekly or fortnightly preaching in chapel, as our main or even sole strategy for bringing young people to faith? At heart is this question: Will young people believe, simply because we tell them it is true? Some, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, will. What about the rest? Following are some reflections on this issue.

Preaching repentance and faith is an essential and ongoing part of our practice. It is manifestly necessary (Romans 10:14–15). This occurs mostly in chapel, but also opportunistically in Christian Development classes and elsewhere in the school as the opportunity arises. It also occurs at Crusader (CRU) camps. No-one to my knowledge has suggested that it lose its primacy.

Why preaching needs strategising and supplementation

Experience (mine and others') suggests that such preaching, of itself, needs both strategising and supplementation. This is because:

- grasp of the basic concepts and necessary language of faith is increasingly lacking amongst the post-Christian young, such that pre-evangelistic teaching is necessary to build a scaffold. Professor Trevor Cooling's work in the early 1990s entitled this 'concept-cracking'[1] as Christian teachers and preachers break open new ideas by gradually building a cognitive structure, from what is known, into what is new.
- simple repetition of the same message at frequent intervals is likely to 'inoculate' students against faith; if it lacks nuance and development, it bores or irritates them. A St Andrew's Cathedral School (SACS) example is as follows: in 2012, a Year 12 Chapel I attended featured all of the following: a competent address by one of our chaplaincy staff; extensive inattention by students, who variously checked messages on their phones; they whispered to one another behind their hands; they dozed; they cleaned out their wallets. Tutors, rostered on to attend but not necessarily being personally committed to the message, found it easier to 'turn a blind eye' than intervene. When I asked one of our student leaders to

explain to me privately why the attention was so poor, he said it was because Year 12 had heard the same message preached in the same way every week for six years and most had stopped listening years ago! We have improved our delivery since!

- over-zealous approaches which appear bombastic, or dismissive of other possible views in controversial areas, often lead in Christian schools to the strident objection by students that 'religion is shoved down their throats'. In this society, beliefs are contestable, and students want the opportunity to interact, which is difficult to achieve if preaching is exclusively our mode of presentation.
- didactic modes are less effective than in the past. This is because:
  - (i) students' modes of engagement with the world are increasingly interactive and multimedia;
  - (ii) attention spans have noticeable shortened. Young people increasingly expect to be stimulated or entertained if they are to be engaged;
  - (iii) many students have mastered the art of polite inattention, where they are physically present, not disruptive, but mentally absent; and
  - (iv) unlike at church, where people are mostly there by choice (apart from those dragged there unwillingly by spouses), students are there by compulsion, sometimes resentfully. This creates a quite different mindset.

It is for these reasons that I have been keen to complement (not replace) our chapel and camp preaching. After all, half an hour of chapel a week and an hour of Christian Development class corresponds to about 3/65ths of the school week, or, if we include an average of before school, after school and Saturday sport activity, about 3% of the school contact time. It is too easy for students to switch their mental switch to 'off' for this time, and if that is our only Christian penetration mechanism, it is too easily ignored.

This concern is supported by other perspectives:

- Dr Beth Green's research[2] at the Gateshead School in England, a school with a Christian council, executive and theological

base, was devastating. She found that, as faith was confined to proclamation in chapel and Religious Education classes, it existed only at the periphery of the school, didn't penetrate its core, and so was dismissed by students as irrelevant to life and totally unimportant.

- Dr Ruth Deakin-Crick's research,[3] also in England, has found that schools which do not penetrate the curriculum with faith will, in a generation, become indistinguishable from secular schools.
- If we are to penetrate student consciousness in major ways, the Christian message should percolate through the whole school, as if it were seeping from every pore, and be unavoidable. This is what Trevor Cooling (1997)[4] calls making Christian faith the primary culture of the school. Students should comprehensively understand the claims of Christ, as a counterpoise to our increasingly pagan culture (Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 10:5). We need to influence therefore how students think about the world. This is why teaching Christianly is so important. It is part of our total evangelistic presentation, which runs for 13 or six years for most of our students, depending on whether they join us in Kindergarten or Year 7. As the proportion of our staff who are Christian steadily increases, and we train our staff further, this approach becomes increasingly viable. It is a way of going from the 3% Christian contact presentation towards 100%.
- Latest writings in the field by James K (Jamie) Smith and David Smith, both professors at Calvin College in Michigan, USA (recent books *Desiring the Kingdom*[5] and *Teaching and Christian Practices*)[6] stress the need to create 'liturgies of desire'. Their essential point is the vital nature of Christian teachers encouraging faith over time in patient work with students which commends the gospel by revealing its wholeness and 'the aroma of Christ'. In this way, spoken evangelism sits in, and is effective because of a relational context. Professor Alistair McGrath made a similar point: for people to believe the gospel

they need first to want it to be true. This requires the effective, and usually ongoing, witness of credible Christian people.

An integrated versus a separatist model of Christian proclamation

When I arrived at my last school as Principal in 1997, I entered a context where the gospel was preached quite aggressively, and there was extensive resentment and push-back from students and parents. I encouraged staff to scaffold their presentations in the knowledge that they had 13 years to work with most students in that school. Through God's grace, the adoption of faith increased markedly, and many who showed little interest while at school have come to faith in succeeding years after graduation. It is important to deal with students sensitively, respectfully and well (1 Peter 3:15), so that, if not yet Christians on graduation, they remain open to faith, not antagonistic. Sometimes our role at school is to sow, and others will reap later.

Our integrated model at that school was very different from the separatist model followed in many church schools. Indeed, some Heads advocate a different approach, which is, that faith does not go past the classroom door, except in Biblical Studies classes. Some say that every teacher is to enter the classroom as a functional atheist.

This is classic dualism: that God's bit is chapel and Biblical Studies, the 'religious bits', where God has an office (the Chaplain's), but the rest of the world is secular. To me, this is giving the game away, and abandoning the field of play. It is tacitly, if not actively, encouraging the situation Beth Green found at the Gateshead School, where faith was driven into irrelevance at the margins of the school. Their view is that the subject matter of curriculum is neutral, and the integrity of the subject will be destroyed by introducing a Christian worldview. My contention is that the default position is secular humanism, which is not neutral. Left to itself, the curriculum is secular humanist, and powerfully undermines the spiritual message of the Chaplain, which gets so little 'air time' compared with the regular curriculum. That is why teaching Christianly includes equipping students to critique the secular humanist assumptions and undergirdings of the New South Wales matriculation credentials, the HSC and International Baccalaureate

Diploma curriculum, and equips them to challenge the secular gods of hedonism, consumerism, scientism and technology.

When some schools aim at such a small footprint for faith, it is not surprising that they seem to have little spiritual impact. The Australian writer, Roy Williams, in *Post-God Nation* says:

> Going to a private school is no guarantee of a decent religious education. Certainly, most students who go to these schools do not leave them with any sort of living faith. About a third of all Australian children go to private (mostly 'church') schools; yet, as we have seen, only a small fraction of graduates emerges from them as regular churchgoers. Indeed, according to one study, '... there is little evidence ... that attendance at a religious school has an effect over and above the influence of the religious beliefs and activities of parents.'

Why? There are several reasons.

The wealthiest independent schools do little more than pay lip service to religion. True, most employ full-time chaplains, who are qualified people. But they hover in the background, their talents under-utilised. For the rest, religion is barely mentioned except on specified occasions. In the words of Ronald Conway: 'The habit of teaching religion in a separate compartment from secular knowledge fail(s) to create a natural relationship between Christian belief and the routine of daily life.'[7]

This is aided and abetted by the insistence of so many schools of Christian foundation on employing teachers with no consideration of whether they are people of faith. This enables non-Christian staff to undermine the message of the Chaplain when they shut the door of their classrooms, or to model lifestyles antithetical to faith. To assume, as some Heads do, that the juggernaut of secularism can be sufficiently countermanded by a 20 minute sermon in Chapel once a week or once a fortnight is naïve.

Other church schools have abandoned any serious engagement with faith, and descended into more tokenism. The critique of 1995 Churchill Fellowship recipient Dr Tim Macnaught is withering:

> It should not be concluded that all meanings attached to the spiritual are uplifting. In some British schools there is a pernicious reductionism at work whereby the spiritual is reduced

> to the conventional sentiments of civic religion, promoting only values such as self-control and respect for property—the values that might domesticate the feral young and persuade them to submit to the invisible hand of the rational economic order. Even in Australian schools of Christian foundation, sheer pragmatism and the thought-world of commerce dominate most proceedings, with the spiritual dimensions valued for that touch of gloss, or class, like the photo of stained glass in the prospectus.'[8]

What then is to be done? It is my contention that comprehensive engagement of students with Christian faith is necessary in order to be effective. Such engagement will include chapel preaching (in schools which have chapels) and the building of a theological scaffold of understanding through Christian Development (Biblical Studies) classes. Also necessary will be the winsome, caring ministry to students of Christian staff, and the Christian worldview exploration of curriculum subjects which seek to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ.

Endnotes

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16 Doing justice and loving mercy in our schools

Stephen Fyson

> And what does the Lord require of you? To do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.
>
> Micah 6:8

Setting the scene

The principal sat on the lounge, head down and breathing slowly. If one looked closely, the welling up of tears could be seen almost running down the forlorn face. His wife gently asked if he wanted to talk about whatever was on his heart and mind. The response was muted. He was looking for the words to express what he was thinking and experiencing. The attempt went something like this:

> I am feeling for one of my staff members. She has a good heart, but there are also considerable difficulties. When I or others try to explain these things, she does not—cannot—understand it. I am going to have to probably re-structure things around her to keep her here ... and then she will go through pain—deep pain. She cannot see it coming. I can see it clearly. My heart is aching for what is coming for her. Doing the right things for the school and doing the right thing for her! It is so hard!

A second scene: The teacher was bumping around the staff room in a noisy manner. This was not her normal approach to matters in that space. A friend wondered about it, and decided to see if something was on her mind. She braved the question: 'Are you OK? You seem frustrated or something!' The response was in the form of a torrent of words, and went something like this:

> How am I expected to be all things to all people? When I discipline a student, the parent complains! When I don't act, other people complain! And the boss is constantly bringing out new polices, and then the deputy wants to change all the procedures for handling those kids who need extra help, or are just plain naughty! Not that we can call it naughtiness anymore! It is 'a call for help', or a 'symptom of his upbringing'—anything but just being naughty! It is so hard!

A third scene: The teenager was floating around the lounge, while her dad was reading a newspaper. The pattern of her movement suggested to the dad that this was not a random circuit. So he took a punt and asked her if there was something on her mind. Her response went something like this:

> Now I don't want you to get angry Dad. But you really need to see this. Sometimes you are really confusing. I never know how you are going to react if I do something dumb. Last night you went off at me for being late. The other day you defended me to Mum for the messy room. But when there is anything with dear brother Brad, you do the 'mess up the hair routine', and say something really lame like 'And no more lad ...' So what's the go? I don't feel safe because I just don't know what you will do ... and God knows how hard that is!

The common struggle

In each of these scenarios, the person in authority has been trying to do the right thing. But the struggle is that someone they care about (an individual or group) is being hurt. This tension—between doing what is right, yet caring for others—is so much of the tension of life whenever one has responsibility for another.

In some literature, this is called the dynamic tension between the 'One and the Many'.[1] It is a bread and butter part of teaching life. Teachers are expected to manage a whole class, yet meet the needs of each student (and sometimes, their parents as well). Faculty and section heads want to see their area grow and flourish, but must compete with the other faculty and section areas. Principals must watch that the vision and mission of the whole community is faithful to its mandate, while dealing with all the particular student, staff and family issues.

This tension is probably most keenly felt in dealing with the two issues of serious discipline, and meeting significant needs. When should a leader give a family a reprieve with their financial commitments, and when should she keep to the regulations, for the sake of the whole community? How many opportunities should a student have to demonstrate that he is going to improve how he acts?

These dynamic parts of school life are why the issue of *justice* is continuously relevant. If we think of justice as 'doing the right thing', and thus when making a mistake, 'getting what we deserve', then reflecting on what it means, biblically, is important for us if we desire to become more mature—that is, to become more Christ-like in how we act in these types of situations.

Our heart tendencies

Before looking at some of the biblical principles about justice as part of Christian life, it may be helpful to consider some reflections about the tendencies of our hearts with reference to justice. As Micah 6:8 reminds us, the complement to justice is mercy. The use of the term 'complement' is intentional, because many would construe the two as opposites, or dialectic, or even in paradoxical relationship with each other.

Micah 6:8 (and its subsequent expressions in scripture) does not allow this. We are not called to do one or the other. We are not called to pit one against the other. We are called to do one, and love doing the other. And we are called to do them both humbly before God.

Yet while a part of our thinking might agree with this clear admonition, experience tells us that at different times, we tend to have a tendency towards one or the other. At times, we tend to be much more

focussed on 'doing justice', and at other times, we cannot let go of the 'mercy at all costs' type of thinking.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones' reflections are most helpful in this regard.[2] His comments came while considering the import of the start of 1 John 4. He saw that the start of this chapter was a contrast to the end of the previous one. The end of 1 John 3 has as its focus the profoundly personal experience of knowing Christ through the wonderful and mysterious experience of having God's Holy Spirit within us.

However, chapter 4 starts with a blunt admonition to *test the spirits*. Lloyd-Jones asked the seeming fair question about why the apostle John presents both aspects of reality when describing our Christian life. He noted that the way this section of scripture presented this duality was the typical 'extraordinary balance' when studying the Bible, as expressed in the two consecutive sentences in this part of scripture: 'By this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us. Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God.'[3]

What made this balance more remarkable for Lloyd-Jones was his wisdom in understanding the difficulty we humans have in keeping it, even in our church life. He saw that much controversy and bitterness could have been avoided if God's called people had taken such teaching more to heart. He explained the seat of the problem this way: 'But the trouble with us as the result of sin is that we always seem to delight in extremes, and we tend to go from one extreme to the other instead of maintaining the position of scriptural balance.'[4]

Does this relate to our topic of considering justice for our schools? Yes, because as we have noted above, many tensions, and yes, even bitterness, can arise from our disputes. One person will believe they have done something which is right, and another will challenge them (often based on their personal experience or their emotions) that they were too soft or too harsh. Lloyd-Jones believed these tensions reflect a deeper and fundamental difference we tend to carry amongst us in our Christian communities: 'the problem of the respective places of experience and doctrine in the Christian life: experience, doctrine and the Holy Spirit'.[5]

That is, we tend to want to push too hard on one side of our reality, and not only ignore the other, but become critical of those who want

to push their side as hard as us. Thus, those of us who are passionate about doctrinal correctness and debating the fine points of secondary theology become heartless in our *legalism*. Those of us who are insistent on interpreting all things through our personal spiritual experiences, become chaotic in our *licence*.

Justice (and its complement, mercy) in our schools can therefore swing between a 'correct harshness' and a 'sentimental softness'. Yet, as Lloyd-Jones noted, *the two are essential*.[6] Is our difficulty a new phenomenon, brought about by the loss of formal authority of the church in our society, or a post-Reformation argumentative spirit? No, it would seem that scripture attests to the need for both justice and mercy because of our basic human natures.

Justice and mercy—a biblical pattern

Two theologians have used patterns within the Bible to describe how and why this human dynamic—of choosing justice over mercy or mercy over justice—is part of our lives. Brueggemann (1982 & 2015)[7] used the Old Testament to construct an educational model of community. He described how the biblical constructs from the Old Testament are central to understanding the Judeo-Christian concept of community, as immediately below.

The *ethos* (justice and righteousness) of the ancient Israelite community set the character tone for the community, because it was founded on the *disclosure* of God's purpose for and manner of engaging with his people. It was represented by the disclosed written laws (the Pentateuch), and was sure and undoubted, and was the basis for the consensus of the community. The *pathos* (mercy and compassion) allowed the new needs to be responded to and stemmed from fresh revelation which 'shatters the consensus' (p.133) to avoid oppression. It was founded on the *disruptive word* of the prophets. The *logos* (or the wise words received humbly from Yahweh) allowed for the relational certainty of everyday life to be focussed on something greater than the individuals within it. It was an 'ordering which leads to responsibility and freedom' (p. 133), and which required wisdom to discern it and which led to responsibility (each one knew what his/her obligations

were), freedom (each one knew what he/she could do), mystery and awe (because *logos* could not be reduced to a formula or contract).

Thus, Brueggemann's work highlighted that, in Christian community, we need to know what is good and true but we also need spiritual discernment that disrupts any misplaced sense of control. This discernment also calls us creatively, under God, to know what is right according to the heart of God in the light of the heart and needs of the people for whom we have responsibility.

This is reminiscent of the account of Solomon, who, when asked by God what he wanted to rule the people, replied, 'So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong.'[8] The first justice situation that is then recounted shows that Solomon acted in a way that brought justice to bear on a case of disputed motherhood, but that it was done in a way that mercifully saved the life of a baby.[9]

This pattern—of doing justice but loving mercy under God—was also noted in the seminal work of Paul Hanson.[10] Hanson's work was based on a review of community in the Old and New Testaments, and it confirmed the basic structure of Brueggemann's work. His theory of community was based on a vision of *being called* as God's people. For those who identified with the community based on this calling, it enabled diversity within unity, because of a focus beyond self and the collective. The basis of this unifying impact, claimed Hanson, comes from recognising certain principles of the biblical picture of community, including the same relational triad of its social structure that Brueggemann identified.

Hanson described how the *righteousness* (justice in the moral life) of the community set the responsibilities of the community. These givens also provided the standards for community justice and responsibility to which individuals committed themselves. *Compassion* (mercy) expressed how the community embraced individual needs against oppression, for righteousness was not supposed to be a heartless affair. *Worship* (literally *service*) was the dynamic belongingness that identified the community and maintained membership focus (daily commitment) outside of self and the collective.

This worship dynamic was central because of the realities of human nature, which at times can take relational norms to extreme positions

(as noted by Lloyd-Jones above). Hanson noted in his study of each book of the Bible that when the community reached an extreme point on any one of the three aspects of community life, that which started out as helpful can become destructive. Thus, Hanson's description explained from his case study how the need for order could harden into rigid administration rather than righteousness. Conversely, the assertion of human passions could lead to sentimental permissiveness, which could encourage social chaos. Spiritual worship that was not connected to daily life led, ironically, to idolatry in conduct.

We can see these dynamics sometimes in our schools. We can see that a mature educational community understands the need for justice and mercy before God, and will work to speak of these things, pray about them together, and make their thinking clearly known to the community. However, an immature community will not admit justice when they are promoting mercy, or mercy when justice is being clung to. Worse than this, an immature Christian school community will not invite reflection before God but will call on *precedent* or *sentiment* or *abstract spiritual homilies* (each of which are a maladaptation of justice, mercy and worship) as their basis of righteousness.

What of justice and mercy in the New Testament?

For some Christians, the thought of any form of justice recalls the legalism which Jesus taught so strongly against, as recorded in the Gospels—see, for example, Matthew 23 and the corresponding Gospel passages. As has been noted above, however, there is a pattern throughout all of scripture of the need for mercy to be understood within a context of justice. As Wolterstorff described it: 'Love that perpetuates injustices is malformed love.'[11] That is, love without justice is chaotic; and justice without love is heartless.

Wolterstorff, in his deep biblical and historical analysis, noted the different ways love has been considered even in the interpretation of 'love' (*agape*). After (among other things) describing how a conception of justice is central to the New Testament,[12] he linked the concept of care and justice: 'Care combines seeking to enhance someone's flourishing with seeking to secure their just treatment.'[13]

Consider this question: How do you know how to help someone, if you do not know what is right? If you see someone in a difficulty—either because they are a victim of a circumstance, or they have perpetuated a difficulty for someone else—how do you know how to help them? The three scenarios at the start of this essay were examples of this very dynamic, which is common to our everyday lives in schools.

Someone may say: 'But what about Paul's letter to the Galatians? What about chapter 5:14—"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, in this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'"?' Bill Dumbrell made this helpful clarification about this part of Christian community life:

> But fulfilment (5:14) does not mean the literal expression of every detail, but rather requires that the true intention of the law, which is love, be maintained ... This does not signify that love totally replaces law as the motivation and expression of Christian conduct, for *love requires specific guidance to operate in its other-person-centred way* ... It is often overlooked that Paul is condemning *the application* of Jewish moral, civil and religious principles derived from the Ten Commandments and not the Commandments themselves.[14] [emphasis added]

This consideration takes us back to the need to know God and his will in us through the guidance of his Spirit, and to test out that Spirit of discernment against God's revealed will for our lives—the balance between experience and doctrine, as Lloyd-Jones expressed it.

A biblical case study

There is a fascinating case study that can help us as teachers (and parents and pastors) understand this necessary relationship between justice and mercy within God's will. It comes from Genesis 4. In this account, God is teaching Cain how to deal with an issue. We recommend that you take time to read through the account afresh, and as you do, allow your imagination to place God as the teacher, and Cain as the fifteen-year-old student. Also, keep in mind the question, 'How does God (who is the perfect teacher and parent) instruct Cain, warn Cain, and then administer justice in love?'

Within this account is a picture of God's justice, mercy and love. I suggest that there is a pattern in this story that reflects God's character.

We can learn from this wisdom if we desire to do justice and mercy in our ministry of Christian schooling. Here is the pattern:[15]

- The 'Teacher' [God] recognised the heart of the student and spoke to it by asking open-ended questions to invite a response: 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?' (verse 6)
- The 'Teacher' gave encouragement, and then instruction, in the consequences of good versus bad choices: 'If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.' (verse 7)
- The student decided to ignore the advice (from the Creator of the Universe no less!) and used deception to murder his brother (verse 8).
- The 'Teacher' knew exactly what happened (see verse 10). He did not come in and pronounce judgement; nor did he lecture—no, the 'Teacher' asked another question that went to the heart of the matter, to invite the student to repentance and ongoing relationship[16]—'Where is your brother?' (verse 9)
- Sadly, the student denied that this had anything to do with him—'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?'
- The 'Teacher' then did the following:
  - he implemented justice—the student received clear and distinct consequence (verses 11 and 12); and
  - he also showed mercy, ensuring that the student did not receive more than what was deserved (verse 15).

The same pattern can be seen in chapter 3 of Genesis, with the parents of this 'student'. At each occasion, God desired to be the near God, and invited his people to intimate working relationship with him[17]—this is his grace which no-one deserves. Note that God was relating personally to Cain, even outside of Eden. Each time, despite their self-interested actions, God invited his people to keep the relationship going by asking them a question that could lead to repentance and restored relationship—this was also gracious. Each time he administered what was

required in terms of people receiving what they deserved (i.e. justice is acted upon). And yet, he also helped them in their need, even within his justice—that is, he was merciful.

This is the Micah 6:8 pattern which Hanson described—justice and mercy within God's will. This is the balance between knowing what is right, but not letting it make us so comfortable that we do not see the needs of those around us, as described by Brueggemann. This is the wisdom for which Solomon prayed, and for which we too should pray.

How can we slow down and remember all of this?

Schools are busy places. Yet through fellowship with others, we can encourage each other to soften our hearts, renew our minds, and experiment in acting differently when doing justice and loving mercy before God. We have not had time to explore the relationship between grace, justice, mercy and love in depth. Nor have we described how our different Christian traditions can sometimes have an impact on how we practice justice and mercy. There is also the deeply profound yet pragmatic issue of the relationship between repentance, forgiveness, different kinds of discipline and punishment, and reconciliation, as they all relate to justice.[18]

However, we can perhaps remember the following personal and corporate spiritual disciplines to build into our routines when it comes to practising godly justice and mercy in our Christian school communities:

- The more serious the situation, the more we should pray.
- Do we prayerfully rehearse the invitational question to ask when we meet with the other person, and then listen hard to the response? (This reflects walking humbly before God.)
- Have we communicated well what is expected in our school *and why*, and what an act of injustice normally deserves? (This reflects justice.)
- Do we know any needs of the person before us, so that we can offer help in that situation? (This reflects mercy.)

May we all learn to walk humbly with God, doing justice and loving mercy as we go, in grace and truth.

Endnotes

1. For example, Newbrough (1992), in exploring the relationship between theory of community and theory of praxis at the level of the human social system, argued the basic thesis that 'the duality, identified as the problem of the One and the Many', has to be transcended into a unitary concept of both The One AND The Many" (p. 11). Newbrough, JR (1992). Community psychology in the post-modern world. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *20*, pp. 10–25.
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3. Lloyd-Jones, M, ibid, p. 14.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid, p. 15.
6. Brueggemann, W (1982 & 2015—second edition). *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education.* Minneaoplis: Fortress Press. 1 Kings 3:9.
7. 1 Kings 3:16–28.
8. Hanson, PD (1986). *The People Called - the growth of community in the Bible.* San Francisco: Harper and Row.
9. Wolterstorff, N (2011). *Justice in Love,* WB Eerdmans PC: Grand Rapids, p.ix.
10. Ibid, p. 50ff.
11. Ibid, p. 110.
12. Dumbrell, W (2006). *Galatians: A new covenant commentary.* Blackwood, SA: New Creation Publications, p. 79.
13. Biblical quotes in this section are from the NASB A pattern like this was first pointed out to me by Dr Bill Dumbrell at his Old Testament lectures at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada.
14. See Luke 24:47 for the continuation of this pattern of a calling to repentance to receive forgiveness.
15. See Deuteronomy 4 and Acts 17 for God being described in 'near God' terms.
16. If you are interested in exploring these things in more detail, the core references cited in this essay deal more deeply with them: Dumbrell's work on Galatians has an 'excursus' that looks at moral obligation in the Christian life; Bruggemann's second edition goes into depth in terms of the educational implications of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*; and Wolsterforff explores the implications of righteousness and justice in community life through the book of Romans (including looking closely at repentance, or lack of repentance, and 'types' of forgiveness).

17 Censorship and the Arts

John Montgomery

What a Christian portrays in his art is the totality of life.
Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*

In Schaeffer's view the Christian artist sees no division between the sacred and the secular. All of life is relevant to artistically explore, express and reflect in the context of a fallen world that God is graciously redeeming. However, many great artists are not ideologically aligned to a Christian worldview. So should dramatic art that does not reflect a Christian worldview or biblical values be censored in our schools? How should we approach great artists and our student artists whose work is not sympathetic to a Christian worldview? What is okay to study and perform in our schools and what is not?

The censorship framework and review process this chapter proposes is designed to assist teachers, principals and school communities to make well considered decisions in developing an appropriately broad and balanced Drama curriculum that is proactively rather than reactively designed and defended.

Protectionist versus exposure

An analysis of the censorship literature exposes a polarity between the protectionist and exposure viewpoints. The 'protectionist' position focuses on keeping children and institutional reputations guarded from potentially harmful ideas and experiences. This position is aligned

to a generally conservative ideology.[1] Blaxland reports typical views: 'I send my kids to the school I do because their philosophy is in line with mine. I don't want my kids to read books that don't reflect my value system.' A librarian at the Sunrise Christian School in Adelaide says, 'We avoid books that have anything to do with witchcraft ... The school has a clear policy in line with the Bible that witches are always bad ... we avoid books in which a witch is seen to be good, even popular books like the Harry Potter series.'[2]

The other paradigm, the 'exposure' position, originates from a liberal ideology, that students should be permitted freedom to access age-appropriate ideas. It argues the obligation of education is to provide young people with exposure to the market place of ideas where they can be tested through quality educational experiences.[3] Blaxland reports a typical view of this paradigm: 'I would question whether I wanted my kids in a school that banned Harry Potter ... If you're going to get into political correctness you're going to have to eliminate an awful lot of good books, including Shakespeare.'[4] Credaro sums up this philosophical dichotomy: 'If education is to be founded on the principle of exposure to diverse ideas, then it is almost mandatory that exposure to controversial material is possible. However, if schools should be a place for transmitting community values, then censorship becomes almost compulsory.'[5] The censorship framework proposed later in this chapter is designed to assist schools wherever they sit on the protectionist-exposure continuum.

Age appropriateness is often central to decisions in schools when considering the suitability of material for particular students.[6] Delaying access is not denying access. Many schools recognise the transition from child to adult that occurs during the high school years and see the need for a dynamic and evolving approach to questions of censorship as students approach adulthood. A teacher in Blaxland's study notes: 'Over thirteen years of education there is very little we can't bring to them.'[7] In the later years of high school many classic and contemporary BOSTES prescribed texts contain mature content with occasional contentious ideas and themes. So how should a Christian school decide its standards and process for censorship?

Sources of authority in determining standards and values

The New South Wales Board of Studies *Advice to Schools Regarding Content*[8] implies that a philosophical or theological position on standards of censorship for HSC student showcases of art works is a matter for each school community to decide for itself.

There are four significant sources of authority influencing standards and values in Christian schools:

> **A first source of authority is traditions**. Traditions include the history of thought and practice of the Church in general. It also includes historical traditions of the educational institution and the specific church that owns and governs the school or college. In non-denominational Christian schools these traditions can often be traced back to the Dutch-Reformed influences on the early Christian school movement in Australia and the charismatic church traditions that also strongly influenced the second wave of the Christian school movement.
>
> **A second source of authority is scripture.** Martin criticises both 'dogmatic' proof texting and 'impressionistic' interpretation. The 'grammatico-historical method' that is the exegetical orthodoxy in biblical scholarship Martin sees as a reasoned, rigorous and robust method of scriptural interpretation.[9] However, also significant in establishing biblical authority in a Christian school is whose heuristic interpretation within the school carries most weight. Persuasion by position and personality play a significant part.
>
> **A third source of authority is community expectation**. Community stakeholders—staff, students, parents of students, alumni and prospective parents—can carry significant authority in the defining of values and expectations on questions of censorship.
>
> **A fourth source of authority is institutional directive.** Values are central to such bodies as school boards, Christian Schools Australia (CSA), the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and government bodies at both state and federal level. All have authority to formulate policy in Australian Christian schools. Blaxland quotes a librarian in Broome Western Australia: 'We have a strict buying policy

for books here which comes from the Catholic Education Office ... No books with heavy swearing, or those supportive of lifestyles against the teachings of the Catholic Church such as homosexuality, books which promote abortion, etc.'[10]

Defining values and standards

Values and standards shift over time. Jenkinson's ten-year study on challenges to school texts between 1982 and 1993 found that profanity was the most popular reason for challenges, and in the later survey profanity had moved into fifth place and witchcraft had moved into first place. Schrader concludes that the time frame by which standards and values shift within a school community can be quite rapid: '... some issues may take years to catch the public eye, while others might arise overnight'. Blaxland observes that some 'material used to be acceptable but is now considered racist or sexist'.[11] Blaxland suggests that any process devised for managing text selection should be responsive and reflective of current contexts. Current events, emerging information and communication technology, and the media probably all play a significant role in shifting and shaping community sentiment.[12]

In Australia, the national Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC) is the most organised and substantial censorship body in Australia. The BOSTES *Advice to Schools Regarding Content* references the OFLC standards which includes an age appropriate framework that is well understood by the wider public. This reflexive standards framework provides a broad common understanding for school communities to discuss and communicate censorship standards.

Self-censorship and fear

Self-censorship due to fear of criticism is identified as the most prevalent source of censorship of texts in Australian schools. Moody writes, 'The most insidious form of censorship is self-censorship ... even librarians who consciously do not agree with censorship ... may in fact censor subconsciously, or even consciously when potential personal threats are perceived.'[13] Moody (2005) and Bunn (2015) argue that the ubiquitous and silent nature of this type of censorship is of considerable concern. Moody sees 'personal threats' to teachers stemming from a perception

of potential conflict with the wider school community and school management. Credaro confirms that this pressure creates a climate of fear in school communities: 'Australian survey results suggest that this climate of fear is greater in secondary Church affiliated schools.'[14] Jenkins observes that problems tend to arise in situations when challenges are dealt with in an ad hoc manner where formal procedures or polices are not in place.

The reasons for self-censorship are philosophically complex and awash with practical problems because of its generally undeclared nature. For many teachers self-censorship is a convenient way to deal with problematic texts, artworks and performances to avoid the focus of undesirable attention: 'In such cases schools submit to censorship pressure without any incident being recorded, and perceived future challenges are being avoided by pre-emptively removing problem resources, or by failing to acquire them.'[15] Cossett-Lent & Pipkin also recognise this chilling effect as a significant problem: 'This form of censorship can be especially dangerous because teachers, fearful of censorship, try to predict what may be challenged and keep only the safest books ... Students, as always, are the losers in this situation.'[16]

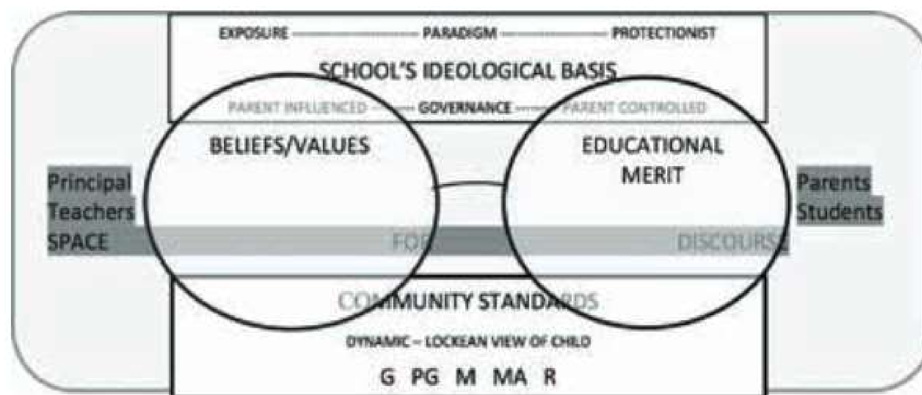
How can our schools best deal with fear? To move from reactive fear-based censorship to a proactive ideological basis for a school's censorship policy and practice, stakeholders must engage in open fear-free discourse. The results of my research demonstrate that such a discourse between teachers, school management and parents in a safe and open environment can be difficult to create. However, the rich outcomes this discourse can produce are well worth the effort. Christian school principals should endeavour to create a safe space for discourse amongst key stakeholders in school communities. A safe space for discourse should be purposefully designed to reduce fear for teachers and to allow focus on creative censorship solutions based on the ideology that is the school's basis for standards and values.

Principles for a censorship framework

The diagram below attempts to express how school communities can approach the question of curriculum censorship. The process starts by defining the ideological basis for censorship in the school. The school's

censorship basis focuses the dual lenses of beliefs/values and educational merit through which the school community views potentially contentious material. By applying a defined set of criteria and standards, a censorship decision is made. These standards are defined by the OFLC ratings that are reflexive to the Australian context and inclusive of age-appropriate sensitivities.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for managing censorship in schools

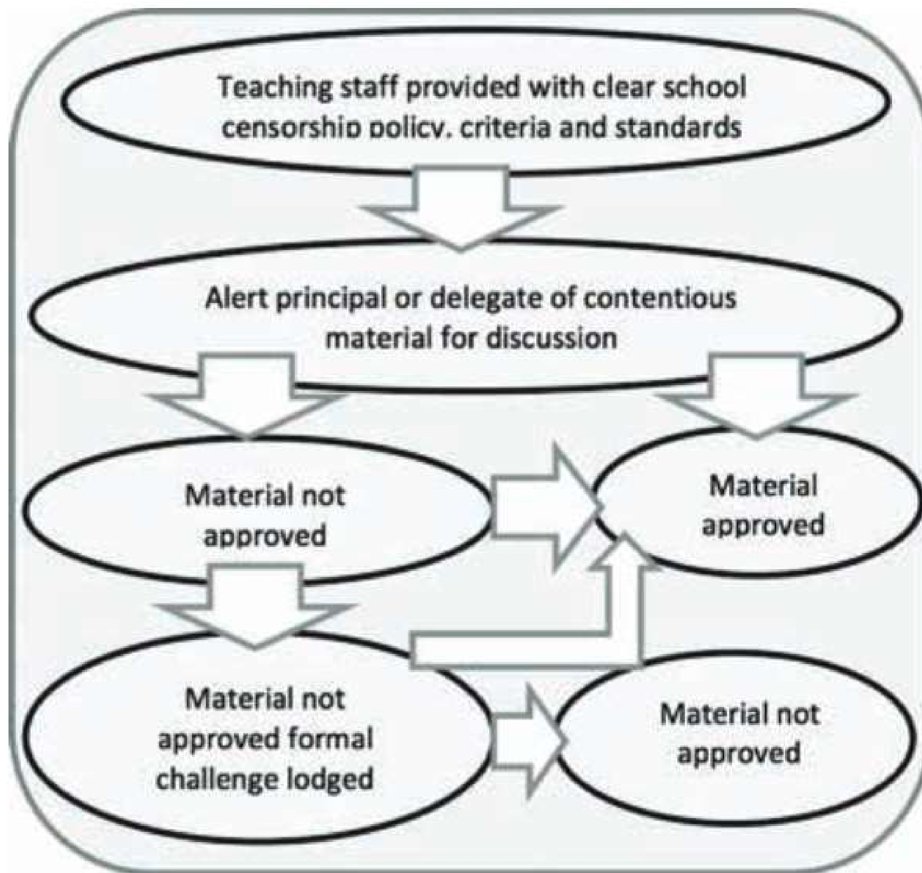


This conceptual framework is operationalised through the review process described below.

School principals are responsible for school curriculum and ensuring school values and beliefs are upheld through the delivery of quality school curriculum. The school's censorship policy should be ideologically based and emerge from the school's values and beliefs. (See Figure 2)

Schools should acknowledge in their censorship policy that they recognise the rights of parents and individuals to present concerns over instructional material and activities. The policy and process should allow for most concerns to be resolved informally through discussion with teachers. Formal censorship occurs, following a prescribed procedure to minimise reactive censorship and to allow all views to be heard and considered before a censorship decision is made. The censorship policy and process should require complainants to have read or viewed in its entirety the resource, text, artwork or performance they wish the school to censor. The complainant should suggest a solution and not just request for the text, artwork or performance to be removed from the curriculum. As an example of this framework in practice, the final section of this chapter is a suggested censorship policy for the New

Figure 2. Proposed censorship review process



South Wales HSC Drama context. This policy and framework could be adapted to any other curriculum area in any Christian school.

HSC Drama censorship—an example of a proactive process

1. Managing HSC Drama individual projects

The New South Wales Board of Studies issues a list of prescribed drama texts for the development of HSC Drama Individual Projects. Some texts on this list may be challenging for some students and school communities. When determining senior student access to these texts, teachers should be sensitive to the emotional maturity and sensitivities of their students. Texts that may cause harm to a particular student should be withheld. Any text with strong language; strong or frequent sexual content; illicit drug use; gratuitous and graphic violence; discriminatory, narrow or salacious content should be provided with great care, consulting the principal or her delegate and the students' parents before providing the text.

2. Managing the group performance

Group performances are devised by students. The content of these performances is based on the students' research and interests. Students should be supported to develop pieces that are theatrically sophisticated, topical and insightful of the human condition. The teacher, in accordance with the school's censorship policy and standards, should censor content that depicts or condones racial, religious, ethnic, sexist or homophobic discrimination, or incites violence, or any portrayal of a person in a demeaning manner. Careful consideration should also be given to content that includes strong language, strong or frequent sexual content, illicit drug use, graphic violence, or is discriminatory, narrow, overly biased or salacious. If there are concerns, then a discussion between the teacher and the principal or her delegate should resolve this.

3. Public performances and showcases

Students may study and present their HSC Drama performances and projects for the Higher School Certificate Examination. However, they may not be considered suitable for public showcase events if they contain:

- Offensive language, that is, language likely to cause outrage or disgust;
- Violence, either real or perceived;
- References to the use of illegal drugs;
- Sexual references.

4. Themes considered inappropriate for a general audience

The school should endeavour to provide performance/showcase opportunity for students whose works are not suitable for a general audience. This may be through informing audiences of the OFLC standard of the performance and the nature of the mature content that the performance or project depicts. Other solutions could include modifying the work or presenting these works at an alternative venue or time, or through other creative solutions that may be employed that the school censorship committee approves.

5. Managing texts for the HSC Drama written examination

The New South Wales Board of Studies issues a list of prescribed drama texts for the study of two topics for the HSC Drama written

examination. When determining student access to these texts teachers should be aware of the maturity and sensitivities of their students and select texts that they believe are most suitable and appropriate for the needs, interests and abilities of their students. Much care must be taken in selecting topics and texts that will be appropriate for all students in a particular class. Any text with strong language, strong or frequent sexual content, illicit drug use, gratuitous and graphic violence, that is discriminatory, narrow or salacious should be managed with great care and involve consulting the principal and parents before selecting the text for the students to study as outlined in Figure 2.

For potentially contentious texts, the school may provide opportunities for parents and senior students to 'examine' the material and how it will be explored before a decision is made. This process could include:

- providing copies of the proposed texts and teaching program for review
- convening a parent/student meeting to discuss the text and how it will be approached
- providing copies of the school's review process and censorship policy including ways to appeal censorship decisions made by the school.

This provides a process for an informed censorship decision in 'partnership' to be made and may avoid a text, artwork or performance being unnecessarily censored or self-censored due to fear of potential threats.

Endnotes

1 Couts, Evans, Webster, & Haxton, 2013; Kallio, 2014; Leahy, 1998; Lent & Pipkin, 2013; Whelan, 2009.

2 Blaxland, 2000b, pp. 20, 21.

3 Couts et al., 2013; Kallio, 2014; Leahy, 1998; Lent & Pipkin, 2013; Whelan, 2009.

4 Blaxland, 2000c, p. 21.

5 Credaro 2001, p. 7.

6 Blaxland, 2000a; French, 2003; Reichman, 2001; Schrader, 1996.

7 Blaxland, 2000a, p. 13.

8 Office Board of Studies, 2005.

9 Martin, 1977, p. 220–247.

10 Blaxland, 2000b, p. 21.

11 Schrader, 1996, p. 77; 2000a, p. 13.

12 Enright, 1997; Narayanaswamy & Weaver, 2013; Nimon, 2005b.

13 Moody, 2005, p. 4.

14 2001, p. 7.

15 French, 2003, p. 25.

16 Cossett-Lent & Pipkin, 2013, pp. 25–26.

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18 Imagination and its place in the Christian school

Richard J Edlin

As created beings, one of our greatest treasures, perhaps the dearest fingerprint of God in us, is our ability to imagine.
Michael Card

Creative imagination is a part of the very character of God, graciously bestowed upon humanity, his image bearers.

Let us explore human imagination in its biblical context:

- from its glorious divine origin in God's creation story in which God gifts this capacity to humanity, the pinnacle of his imaginative creation,
- through its distortion and idolatry because of the Fall,
- through its redeemed character because of the Cross of Christ and in which God's people are challenged with imagination's renewal and the opportunity to use of this divine attribute rightly,
- and through to the glorious restorative completion at the return of the Lord Jesus.

Imagination, I believe, is 'our minds working with our hearts and hands to be inventive and creative (in obedience or disobedience to God's creation norms)'.

Imagination through a biblical lens

The term 'imagination' or 'imaginings' occurs up to 36 times in the Bible, 35 of them in the negative, one of which is Genesis 6:5–8:

> The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every imagination of the human heart was only evil all the time.

Given such strong biblical negativity, some Christians have concluded that imagination is a sinful characteristic and should be shunned. Christian musician Michael Card (2011) comments, 'As created beings, one of our greatest treasures, perhaps the dearest fingerprint of God in us, is our ability to imagine. But inevitably, whenever I speak about the "biblical imagination" someone will object, "Isn't the imagination a bad thing? Doesn't the Bible say our imaginations are "evil"?'

But does the Bible really view imagination as inherently evil? I suggest not. The one positive reference to imagination from among its 35 biblical appearances occurs in Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all that we can ask *or imagine*, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever, Amen. (Ephesians 3:20)

There is not a hint of condemnation of imagination in that passage. Furthermore, the entire Bible itself is full of glorious imaginative language. Rather than coming to us as a step-by-step systematic theology instruction manual, God has chosen to reveal himself biblically through powerful, image-filled literature. As just one magnificent example, take time to re-read Psalm 23 as a glorious passage of imaginative writing. Also, consider the power of the parables of Jesus—imaginary stories he told to emphasise key concepts during his earthly ministry. The parable of the Good Samaritan is just one case in point (Luke 10:29–37). On the other hand, we have the true account of God's own people, the Israelites, constructing a golden calf, a God-replacing idol of their own imagination, as just one demonstration of the truth of Genesis 6:5–8 quoted earlier. This is imagination as a tool of the devil.

How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction wherein the Bible is claimed by some to condemn a mode of communication (imagination) that the Bible itself liberally uses in order to communicate? The answer provides a salient lesson in ensuring that we avoid out-of-context proof-texting, and recognise the integrity and metanarrative (i.e. big story) of the Bible as a whole.

All was initially created good by God. In what is called the Cultural Mandate or the Creation Mandate (Genesis 1:28 & 2:15, Psalm 8), God gave to human beings the unique capacity to explore and shape these characteristics. The characteristics are not evil in themselves, but what fallen humanity has done with them has debased them. Wonderfully, the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ makes possible their redemption—implemented in the light of the Cross through the sanctified activities of Christ's followers in this epoch between Christ's ascension and his second coming.

The picture being described here is often referred to as the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Renewal (CFRR) schema. It is based upon a worldview which takes the whole Bible into account when understanding any part of it.

God's Big Story (the biblical metanarrative)			
CREATION →	**FALL** →	**REDEMPTION** →	**RENEWAL**
How God intended for things to be	**How humans have mucked it up**	**God's restoration through his son Jesus Christ**	**Christians as gospel ambassadors until Christ's return**
Creational order for: Agriculture Family Sexuality Government Education Law Imagination…	Humanity's abuse of: Agriculture Family Sexuality Government Education Law Imagination…	Christians as God's shalom representatives in: Agriculture Family Sexuality Government Education Law Imagination…	Separation of God's people from everyone else; The Great Judgment; Heaven Hell

Fig 1. Creation-Fall-Redemption-Fulfilment (CFRR) Motif

The CFRR motif provides us with a focusing concept (underneath each heading in the figure) in each stage of the schema. As expanded in

Fig. 2 below, these concepts give us biblically faithful insights into the nature of imagination at each key stage of the biblical metanarrative.

Imagination from the perspective of a CFRR biblical metanarrative from Genesis to Revelation	
Imagination: Our minds working with our hearts and hands to be inventive and creative (in obedience or disobedience to God's creation norms)	
Creation	Creator God made humanity in his image. He displayed imagination in his creativity. He gave that imagination to humanity, and blessed our use of it (Genesis 1, Psalm 8)
Fall	Along with all of our God-given capacities, sin has distorted and warped our imaginative faculties so that though still useful, imagination has become a tool of self-aggrandisement, autonomy, despair and hopelessness. This is unregenerate imagination. (Genesis 6; Romans 1)
Redemption	In Christ, brought under his Lordship and through his redeeming work on the cross, imagination is restored, capable once again of flourishing within God's initial glorious character and purpose.
Renewal	Make every imagination obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5) This is regenerate imagination, and is what we strive for as Christian educators. (Romans 12:2). In the 'now-and not-yet' period of history as we prepare for Christ's glorious return, Christians have the dynamic calling to share the fullness of the gospel in all of life. (2 Peter 3; Revelations 21)

Figure 2. CFRR model applied to the concept of Imagination

A full biblical metanarrative shows us that in the Bible, there is no conflict at all about imagination.

Imagination, as a delightful aspect of the very character of God himself, was endowed by God as a gift to humankind as a part of our being made in God's image. It was given to enable us to carry out the Cultural Mandate by imagining names, creating cultural structures etc., as we exercise stewardly dominion over God's creation. Imagination glorified God and brought pleasure and satisfaction to humanity.

With the disobedience and fall of Adam and Eve into sin, evil entered the world and all of God's creation became fractured and distorted. The imaginations of human hearts became sinful, a period of human history that the 34 negative biblical references depict, concerning the evil imaginings of human hearts, minds and hands.

God's glorious plan for the world in general, and for humankind in particular, has not been to leave us in the despair of the Fall. God so loves his creation that he sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our sinful rebellion against him (John 3:16). Now, through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, and his bodily resurrection, the power of sin and death have been defeated, and the possibility of a restored relationship and created order has been made possible. Those who put their trust in the finished work of Jesus on the Cross are now holy partners in God's great restorative plan. Among other things, a regenerate concept of imagination once more becomes possible, championed by the people of God. Our calling is to engage with the culture, proclaiming and living the Good News of salvation in Christ in everything.

Imagination as explored by Christian writers

In recent decades, some biblical scholars have begun re-exploring imagination in creative and God-honouring ways. Goheen and Bartholomew anchor imagination's value in God by rightly claiming that 'Part of being made in the image of God is that he has graced us with something of his own capacity for creativity.' Francis Schaeffer exclaimed that, 'The Christian is the one whose imagination should fly beyond the stars' (1973, p. 61). Schaeffer introduced a new generation of Christians to the value of the arts and imagination as tools to interpret culture.

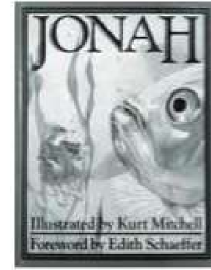
The work of Cal Seerveld, in particular his 1980 *Rainbows for the Fallen World*, gave increased impetus to this resurgent interest among Bible-believing Christians in imagination, as did Seerveld's comments on the reality of the imagination in *A Christian Critique of Art and Literature*. Leland Ryken from Wheaton College has reminded readers that the scriptures, rather than being a step-by-step instruction manual for Christian living, in reality form a rich, metanarrative where God guides his people by the use of an abundant panoply of tools including metaphor, story, poetic love language, and other imaginative literary techniques. Veith and Ristuccia also frame an understanding of imagination within the context of a biblical metanarrative.

Uses and mis-uses of imagination

Children's Story Bibles

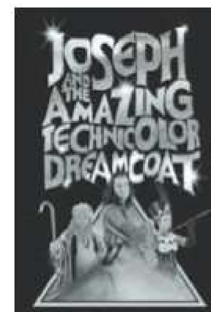
Many efforts have been made to unpack the biblical metanarrative in a way that children can understand. Sometimes, the Bible is depicted as a series of individual morality stories about people in particular places. In essence, however, the Bible is not about Noah or Joseph or David or Samson or Paul. It's about God and his faithful plan to make a people for himself and to draw that people back to himself. Essentially, the Bible is God's big story centering in the incarnation and the redemptive work of Jesus, and we human beings are privileged to have a grand role to play in that story.

Some examples of children's story Bibles that present this imaginative and faithful view of God and the Bible are Sally Lloyd-Jones' *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (2007) and *Jonah*, illustrated by Kurt Mitchell (1981). The only text in *Jonah* is the NIV version of the book of Jonah. The illustrations imagine Jonah as a mouse, and the city of Nineveh as a city of cats—an image that describes the horror that Jonah must have felt when God commissioned him to take a message of repentance to these wayward people.



Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat

In 1968, Andrew Lloyd-Webber, partnered with Tim Rice to construct a musical entitled *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat.* It has since been performed by tens of thousands of groups, including many Christian schools, all around the world. Its catchy tunes, its variety of musical genres, and its mixture of pathos and humor, have caught the imagination of millions of people.



True, *Joseph* is an example of the creative use of the imagination. Superimposing Elvis over the character of Pharaoh, the contrasting musical styles such as calypso and western pop music, the appeal to naive innocence through the use of child performers and choirs are some of the imaginative features that give the show its appeal.

However, *Joseph* is far removed from a faithful re-telling of the Bible story. The message of *Joseph* is that whilst we are all searching for meaning and purpose in life, any form of escapism, such as the drug culture (how else did you get amazing technicolour dreams in the 1970s?) or eastern mysticism, can satisfy this eternal desire. In direct conflict with the exclusive message of the Bible, *Joseph's* songs stress the notion that 'any dream will do'.

The Imaginative artwork of Thomas Kinkade

Famous artist Thomas Kinkade was a self-confessed Christian universalist who painted and franchised popular, idyllic, Disney-like scenes, where trouble and disturbing concepts are removed from one's visage. Christian art critic Dan Siedell offers a critique of Kinkade's work: 'These images seem to say, the world isn't so bad, faith isn't so hard, grace therefore not so desperately sought ... Kinkade's desire to depict a world before the fall is Christ-less Christianity in paint.'[1]

Implications of a redeemed imagination for Christian schooling

Here are some introductory discussion points for Christian schools based on the imagination perspective presented in this article. Each one is worthy of further discussion and critique by stakeholders in Christian school communities.

There is such a thing as a Christian imagination. Imagination is not inherently evil—it is a part of the very character of God that he has graciously gifted to humanity. The responsibility of Christian school communities is to explore all subjects—including the way imagination contributes to every key learning area—from a biblically faithful worldview or metanarrative perspective.

Celebrate the imagination and the aesthetic. Do not allow school curricula to be swamped by economic rationalism and its prioritisation of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). While important, they are not the sum of the curriculum. When we allow an economic rationalist STEM perspective to dominate to the degree that aesthetic subjects are squeezed out, or imaginative approaches to subjects are replaced by cerebral 'teach-to-the-exam' routines, we are practising unfaithful pedagogy.

Allow imagination to permeate content material and pedagogy. As teachers we should feel liberated enough to allow the surprise of imagination to adorn our content material and our pedagogy. When teachers (either parents at home or educators at school) balance trusted nurture with the imaginative and joyful surprise of the unexpected, the potential for meaningful learning increases enormously.

Music and the performing arts, like all other subjects, are religiously committed. Gloria Stronks comments that 'A deep appreciation of the world around us, of music, of art, or of poetry will not make one become a Christian. But Christians who have developed a knowledge and appreciation of these aspects find that their faith deepens because they have richer ways of responding to their Creator.'[2]

The perspective of a comprehensive biblical metanarrative is vital. Imagination-rich learning, based upon a CFRR approach or similar iterations, can provide children with a realistic but hope-filled understanding of the world and their places and task in it (Hebrews 1:3). As Kropp commented some decades ago, imagination, '[and] the visual arts are a way of serving God ... Christians are called to use these special gifts and activities to proclaim the gospel which includes the despair and distortion of sin as well as the love and grace of God'.[3]

Learning about aesthetic subjects should be rigorous, not some 'fill-in' activity late on Friday afternoon. Rigour and delightful creative expression are not enemies. A careful investigation into imaginative art, music, acting and literature should co-exist with

a playful, hands-on interaction by children with creative expression, and the display of such works on classroom walls, in school magazines, and in musical performances and science fairs. Roques describes an example of this whereby children in a French language class wrote and performed a drama in French that was entertaining, full of imagination, and exhilarating, 'where children who normally claim to hate French [were] loving it'.[4]

Intellectual aspects of imagination in music and the performing arts could be nurtured by surrounding students with examples of imaginative works. In terms of art, for example, Stronks (2014) recommends that prints of selected artists be hung in Christian school classrooms and corridors, so that even the background environment can foster critical awareness.[5]

Construct an annotated list of appropriate music and visual arts artifacts/productions suitable for the Christian school. This could be done in conjunction with like-minded teachers from other Christian schools, and made available to all Christian schools as a vital service to them.

Find linkages with other subjects. Every history teacher requires students to exhibit good grammar and sentence structure in their exploration and written discussion of history. Conversely, every language teacher requires some content material to teach grammar, paragraphing, etc. Progressive schools often construct integral curriculum patterns to allow complementary key learning areas to benefit from this holistic realisation. Blomberg artfully encourages Christian educators to adopt an integral approach.[6] For their part, teachers of visual and performing arts can enhance students' learning and enrich imaginative instruction by cooperating with teachers of other key learning areas and approaching skills and content instruction in a manner that enables the visual arts to enhance other areas of learning—and vice versa.

The possibilities are endless. Science classes can be enhanced by using artistic imagination to diagram relationships or illustrate concepts. Roper (1980, p. 161) reminds us that home economics is concerned not just about how to make palatable products for eating

and drinking, but it requires vision and imagination to create foods that look interesting, and which appeal to the culturally bound aesthetic of taste preferences. Steensma and van Brummelen (1977, p. 75) make a similar point in the area of literature.[7]

Therefore, don't restrict imagination to the visual and performing arts. In Genesis 2:9, when God made trees, the imaginative God did not just have utility in mind. He also created vegetation with imagination and the aesthetic very much as a part of his creative activity. 'The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that *were pleasing to the eye* and good for food. (Genesis 2:9 NIV) In its primary creational and redeemed senses, we should see imagination as a divine delight. All key learning areas can be enriched by the use of imagination and the aesthetic. For example, Meyer has demonstrated how judiciously applied imagination improves student learning even in the abstract area of electrical physics.[8] According to Gene Veith, C S Lewis created the Narnia tales specifically with the power of the imagination in mind, to overcome pagan imaginings about God.

Use a sanctified imagination to view pedagogy differently. In both research by Cooling and Green (2015) in UK and that by Edlin in the 'Essence of Christian Schooling' survey in Australia, the overwhelming majority of teachers in Christian schools indicate that the primary relationship between their Christian faith and their teaching is in the area of interpersonal relationships, and so-called 'spiritual matters' such as Bible memorisation and personal salvation issues. Indeed, these things are vital, but the Christian school is not a church. Done properly and imaginatively, Christian school education within the subject areas themselves will challenge students with the hope-filled wonder of God and his world. As David says in Psalm 19, 'the heavens declare the creator's glory'.

Conclusion

Imagination is an aspect of the very character of God that he has wonderfully chosen to endow upon humanity when he made us in his own image. Every aspect of life is touched by it. The young couple in love

become engaged as they look forward to (i.e. imagine) a future life together. The grandmother and daughter play morning tea, pouring imaginary hot tea into imaginary cups, and drinking it down with satisfying slurps and gulps. The architect listens to the priorities of town planners and imagines what their desires might look like in specific geographic settings, and draws up blueprints accordingly. The author, the poet, the composer, and the playwright all try to give expression in various forms to the imaginations of their minds. Science teachers create imaginary models to explain principles and aspects of reality invisible to the naked eye. Musical directors choreograph dances to complement musical scores.

But imagination can become a tool of the devil and often is distorted and marred by sin. When left to its own deluded devices, imagination emanating from sinful human hearts leads to selfish delusion, despair and idolatry. One evening spent analysing the advertising on television is enough to convince us of that. Therefore, the surprise and anticipation of creative imagination in the Christian school classroom will be tempered by the gentle, guiding hand of the teacher lest that creativity tend toward self-centered anarchy and a distorted understanding of the world.

In Christ, however, all things are made new. Through the imagination, we can empathise with others, and an imagination shaped by the Lordship of Christ provides direction for a biblically faithful worldview and educational practice. A redeemed imagination forms a foundation for Christian witness and cultural engagement.

Imagination, in every area of life, can be used to honour and serve God, or to honour and serve a god-substitute. A God-honouring imagination is a vital component of Christian schooling. When brought under the Lordship of Christ, and when explored with playful passion and rigour in both a recreational and an academic sense, a redeemed imagination in the classroom enriches life, declares God's glory, and draws us closer to our Creator.

Endnotes

1 Michael Card, 2011.

2 M Goheen and C Bartholomew, 2008, p. 157; Seerveld, C, *Rainbows for the fallen world, 1980 & A Christian Critique of Art and* Literature, 1995; Leland Ryken, 2006; Veith and Ristuccia, 2015.

3 D Siedel, 2012, p. 2.

4 Gloria Stronks, 2014.

5 D Kropp, 1977, p. 88.

6 M Roques, 1989, p. 147.

7 Gloria Stronks, 2014.

8 D Blomberg, 2007.

9 D Roper, 1980, p. 161; and G Steensma and H van Brummelen,1977, p. 75.

10 K Meyer, 2015.

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19 Professional learning in faith-based schools

Understanding the back-story

John Scott

What has Jerusalem to do with Athens, or the Church with the Academy?
(after Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 7.9)

This chapter develops the findings of a study of the professional learning in three Australian faith-based schools (Christian, Jewish and Muslim) and, in particular, any connection between their professional learning and their faith-base. The schools' students, teachers and educational leaders were able to express their insights through interviews and focus groups.

There are deeper issues regarding faith-based education, of direct relevance to Christian schools in particular, as they seek to understand the faith-based education they provide. Our schools operate in a multi-cultural and post-colonial Australia, with moral challenges that follow from the connected and technologically reliant world our students inhabit.

I present a number of issues to help teachers and institutional leaders to better understand the faith-based education they provide. I discuss the difference between educational theory and practice, and recognize the force of the school's hidden curriculum. I argue that a faith-based school's professional learning might include critical engagement with

the faith-based distinctives of the school and their relationship with the school's policies and practices.

I propose a simple two-by-two structure to help teachers and school administrators analyse their professional learning program, and more clearly understand the nature and purposes of the school's professional learning.

Finally, 'Questions for discussion' may help teachers and educational leaders to engage in the critical analysis of the school's policies and practices for which I am arguing.

Theoretical framing

The research recognised that educational practice takes place within a complex dialectic of teacher, student and family, institution, faith tradition and society. Its interpretative stance recognised the value of the individual and the situatedness of educational theory and practice which is grounded in Habermas's public sphere and the interweaving of the public and private realms.[1]

Twenty-first-century Australia is subject to a variety of international forces. These arise through a global world economy, the transformation of corporations into multinationals and the limiting of national autonomy through the weakening of national borders.[2] Educational theory and practice will reflect the complex political environment within which schools operate.

Questions for discussion:

How is your school affected by each of the following:

- Pressures from government (all levels)
- Economic pressures from outside the school
- The growing multicultural Australian society?
- How has your school responded to these pressures?
- Are there ways in which the school's response might be modified, and, if so, how?

Theory and practice

Carr argues forcefully against characterising theory as dealing with epistemological, philosophical matters, as opposed to practice which is seen as dealing with the use of educational theory and knowledge. As he explains, 'to engage in an educational process always pre-supposes a theoretical scheme that is at one and the same time constitutive of this practice and the means for understanding the educational practice of others'[3].

The research supported the view of Carr (and others) that debate regarding the relationship of educational theory and practice is better replaced by drawing on Aristotle's understanding. In his *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguished three types of reasoning: 'theoretical', 'productive', and 'practical' science. Each has a particular goal (*telos*) and guiding disposition, resulting in a particular kind of action. The Aristotelian classification is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Aristotle's reasonings

TYPE OF REASONING	*TELOS*	DISPOSITION	ACTION
Theoretical Science	attaining truth	*episteme*	*theoria*
Productive Science	making/ producing something	*techne*	*poiesis*
Practical Science	wise and prudent judgment	*phronesis*	*praxis*

Productive science aims at making or producing a specific object known beforehand, guided by a disposition (*techne*) to act with technical expertise and understanding. The 'making action', *poiesis*, is 'guided by fixed ends and determinate rules',[4] seeking to implement the underlying theory. In schools, professional learning that focuses on gaining classroom management skills, often the focus of standards-based frameworks, may be understood within this paradigm.

By contrast, practical science is characterised by *praxis*, a 'doing action'[5] consisting of informed action accompanied by reflection.

Praxis seeks to realise an end that is morally 'good', seen not only in its 'end' but also in the mode of its expression. *Praxis* is guided by *phronesis* ('practical wisdom'), a moral disposition to act with justice and responsiveness. It may be understood as 'the virtue of knowing which general ethical principle to apply in a particular situation', accepting that this may be expressed differently in different situations. As Carr explains, 'without practical wisdom ... "good practice" becomes indistinguishable from instrumental cleverness'.[6]

With Carr, I argue that the relationship between theory and practice is better replaced by distinguishing different kinds of action (in Aristotelian terms, *poiesis* and *praxis*) and their corresponding dispositions (*techne* and *phronesis*). Educational practice may then be understood not only as the utilitarian exercise of techniques designed to solve particular technical problems of classroom practice, but rather that 'expertise ... consists of spontaneous and flexible direction and redirection of the learning enterprise'). Similarly, Elliott calls for 'less emphasis on the production of standardised and measurable outcomes and more emphasis on the responsibility of teachers to construct learning environments that challenge, engage and motivate all pupils'.[7]

Questions for discussion:

- What is the balance in your school between professional learning focused on classroom management skills and other aims?
- How much attention is given in your school's professional learning to the quality of the learning environment in challenging and engaging all students?
- How would you identify effective strategies in your classroom in engaging and motivating all students?

Understanding theory and practice in this way recognises that educational practice may involve the pursuit of moral purpose and goals, determining appropriate action in response to relevant ethical principles. Teachers' self-reflection becomes an essential part of developing understanding and consequent action. This critical self-reflection is caught up in Freire's conscientisation, the 'critical comprehension of man as a being who exists *in* and *with* the world ... simultaneously

transforming the world by their action and grasping and expressing the world's reality in their creative language'.

As Freire observes, 'education worldwide is political by nature'.[8] The consideration of beliefs, purposes and actions that is being discussed here is shaped by the personal and institutional socio-political context, which for the faith-based school may include forces originating from the broader faith tradition.

The nature of professional learning

In a twenty-first century marked by constant change and technological innovation, teachers' professional learning may reflect the need to think critically, problem-solve and work in teams. Drawing on Schon, Stenhouse and Freire, the research took the view that effective professional learning is marked by collegial participation in context-specific programs, with critical teacher reflection and teacher autonomy and ongoing support over time.[9] To this end, teachers and educational leaders in faith-based schools might engage in discussion to better understand the relationship of faith and practice and to expose issues of ideological influence.

Schools might employ a number of strategies in delivering professional learning, in order to encourage teacher reflection and critical engagement. These might include:

- Interactive study groups
- Curriculum workshops
- Action research projects with tertiary partnerships
- School evaluation workshops.

Questions for discussion:

- Which of these strategies does your school use?
- Are there other strategies that might be employed to encourage teacher engagement?
- How effectively does your school encourage teacher reflection?
- Does your school value your particular insights into its teaching and learning program?

The hidden curriculum

Educational discourse is shaped by the school's political and ideological contexts, which for the faith-based school includes its faith tradition, raising the critical perspective regarding ideological influence relative to faith-based issues. These contexts may have a powerful influence upon and through the school's hidden curriculum, which, as Stenhouse points out,[10] reflects the way the school sets up its reality and constructs its view of knowledge.

Questions for discussion:

- When looking at the way your school is structured, what does your school value and what does it disparage?
- What implicit messages does your school send to its stakeholders in each of the following:
  - Its design of buildings, and the physical environment
  - Its style and layout of public and student reception areas
  - Its style of communications
  - Curriculum structure and timetabling?
- In your school, are examination results more important than pastoral support of students?
- What kinds of student activities are rewarded?

The values and norms expressed by the hidden curriculum may incorporate expressions of the particular faith-related ideologies, which may be at odds with those of students, families or the wider society. This issue may be particularly relevant for faith-based schools enrolling students and families of various faith commitments, or none, like many Australian Anglican schools. It may also be relevant to the school's policy regarding the employment of staff.

Questions for discussion:

- How would you describe the range of faith commitments of the teachers, students and families in your school?
- How does your school recognise this range of faith commitments in its teaching and learning programs?

- To what extent does your school respect different viewpoints in individual faith positions—in relation to teachers, students, and families?

The research design and findings

Each of the schools in the case study was independent, coeducational, K-12, with more than 1,000 students, so that the full range of professional learning needs was addressed.

The research design included semi-structured interviews with the Principal, the religious leader and the person responsible for curriculum and professional development, together with focus groups of primary and secondary students and teachers. Once the school had been chosen, the Principal determined the other participants. Ethical issues were carefully addressed, including those that relate to the participation of children, and were approved by the relevant ethics committee.

The interview schedule, sent to participants beforehand, explored the interviewee's understanding of the school's distinctives, its professional learning activities, and any perceived relationship between the faith tradition and the professional learning program. Focus groups explored the effectiveness of the school's professional learning, as well as any perceived relationship between the faith tradition and the school's professional learning.

The schools were compared in a number of ways: their understanding of faith, drawing on a structure developed from Ammerman, who examined the faith-orientation of Christian schools; the various models of professional learning evident, drawing on Kennedy's overview of the characteristics of different types of professional learning activities, and Ax and Ponte's analysis of educational praxis.[11]

All schools were welcoming, with a positive engagement of all those taking part. In particular, students' perceptions seemed enthusiastic, helpful and illuminating. Two issues, viz., curriculum structure and classifying observed professional learning activities, were of particular relevance in the study.

The schools in the research seemed to be working largely in a 'dual curriculum' structure, in which the religious teaching and the 'secular' program operate separately, with little or no apparent inter-relationship.

In each school it was apparent that there were inherent challenges in this structure. For example, the following issues became apparent during various interviews and focus groups:

- When teaching English, how does the school deal with texts presenting issues of dissonance between school's values and those expressed in the texts being considered?
- How does the school teach Evolution, when the school on religious grounds is committed to a Creationist position?
- How does the school use examples drawn from games of chance when teaching Probability in senior Mathematics classes, when on religious grounds all forms of gambling are regarded as unacceptable?
- How does the school teach harm minimisation in relation to drug education, when on religious grounds any use of drugs is opposed?
- When teaching Comparative Religions, how does the school resolve the tension between presenting other religious viewpoints in a neutral and respectful way, and its view about the truth of its own faith tradition?

Questions for discussion:

- Are any of these issues significant in your school, and, if so, how has the school responded to any tensions that may apply?
- Are there other issues like these in your school, and, if so, how has the school responded?

The dual curriculum may have particular significance in the religious education of the school. Bekerman and Kopelowitz analysed the formal Jewish education in 25 liberal Jewish schools in a variety of English-speaking countries including Australia, as well as some Spanish-speaking countries. Analogous to other Australian faith-based schools, they found a tension between parental demands for 'excellence in secular education' and a commitment to promoting a sense of Jewish identity and belonging. The schools of their study followed a dual curriculum as described above. From their observation,

the schools' religious education was didactic and texts were presented as canonical: 'teachers seemed to be strongly working through paradigmatic perspectives which pointed at the possibility of transferring knowledge from texts to the children's minds without enabling the recipient to engage the texts critically on his or her own terms'. In their view, this approach perpetuated the compartmentalisation of the dual curriculum structure so that 'the students will continue to receive the message that the Jewish experience is a marginal one and not relevant for life in the wider world of which they are part'.

Given my experience that a dual curriculum is not unusual in a faith-based school, Bekerman and Kopelowitz's conclusions may be relevant to the religious education program in a number of Australian Christian schools, and suggest that the dual curriculum structure may, in fact, perpetuate the marginalisation of faith-based experience and/or commitment.[12]

Questions for discussion:

- Do you think that the way the religious education is structured and presented in your school marginalises faith-based experience and/or commitment?
- If so, what strategies might the school use to improve the situation?

Classifying professional learning

Researchers have expressed differing perspectives regarding professional learning. Boud and Hager, for example, capture the characteristics of collaborative, situated learning by teachers in the metaphors of 'participation', 'construction' and 'becoming'. Kennedy maps professional learning activities on a dimension of increasing professional growth. Sparks distinguishes professional learning with mandated institutional compliance and professional learning with teacher judgment and reflection. In practice, both types of professional learning may be evident in a school.[13] In a straight-forward approach, Huberman and Guskey categorise professional learning in terms of deficit, 'the idea that something is lacking and needs to be corrected', or growth, aiming

to 'heighten awareness and facilitate experimentation in didactic and organisational arrangements'.[14]

I suggest that a school's professional learning might conveniently be examined in relation to the two dimensions of: growth/deficit, and individual/institutional. This classification is represented in Table 2.

Table 2 Dimensions of professional learning

	individual	institutional
Growth	*Cell 1*	*Cell 2*
Deficit	*Cell 3*	*Cell 4*

Schools might then examine the location of their professional learning activities in the table, to assist clarity as to the expectations of the school. The location of particular professional learning activities in the table might be indicated, for example, in the expressed aim of the activity: activities in Cell 1 might be indicated by such descriptions as 'I aim to …'; those in Cell 2 by 'We aim to …'; those in Cell 3 by 'I need to …'; those in Cell 4 by 'You need to …'. Institutional mandate or individual deficit may be seen in the use of 'need', rather than 'aim'.

Schools work within a standards-based framework. Although there is no reference to the statutory requirements of standards-based frameworks in Table 2, they will impinge on the school's professional learning, whether through the individual or the institution. Professional learning devoted to meeting statutory requirements may be most naturally located in Cells 3 and 4.

Questions for discussion:

- How is professional learning presented and organised in your school?

- What proportion of the professional learning does the school mandate?
- Does the school encourage and empower its teachers to identify personal needs and goals?

Use the model provided in Table 2 together with the language used in the school to describe professional learning to locate the professional learning activities you have undertaken in the current year, to confirm the accuracy of your analysis.

The faith-based school may experience faith-based ideological requirements or pressures, whether overt or unrecognised. These may arise either from the expectations of the faith tradition, or from the school itself. Schools might adopt the policy, for example, that only students of the school's faith tradition are able to enrol in the school. This was the case in both the Jewish and the Muslim schools of the study, but not the Christian school. Alternatively, the school might adopt a policy that its teachers should be supportive of the school's faith tradition (which might be operationalised in a variety of ways).

In addition to staff employment or student enrolment policies, the faith tradition may influence the content of school-determined teaching programs, or policies in relation to library holdings. Would the school, for example, choose not to acquire certain books for its library, on the grounds that they were deemed unacceptable to the faith tradition? Examining the presence and/or impact of such possible ideological pressures might be addressed as part of the critical reflection that is characteristic of Freire's conscientisation.

In relation to this framework, most professional learning in the study was understood in terms of remediation of deficits, and seemed focused on statutory responsibilities and student performance in public examinations. That is, in relation to the case study, in Table 2 most professional learning seemed to be located in Cells 3 and 4 rather than in Cells 1 and 2. This discussion raises a number of areas for critical reflection.

Questions for discussion:

- Does the school's faith tradition place any guidelines or restrictions on its teaching programs, or on the pedagogy encouraged by the school?

- If so, in what ways are such guidelines or restrictions helpful or unhelpful?
- What meaning does the school give to the term 'faith', and how is this understanding expressed in its policies and practices?
- How does the school describe the aims of its professional learning program?
- How does the school encourage the professional growth of its teachers?

Conclusion

The research recognised the opportunity schools have to shape their society in a post-colonial, pluralist Australia. The research supports Freire's position that transformative education is grounded in conscientisation, the critical self-reflection by teachers, which in this research may be directed towards clarifying the school's understanding of faith, and commonalities and differences across faith traditions and the secular society. A number of the *'Questions for discussion'* are directed towards empowering teachers' critical reflection, and encouraging collegial participation.

As Freire argues, conscientisation will result in teachers committed to an ethical education marked by social critique and action, speaking for freedom and social justice and against authoritarianism and ideological domination.[15] This may be seen as strategic to the pursuit of a society marked by equality of access and opportunity and acceptance of difference.

In multicultural Australia, in which the growth in number and variety of faith-based schools is transforming the face of education,[16] I argue that developing a critical awareness of the relationship between the school's faith tradition and its education is a fundamental strategy in identifying and resolving possible ideological faith-based constraints. Further, I see that professional learning directed towards the intersection of faith and the school's policies and practices is important in the pursuit of transformative education.

Finally, I suggest there are two areas of particular relevance for professional learning in a faith-based school: the school's religious education program and its values.

First, in relation to the religious education program: Bekerman and Kopelowtiz, in their study of Jewish Studies in a number of Jewish schools, raise a number of issues that might form part of any faith-based school's professional learning program. They ask the following questions (re-cast in terms of any general faith tradition, rather than Judaism).[17]

Questions for discussion:

- What are the basic assumptions about the nature of classroom learning upon which your school's religious education is conducted?
- What are the basic assumptions about the nature of your school's faith tradition upon which the school's religious education is conducted?
- How are these assumptions translated into the relationship between teacher and student and the classroom, the school, and life outside of school?

Second, in relation to school values: given that all Australian schools must subscribe to the Values of Australian Schooling (Australian Government Department of Education Science and Training, 2005), professional learning might also be directed towards understanding the values of the faith tradition and their operationalisation in the school's policies and practices, with a view to identifying the coherence between these values and the mandated Values of Australian Schooling. The critical reflection of teachers might be directed towards such questions as the following.

Questions for discussion:

- Can a faith-based school articulate from its faith-based perspective its commitment to values that other schools may articulate from a secular perspective? In your school, what might such values and their rationale be?
- Are there secular values that would not be supported by your school's faith tradition?
- Are there values supported by your school's faith tradition that are inconsistent with the secular values of the Australian

Federal government?

- How would your school resolve any conflict between the understanding of the school's faith tradition and the statutory requirement of government-determined values?

Endnotes

1 Habermas, 2006; and Habermas, Lennox, & Lennox, 1974, p. 54.
2 Torres, 1998; Helsby, 1999; and Sugrue, 2004.
3 Carr, 1995, p. 41.
4 Carr, 1995, p. 73.
5 Carr & Kemmis, 1997, p. 33.
6 Carr, 1995, p. 71.
7 Carr & Kemmis, 1997, p. 37; and Elliott p. 286.
8 Freire, 1985, pp. 68, 188.
9 Schon, 1987, 2006; Stenhouse, 1975; and Freire, 1985.
10 Stenhouse, 1975, p. 41.
11 Kennedy, 2005; Ax and Ponte, 2008; and Ammerman, 2005.
12 Bekerman and Kopelowitz, 2008, pp. 329, 333, 335.
13 Boud and Hager, 2012; and Kennedy, 2005.
14 Sparks, 2004; and Huberman and Guskey, 1995, pp. 269, 270.
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16 Buckingham, 2010.
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20 The effective management of leadership continuity risk in schools

David Bartlett

> Current recruitment and termination practices often sit in stark contrast to the desired board and Principal relationship in the management of continuity risk. A shift is needed to proactive leadership transition grounded in community governance principles.
>
> David Bartlett

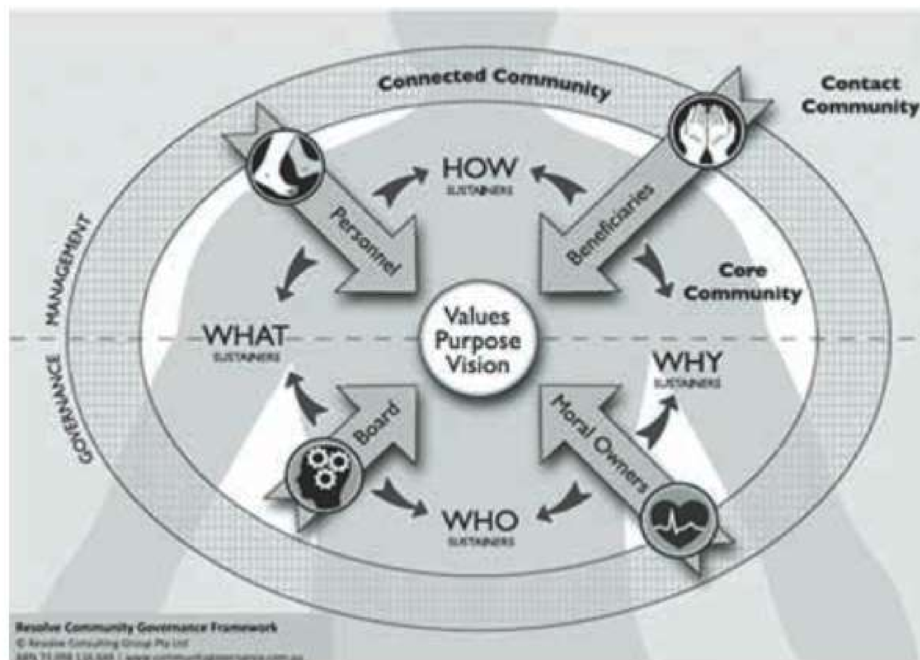
The engagement and departure of a Principal or board chair, the primary leaders of the school and board respectively, are significant events and involve increased risk and potential vulnerability for a school in their governance and management during these times of change. As a specialist consultant to the schools and not-for-profit sector I have worked with hundreds of schools, and note the heavy use of a variety of corporate governance models, policies and practices by many schools. These are often picked up as templates and used uncritically and without reference to the unique nature of Christian faith-based not-for-profit organisations. It should be no surprise that they therefore often have limited success in their application.

This chapter will examine the policies and practices utilised in the relationship between the board and the Principal, and measures

these against the community governance framework[1] of not-for-profit governance. In addition, managing the continuity and transition risks associated with key leaders in governance and management arriving or moving on in your school will be considered. Central to the biblically informed community governance framework are relationships in community. Resolve contends in their framework of governance that a healthy Christian organisation will remain healthy over the long term predominantly if the policies and practices are established and carried out with continual reference to and consistent with the core purpose, core values and vision of the organisation.

One of the board's key roles in governance of a community organisation like a school is to keep the organisation accountable to its core values, core purpose and vision. In doing this, the board is sustaining and ensuring that the relational linkages remain strong between the board, personnel (via the Principal), beneficiaries (students and families) and moral owners (company members, church or diocese). The board is continually seeking to focus all four groups towards the core values, core purpose and vision. This is illustrated in the community governance diagram below.

Diagram 1—the Community Governance framework by Resolve



As already noted, the relationships in a school operate in community. Christian ministry organisations should operate within active,

healthy Christian community and with an understanding that this is critical to a healthy Christian organisation. If the policies and practices do not 'walk the talk' consistently with our Christian community core values, core purpose and vision then we indeed risk the health of our organisation. It is therefore critical that all policies and practices of the school board are consistent when held up to the light of the school's foundational documents. The constitution objects, statement of faith, core values, core purpose and vision are key reference points for the board to continually measure against.

Many schools have well established employment policies and contracts, succession plans and the like. However, these are often created in isolation from these foundational statements of the school. They are often created with reference only to corporate approaches to employment law and regulation rather than aiming to support a collaborative and healthy relationship between board and management consistent with the aforementioned foundational statements. For this reason they often fall short—usually being written to favour the employer and taking a reactionary perspective rather than providing proactive terms and considerations.

The following are two examples to illustrate this tendency:

First, fixed term contracts. In the employment of a Principal, utilising a fixed term contract of employment is common. Fixed terms are popular with school boards—they provide some certainty about the commitment a Principal is giving to the school, but in reality they do not assist much in cases of conflict (where six months notice can end the relationship anyway). Why then are they so popular? One reason is because they have provided boards with a perception of an easy way out to move to another Principal and avoid potential conflict at the conclusion of the term of the contract. The alternative (and we would argue a more biblical approach) would be to negotiate proactively with the Principal when a board desires a change to a new school leader, which is facilitated more easily in a conventional open ended contract of employment. The fixed term contract works against relational health between the board and the Principal, and from our experience is unfortunately regularly misused.

Second, emergency succession planning. Succession planning in most schools usually prioritises emergency succession planning in the

event of a sudden departure of management or governance leadership, rather than a plan seeking to create a pathway to assist a proactive healthy transition in leadership whilst minimising continuity risk. A simple definition of succession is 'the act or process of getting a title or right after the person who had that title or right before you has died or is no longer able or allowed to have it.'[2] Succession as a term is focussed on 'rights', rather than the more collaborative term 'transition' which is deliberately chosen by the author as it more accurately reflects a biblical relationship-strengthening process of transition in leadership.

During employment, times of change in vision or poor performance of the Principal (perceived or actual) it is evident to us in our work with schools that board policies in this important area are too often inadequate to manage these sensitive areas from the perspective of healthy community governance.

David Ford,[3] in his paper on the employment relationship between the Principal and the board, notes the following key factors impacting a healthy board and Principal relationship:

- the Principal's authority to deal with the role is often constrained by an interfering board;
- the board can sometimes misrepresent the position or school to applicants leading to a disconnect in relationship at the start; and
- utilising an employment contract that is balanced and fair is critical, fulfilling the needs of the school without bias towards the school or the employee (with neither being appropriate)

The current processes used by most schools around the employment and conclusion of the Principal relationship tend to tilt strongly in favour of the school at the expense of the Principal based on my research working with more than 500 non government school clients, especially in relation to the management of conflict situations. We agree with Ford that this is usually due to a well-meaning lawyer or board members preparing the contract with a desire to protect the school under all circumstances. Many would argue that this is perfectly correct and appropriate; however, in a Christian organisational setting our contention is that there is a more balanced approach available and required.

Below are suggested governance policies and practices that we recommend to sustain a healthy relationship between governance and management leadership in schools. Whilst many of these will be familiar to the reader, the introduction of a school leadership continuity plan is a new policy document and process that we believe will enhance the key leadership relationship in schools to new levels of sustained health.

Healthy governance policies

Healthy boards will have thought through their board processes and have in place policies covering at least the following in areas relating to the governance and management relationship:

- **Governance philosophy, guiding principles and governance commitment.**

  This set of policies will describe the philosophy of governance being utilised by the board—for example, stating that the board is following Carver's Policy Governance[4] or another model/framework of governance. Guiding principles will be a series of statements describing the culture of the board eg., statements such as 'We will govern proactively with our eyes to the future rather than reactively.'

- **Board roles, responsibilities and meetings, incorporating**:
  - the board's role in setting governance not operational policy
  - board members' role
  - board officers' roles (chairman, deputy chairman, secretary)
  - meeting structure and annual cycle

- **Board committees including composition, terms of reference for each committee, authority and reporting**

- **School leadership continuity plan**, incorporating:
  - board skills matrix and professional development plan
  - process for governance and management leadership transition

- **Board relationship with stakeholders,** including how the board takes into account stakeholders concerns and

mechanisms for doing so

- **Principal boundaries policies** across the operational areas of the school as determined by the board (referred to as executive limitations in the Carver Policy Governance[5] model)

- **Board relationship with the Principal**, including Principal's authority, accountability, employment contract, key performance indicators, monitoring or role performance and links with the board, and a school leadership continuity plan.

The school leadership continuity plan

Many leaders would be familiar with a majority of the above list of governance policies that assist in managing the relationship between the board and Principal.

Not so common, however, is the school leadership continuity plan. Differing from a succession plan, the school leadership continuity plan is created as a collaborative exercise between the board and the Principal in order to develop such an agreed, proactive school leadership continuity plan. This plan can form part of the contractual documents on employment of the Principal. The school leadership continuity plan covers agreed strategies and behaviours in the case of an impending change in key governance and management leadership (typically either the board chair or Principal but sometimes extending to other influential positions in the school context—senior pastor of a sponsoring church, business manager etc.).

The school leadership continuity plan should be developed collaboratively with all stakeholders to the document, and helps minimise continuity risk in times of leadership change which often creates organisational vulnerability. The plan covers the following key areas with policies and processes outlined in some detail and agreed by all stakeholders to the transition process:

- **The agreed appointment of an independent transition adviser.** This is an important aspect of the plan as it brings into the process an objective moderator/adviser that can assist the school impartially and sensitively navigate the process

of transition in leadership. The person or organisation may be a trusted past chairman of the school, school association representative or external consultant with appropriate school governance and management skills and experience.

- **Key processes and accountabilities.** This involves an overview of the major process stages through the transition and the key accountabilities and objectives at each stage of the process.

- **Use of mediators**. The plan should contain clauses that discuss key events or circumstances that trigger the use of mediation, particularly in relation to perceived or actual conflict between the board and Principal or within the board itself in the case of a leadership issue within the board.

- **Legal involvement (when and when not).** In addition, provisions would be outlined for arbitration and the agreed processes to be followed in the case of a legal situation needing to proceed to minimise the stress on relationships during these proceedings if needed.

- **Handling grievances.** The plan should outline clearly the principles and processes that have been agreed upon for handling grievances relating to the transition of leadership.

- **Confidentiality.** The plan should make it very clear how confidential matters should be handled, including who parties are authorised to seek advice from etc.

- **Cooling off periods to create space for reflection at key points of the transition timeline.**

- **Training**. Agreed training and induction processes for new leaders to ensure that they understand and implement the policies and processes of governance and management in the school consistently with the foundational statements and approved policy

- **Communication protocols and agreed channels of**

communication, including agreement on conduits for formal and informal communication between the parties

- **Due diligence requirements** to ensure the integrity of processes being followed
- **Handling media.** Clauses that agree on approaches to media enquiries in relation to the transition in leadership.

The school leadership continuity plan is aimed at proactively creating a safe environment to embrace potential conflict or other issues that arise with a transition in key leadership positions. The plan should be created at the time of employment or shortly thereafter so as to have a plan ready for the occasion when transition is experienced. Many transitions are planned. However, our experience is that just as many (if not more) are not well planned ahead and are not a safe process for all stakeholders.

Healthy governance practices

Healthy governance *policies* are one aspect of maintaining a healthy governance and management relationship. The second aspect to consider, and more important in my view, are healthy governance *practices*. From my experience, there tends to be more established and generally healthy practices surrounding the governance and management relationship and procedures when considering poor performance of the Principal. Unfortunately, we have experienced many distressing governance and management relationship breakdowns including the following few examples:

- **A long serving Principal in a school works proactively with the board to govern rather than manage over many years.** The school is operated as a ministry of a church and has historically had a passive board led by a strong chairman. A change in senior pastor of the church (who takes the chair role) leads to the termination of the Principal without regard to due process or approved policies and processes of the school board within 6 months. The board is silent and submits to

the authority of the pastor without reference to established policies or due process.

- **A Principal is just starting their fifth year of a five year contract and looks forward to negotiating a further term with the board during the year.** Out of the blue the Principal is advised by the chair that their term will not be renewed as the school wishes to head in another direction. There is no prior discussion or opportunity for the Principal to process the board's thinking or decision. The Principal then discovers that negotiations with potential applicants for the role had commenced prior to advice to them that their employment was not being continued.

- **A new board chairman is appointed to the board who does not have any understanding of Christian organisations or schools.** The board has in place good governance practices and a board policy manual. The new chairman is a business professional and systematically throws out the governance policies and practices of the board, operates as a dictatorial chairman and causes havoc across the school, dropping down into management matters in the school over the next few years. This leads to the termination of two principals before the sponsoring church replaces the chairman.

- **After the annual general meeting, the board of a school has three new board members that are also active parents of the school.** With no governance training these board members cause division in the board, ignoring good governance principles leading to the resignation of the chairman and the termination of the Principal over management matters that the board members as a faction do not agree with.

- **A long serving Principal well past expected retirement age is closely involved with the appointment of board members of the school of similar age and others are ex students of the school.** There is great loyalty to the Principal and both Principal and the board have no desire to start a conversation

about transition in leadership to a new Principal. There is an objectively unhealthy expectation in the Principal and the board that the Principal will just keep on going, so no continuity plan exists.

A common theme with all of the above examples is the loss of objectivity and independence of those in leadership, often contributed to by a compromise of the character of individuals unable to see that they have manoeuvred themselves into positions of power with little or no accountability rather than exercising authority rooted in clear and transparent accountability. It is clear based on my research and experience that despite the best policies and processes that the school may have in place, if leadership character is compromised the health of the school is at great risk and vulnerability.

Core practices leading to healthy governance practices

The following two core practices are therefore recommended to provide a circuit breaker to bad behaviour and character issues, as well as foster a healthy governance environment and relationship between the board and management:

1. Accountability at all levels

Accountability practices cannot be overstated. The Principal's accountability to the board and board to the Principal is outlined in policy. However, this needs to be regularly practised and lived out in the school. The board needs to know very clearly where governance and management accountability starts and ends, and refer to this when looking at any issues or matters for consideration by the board. The first question a board should be asking when considering a matter is 'What is the governance response to this issue?' This will enable matters that are really management issues to be deferred back to management early on, and also help ensure that boards are thinking in terms of policy and long term issues rather than practice or processes and short term management issues.

Whilst accountability is often established and understood well between the Principal and the board, in our experience there is a significant deficiency in accountability in most schools of the board to the *moral* ownership of the school.

The board of the school needs to be accountable to its moral owners. The moral owners of the school may be an obvious group such as the members of a school company or the association, or less obvious such as an external church denomination or diocesan representative, founders, alumni or even major benefactors or donors. Accountability to moral ownership moves beyond just presentation of financial reports at an annual general meeting and acting in the best interests of the school as a whole, but must also include accountability for the core values and core purpose of the organisation to the moral owners.

The board needs to keep the moral ownership actively connected to the *'Why?'* of the school—why the school exists at a missional level. The board should also ensure that moral ownership is healthy and engaged in the areas of strategic direction of the organisation, and how the school is governed. The moral owners provide the source of new board members for the school, so this board/moral owner relationship needs to be cultivated and cared for to ensure that board members are appointed from a group of people who understand the ethos, the DNA of the school. This provides some insurance for the school should the board lose its way or head off on a tangent away from the moral owners' understanding of 'Why' the school exists.

2. Safe relationships with clear conduct guidelines

Training of the board chair should be a priority to ensure that the process of board meetings is healthy, and that meetings are safe for all participants and encourage full active discussion on issues. A consensus approach to chairing and decision making is ideal. However, a culture where it is safe to appropriately dissent and still make decisions that all board members own (despite only a majority approving) is best practice. In a healthy boardroom, the board chair is always seeking to ensure that the issue and not the personalities is being discussed. Quiet board members are encouraged by the board chair to speak, and inappropriate behaviour is acted on swiftly.

In a best practice boardroom, the board chair will promote a shared leadership in relation to setting the culture or governance tone of the board, encouraging all board members to practice self-leadership and keeping each other accountable to excellent board relationships and practices. This is not the job of the board chair alone. The board chair's

role is predominantly to look after the administrative workings and leadership of the board—not act as the super director or final decision maker. The board chair may help set the expectations for the tone of the meeting, but the board as a whole sets the tone and hence the lasting culture of the board.

Conclusion

It is our contention that the interplay of well thought through governance policy, practice and culture linked to foundational core values, core purpose and moral ownership provides the best opportunity for a long term healthy school in the area of governance and management relationships. To establish a school leadership transition plan at the key time of recruitment of a new Principal provides an opportunity to do what John F. Kennedy notably referred to in stating 'The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.'[6]

Endnotes

1 D Bartlett & P Campey, *Community Governance: A framework for building healthy Christian organisations,* 2006.

2 *Websters Dictionary*, 2016.

3 D Ford, *The Principal and the Board: An Essential Governance Dynamic.*

4 J Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference*, 1990.

5 J Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference*, 1990.

6 JFKennedy, *State of the Union Address,* 1962.

21 Community engagement in schools

Jenny George

> Even as communities focus on planning and engagement initiatives to improve their quality of life, the world is not standing still.
>
> Ames Orton 2012

While many schools are spinning their wheels in traditional methods of community engagement, there are new approaches emerging from the collaborative educational village that are providing new opportunities for partnering, for volunteering and for learning. Recent societal trends affecting school communities need to be considered. There are new models of partnership developing: open door flexible organisations, increasing global awareness, fast moving changes to technology, changing social and family demographics, emerging health challenges and shifting employment practices all form part of the emerging landscape in which schools operate. This chapter explores how we can springboard our learning environments beyond the classroom, teachers and school students towards the twenty-first century educational village of learning partnerships and projects. It will explore innovative ideas towards improved outcomes for emerging educational needs especially through

a rethink of community engagement practices with an open broader mission aligned perspective.

About community engagement

Community engagement is a term that runs across professions and disciplines and applies to education as well. Community engagement involves a strategic intent to collaborate for a shared purpose. Wallis describes community engagement as 'a two-way relationship leading to productive partnerships that yield mutually beneficial outcomes'.[1] The Australian government describes it as:

> ... a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest or affiliation, to address issues affecting their well-being. Linking the term 'community' to 'engagement' serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, with associated implications for inclusiveness, to ensure consideration is given to the diversity that exists within any community.[2]

In educational institutions the shared purpose is focused towards educational outcomes as shown by this university description:

> 'Community engagement' describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.[3]

In light of these definitions and the many sectors that embrace the practice of community engagement, the breadth and scope of community engagement (considered much broader than parent engagement) is vastly under developed in most school communities including Christian schools. This chapter focuses on a practical rather than a theoretical approach to the collaborative educational village concept, although Jerome Bruner's understanding of educational theory gives some theoretical insights into this approach.

Old ways of community engagement in schools

Christian schools like most Australian schools usually approach community engagement in a minimalist kind of way; that is, to do only what needs to be done to keep the school community (read 'engaged parents') happy. As a result the basic practices are well known and have existed for a long period in Australia. They are mostly characterised by a one-direction information exchange between the school and the parents such as an annual parent teacher meeting and invitations to occasional special assemblies. In some schools, a two-way partnership has emerged such as a volunteer parent committee usually with a focus on fundraising through a major community event, often a fete. Further partnerships with parents may also include requests for help negotiated between the teacher and volunteer. Older more traditional (and usually non-government) schools may also have an Alumni group actively seeking input into school affairs. Now, with shifts in society patterns of work and parenting, some schools are finding the old modes of community engagement are becoming tired and not as effective. Parents have increasing conflicts with work, life and volunteering at school and school staff members are too busy. Generally, resources available for community engagement initiatives are limited and it is still viewed as an unnecessary add-on, despite the government initiatives in the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

Trends in the global century

The Australian middle class environment is characterised by social changes including increased use of technology, more diverse family arrangements, more solo parenting and longer working hours by both parents. In addition, Australia has an ageing society and a larger healthier elderly population looking for meaningful ways to spend their time. Health issues such as mental health are more prevalent, as are depression and loneliness and these are linked to our identity and our belonging. Recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data suggests that we are becoming a country of people who identify less with institutional religion.[4] These societal changes have significant implications for the volunteering and learning community associated with a school and should cause us to do some serious reflection.

Changes in organisational cultures and school cultures are also emerging. There are some changes in the scale of some schools working as multiple campuses and members of faith-based school networks. Independent low-fee faith-based schools have been growing. The increased use of technology in the wider society and the online information era has impacted schools and changed the way we work, educate and communicate. There is also an emerging shift from closed to open organisations that has the potential to have implications for schools. The increase of public-private partnerships, and the emerging fourth way of doing business (e.g. social enterprise) also may have its own applications in the school sector. The global society is readily broadening our communities beyond local and even national ones to global entities that may range from multinational for-profit organisations to free share networks. This paper will look at some examples that are emerging that demonstrate benefits for schools of leveraging their communities and their volunteers for mutual benefit.

Why volunteering is still good for us, for education and for society

While people may be increasingly time poor in Australia, there are still many good reasons to engage in volunteering. The Universal Declaration of Volunteering declares that volunteering is a way that the 'human values of community, caring and serving can be sustained and strengthened'. Through volunteering, individuals actively engaging as members of communities are moving towards 'realising their human potential'.[5]

In Australia, a volunteer is defined as 'someone who, in the previous 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group'.[6] In fact, volunteering is growing, up from 5.2 million in 2006 to 6.1 million in 2010, with people in the 45–54 age bracket and couples with dependent children (55%) having the highest rate of volunteering. Employed people (both full and part time) had a higher volunteering rate than those not in the labour force. This description characterises many of our school parents.

Volunteering is one factor toward raising good citizens and teaching community values. We have evidence that volunteering around our children is good for them. Research shows that the intergenerational benefits of volunteering are significant because as children see their

parents volunteer then they themselves are more likely to volunteer as adults and this has long term benefits to society.[7] In Christian schools the training of children to give generously to others in the community is arguably a core value and one most easily learnt through seeing their own parent involvement as assisted by the school village environment.

Parents are invested in their schools, because they are invested in their children. The school can provide an obvious avenue for volunteering, like churches and sporting clubs, and may provide a sense of belonging that families may be looking for. Australian data shows that our sporting clubs and charities (followed by schools) are the most common areas for volunteering in Australia and that significantly 58% of volunteers tend to work for only one organisation during the year.[8] Thus first allegiance is a key factor for schools to consider; and finding worthwhile, interesting and pleasurable roles that are user friendly for our volunteers is important.

Is community engagement a mandate for Christ-centred education?

Throughout the Bible, community is developed as a key theme in the way we are designed to live and flourish. Notions of sharing together, encouraging each other, assisting each other, working together, delighting in each other's strengths, being there in each other's weaknesses, loving each other and bearing with each other are all present. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul unfolds the concept of one body but many parts and highlights that although we are all different we need to work together for the greater good of community within society:

> And so we are formed into one body. It didn't matter whether we were Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free people. We were all given the same Spirit to drink. So the body is not made up of just one part. It has many parts.
>
> Suppose the foot says, 'I am not a hand. So I don't belong to the body.' By saying this, it cannot stop being part of the body. And suppose the ear says, 'I am not an eye. So I don't belong to the body.' By saying this, it cannot stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, how could it hear? If the whole body were an ear, how could it smell? God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be. If all the parts were

> the same, how could there be a body? As it is, there are many parts. But there is only one body.[9]

In addition, Christ-centred behaviour revolves around service towards others as Christ served us. Volunteering in community is a wonderful demonstration of service to children and society, albeit more difficult now due to today's demands.

Some emerging ideas for community engagement in schools

Some new ideas trialled in schools around Australia are demonstrating such benefits. Examples include project orientated community engagement such as community-built vegie gardens and nature playgrounds. Many of these initiatives are being borne out of the sustainable schools movement and supported by grants offered by government in this area. Also, charity-orientated fundraisers and events are emerging with great success, mobilising communities on a project or event basis.

Some broader partnerships between different types of organisations are also emerging. Schools are starting to develop partnerships to add value to their student education opportunities. For example, schools are partnering with universities to develop direct flow on from school to university, some programs involving the sharing of facilities or equipment or expertise.

Yet while project orientated work driven by volunteer communities offers some great opportunities, there is further room for a strategic rethink of our strategic community engagement in light of the potential for schools to operate as open organisations in a faith-centred educational context. This is where the collaborative educational village may provide an exciting possible future.

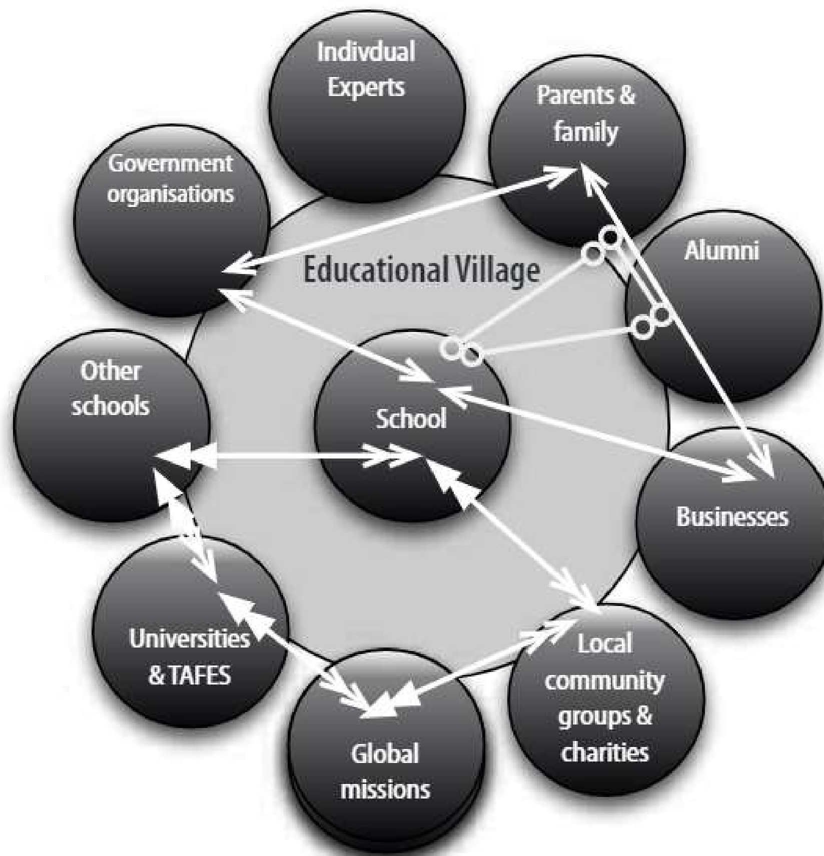
The collaborative educational village

Education in Australia may benefit greatly from developing innovative partnerships between many different stakeholders from the community, business and not-for-profit world. This is especially true as governments continue their current trend of retracting funding to Australian schools. These new collaborations with multiple partners create the basis of the collaborative educational village, a concept where there is a strategically planned sharing of resources for educational purposes

between mission-aligned partners. This can include the sharing of time, expertise, skills, spaces and experiences for a mutually beneficial purpose. This type of work may included partnering type initiatives out of school environments and time, school aligned work or school core school business.

When viewed as an educational village with a strategic open door policy it is easier to imagine the network of opportunities for families and friends to partner with the school. The diagram (Figure 1) shows some of the partnerships available when viewed from an educational village perspective.

Figure 1: Educational village with projects



Examples of the collaborative educational village in action

1. Partnering with experts in the classroom and beyond

This idea develops the concept of learning partners who broaden perspectives and cultural understanding by taking learning into the real world through experts, broadening students' possibilities and future

and learning about new communities of practice: 'By bringing local experts into your class, or by working with community partners on projects outside of the classroom, the school exposes students to people of varying professions.'[10]

The following is an example of such co-teaching with experts, especially those already in your community who are passionate and have some expertise to bring: '"It takes a village to raise a child" rings true for Crellin Elementary [in Maryland, USA]. By utilising local experts, parents, professionals, and community members to help further learning in the classroom, the school is able to provide deeper learning and mastery of subjects while also showing students the relevance of their education.'[11]

There are further opportunities for school administration, IT teams and leadership to draw on the professional expertise in their own communities for mutual advantage. Sharing expertise from the educational village to up-skill staff and parents is also an excellent opportunity; for example, professional development programs and parenting events run by school aligned institutes and complementing teaching and learning by working with their parents, staff and leadership.

2. Passion and skill-based volunteering groups

There is growing evidence that people want to give in an area where they feel they add value and have a special contribution to make or feel they belong. People tend to join together for a love of a sport, a shared interest, a shared belief, or a place to find like-minded people and share belonging. The emergence of passion and skill-based volunteering groups in schools allows for people to avoid the volunteering they don't have an interest in, don't have the skills to do or don't have the time to do. There are emerging trends in several schools where the P & C has struggled to get volunteers to come along to meetings, and yet new passion based groups are blooming, such as a Friends of The Arts Group with Arts focused activities tapping positively into parents' interests and skills.

3. Local issue-based village learning projects

Another community driven approach to education revolves around the teaching and learning in community involving a complex social justice issue:

> We use a social justice lens as we design curriculum, organise parent education, and develop school policies to help us better understand and address large, complex social issues such as poverty, food insecurity, racism, and environmental justice. By including our whole community, we create a learning environment that engages teachers, students, families, and staff in a deeper way.[12]

Ideas also include shared spaces freely accessible to all the parties involved in the project, collaborative project development with demonstrated respect for the views of each contributor, a shared language, shared resources and issue-based events: 'The speakers provide positive role models for our students, and also an opportunity to highlight the role that activism plays in our society. We include a wide range of representation, from grassroots activists and non-profits to academia and government agencies.' Another educator places it in the context of future education: ' ... an important area that is clearly the way of the future where learning is both an all-of-life and all-of-community activity'.

4. Global issue-based village learning projects

Through the development of a network of partners from different sectors and different countries some wonderful opportunities exist for students and teachers learning towards better global futures. Some schools call these 'mission trips' and certainly the evaluations of students and teachers from these trips show that these are an amazing way to broaden the perspectives of Australian students and give them a broader purpose. Examples include visits to another country (including developing countries) to visit a school or orphanage for several weeks, learning, relating, serving and sharing with the local hosts. This is best received where the host organisations are equipped for the volunteers and the partnerships extend over a long-term period and reap mutual benefit. An example of a meaningful global issue-based village learning project is written up in the following newspaper article at the link (ssg_article_south_africa_aussie_schoolboys_help_orphans-3.pdf).

5. Stakeholder-based learning projects

Innovative student-led projects are also emerging with educational village partners teaching students about business and work within culture and the importance of partners and relationships to make a

project happen. In one example of many, a student in year 9 developed a project as part of a program run at the school. This student organised and ran a local surfing competition, found a business partner to provide sponsorship, worked with local council to get approval for the event and developed publishing materials working with local designers. He then ran the event in conjunction with volunteers from the Christian surfers group, supportive parents and teachers at a local beach. This is a learning opportunity and a rewarding day for many well beyond what classroom teaching can offer.

6. Rethinking large school community engagement—based on a pilot action research project

With the support of leadership, a process of strategically driven organisational reflection and reconsideration regarding community engagement at the school was undertaken. Using a collaborative process, a slow paced change was proposed to be introduced across a wide range of community members both paid and unpaid in a school community. The results, while still anecdotal show some hope for a refreshing new approach to the leveraging of the skills and passions of the new open school.

A large independent school, with a community of more than 6,000 people was the case study for this action research pilot project. The methodology was adapted from a successful project in a local government context with multiple highly invested stakeholders including volunteers.[13] The project involved the transition towards an education village approach and has shown some strong positive indicators, with early lessons of success and failure. Most interesting was the need for institutional change and capacity building with the staff to run alongside the new community governance and engagement approach for volunteers.

Given the high level of community involvement in this project, developing a transparent process of sharing knowledge (literature and best practice and a web site) and learning together about community engagement has been important. This has been done in a relational context involving informal chats, mentoring, meetings, workshops, sharing and reflecting. Still, this process has not gone far enough, with most of the community not willing to search the information about the changes voluntarily, possibly due either to lack of time or motivation.

The project has taken a long-term approach and has involved applying and testing some tools including a mapping process of the community engagement at the school. The project included a gap analysis, volunteer motivational analysis, institutional and social capacity analysis, and exploration and trial of possible future directions.

The project has moved slowly to accommodate various stakeholder time constraints and resistance while still exploring, adapting and developing a fit for purpose community engagement model. As researcher I discovered there was an appreciation that this was going to be a process of adaptation and learning within many layers and sub-communities of the school's broader community, which applied to me as well.

After several years of observational research within the community including conversations and meetings and workshops, the community engagement at the school was mapped and reflected on, changed and reflected on and then distributed and embraced by the organisation and used in the staff expo.

Some of the initiatives in the early implementation are:

- New local and globally focused partnerships involving trips, sharing resources and service opportunities
- Leadership initiated change, strategic intent and projects
- Staff rewards for community initiatives and partnerships
- A new community website managed by volunteers, enabling easy access and sharing of all that is going on in this community space
- Community welcome spaces in the school
- Partnerships and projects between staff and experts in the community, and expert staff and parents starting to influence teaching and learning in classrooms, parenting including one off lectures, and real-life projects
- University students partnering with teachers and students in teaching and learning projects
- The emergence of new 'Friends of' groups in the areas of the Arts, Material Technology, Animals and Sustainability, Uniform and Library

- A database of the broader non-paid mission-aligned community is being developed that show their interests and skills and their willingness to share these with the school. This will be accessible to all staff.
- An online volunteer induction program that is easy to use and covers legal and compliance issues
- A new identity (badges, clothes and a logo) and recognition program (rewards and acknowledgment) for participating volunteers.

Conclusion

A fresh approach to community engagement is being explored in several Australian Christian schools with an educational village showing some potential. It needs to involve a full range of school stakeholders, paid and unpaid, and aims to extend to a far wider range of stakeholders with an aligned mission towards excellence in Christ-centred education. It is argued here that thoughtful and deliberate strategic engagement within and beyond our school communities may help develop the potential of educational villages and better equip our students, staff, families and friends for the future. Finally, it is also argued that the collaborative educational village is a good fit with innovative Christ-centred schools willing to explore dynamic and engaging educational opportunities.

Endnotes

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Part C

Exploring the relationship of Christian education to curriculum

22 Warm engagement: the starting point to early childhood learning

Jean Ashton

> Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.
>
> Jesus

Humankind, the pinnacle of God's creative genius, stands apart in the creation narratives of Genesis 1 and 2, as being God's treasure, born of love to live in relationship with him. God's bond with humanity is evident even amongst the very youngest children, and God's creative plan unfolds in the way infants are conceived, mature and develop in stature and understanding over the first years of life. Children, like adults are God's image bearers (Genesis 1:27), beginning as a union of cells maturing over forty weeks before the miracle of birth launches them into a complex world of learning, the patterns of which begin before birth and continue with their first social encounters. The value of infants, toddlers and young children to God is evident in Psalm 139:13–16 where we read:

> For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance, in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them purpose for it.

Christian parents have an obligation to love and nurture their children, and to teach them the things of God (Deuteronomy 4:9), that they might grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). For educators of children in Christian schools, standing *in loco parentis*, the command is the same. Our task is to establish a foundation for academic and social achievement, yet we also need to share Christ's love. That young children need to develop a relationship with Christ, as well as positive social outcomes and academic learning dispositions, is the subject of this chapter.

What research tells us about early learning and attachment

Although the writer of Proverbs knew intuitively the importance of early learning when he said, 'Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it' (Proverbs 22:6), today we test this tenth century BC wisdom empirically with neuroscience which allows us to understand how learning and social dispositions are established. From the moment of conception, through the pre-school years, to children's first forays into a kindergarten classroom, brain development takes place at an unprecedented rate. The capacity to absorb information is astounding in the first years of life.[1] Furthermore, we now know that positive brain development is linked to responsive attachments built through consistent communication with significant adults to strengthen children's socio-emotional and cognitive wellbeing.[2]

For many families and educators, academic achievement centres on the secondary school years, with a curriculum designed to prepare students for university or vocational training. However, while the importance of secondary education is unquestioned, effective learning is contingent on strong early brain development which occurs as a result of a dynamic interaction between genetic influences and

environmental factors facilitating or, as a consequence of negative influences, delaying brain growth.[3] As God's image bearers, it is hardly surprising that humans are the most complex of all animals, endowed with extraordinary capabilities. The human brain's capacity to make complicated calculations about abstract matters within fractions of a second is astonishing and, as its development over the lifespan has become better understood, the mind of the Creator and the complexity of the life he has made become evident.

During sensitive periods between birth and five years, the infant brain's neuroplasticity allows cells to connect, creating intricate circuitry which is wired together and strengthened by consistent and repeated events. At this time the conditions for influencing brain structure and development are at their peak, and when rich sensory, emotional and social experiences are offered to infants and toddlers, strong neural connectedness[4] is encouraged, impacting significantly on later perceptual, cognitive and emotional capabilities.[5] While parents' education and socioeconomic status including income, family size and marital factors also influence development, the quality and frequency of experiences in children's early years has the greatest impact,[6] with consolidation of the brain's early structuring occurring through effective parenting and responsive teaching into the infants' years.

The brain develops most effectively when infants are securely attached to primary caregivers (generally parents, other family members and early childhood educators). Longitudinal research[7] from the UK has demonstrated that quality care and enriched play-based learning in early childhood settings can improve academic and social outcomes for all children, and especially for those at risk through family and social disadvantage. Significant correlations between the length of time spent with warm, caring educators and mathematical and literacy progress in the first year of school have been found, with academic effects continuing even to second grade and beyond.[8] In this environment, positive child/educator relationships and rich experiences strengthened children's capacity for social engagement and learning. When play was used as the primary medium for learning by interactional educators collaborating with children to facilitate their inquiry, enthusiasm and engagement, effective learning behaviours were developed with lasting effects.

In counselling Timothy, the apostle Paul urged him to 'continue in what [he had] learned ... because from infancy [he had] known the Holy Scriptures, which [could] make [him] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus' (2 Timothy 3:14–15). Today we understand that what is consistently learned in childhood becomes part of who we are, informing the values that shape our lives. While effective early learning encourages lifelong patterns of academic and social behaviour, in a climate of diminishing moral absolutes where values are fluid and relative, young children's experiences must also include knowledge of God's love and salvation through Jesus Christ. If we are to help young people negotiate the competing values of society, we need to equip them from infancy with God's Word (Proverbs 22:6) in addition to fostering their learning and socialising capabilities.

Sociocultural learning through play

The value of education is increasingly viewed as developing children's learning competency rather than set skills, and of fostering their capacity to think clearly and creatively, using strategies to plan and implement, solve problems effectively and communicate understanding. The work of Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) has revolutionised the way education is conceived today, with ideas which have transformed thinking about early years' education over the last thirty years. Vygotsky believed that when equipped with culturally appropriate learning tools, e.g. the signs, symbols, maps, numbers, music and technology which characterise our twenty-first century world, even the very youngest children can understand and learn, often beyond that which they were thought capable of achieving a generation ago. Through language, the greatest cultural tool, dialogue is used to mediate thought, giving children and adults alike the power to solve problems, plan solutions before executing tasks, and ultimately mediate their thinking.[9]

The role of the educator is crucial in supporting learning until mastery occurs and to assess each child's 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) which Vygotsky described as the 'difference between the level of solved tasks that can be performed with adult guidance and help, and the level of independently solved tasks'.[10] Effective teaching should challenge children to strive just beyond their current cognitive capacity,

enabling them with guidance to reach a goal. As children and educators work to accomplish tasks together, each is encouraged to verbalise their thinking, making it explicit to the other, thus creating an external dialogue which leads to valuable learning for the child and opens a window into the child's mind for the adult. For example, the construction of a Lego tower might include the following:

Child:	I am going to build the tallest tower in the world!
Educator:	Wonderful! It's already tall! Where will you put your next block?
Child:	On here!!
Educator:	Hmm, I like your plan, but what will happen if you put that block there?
Child:	It will make the tower taller!
Educator:	You are right! I think it would make it taller, but I'm a bit worried it would overbalance!
Child:	No it won't! I'm going to put it here!
Educator:	OK, it's getting very tall! (The top of the tower falls) Uh Oh, That is a shame! Why did it fall when you placed that block there? Did it look bigger on that side than on the other? When you placed that block there the two sides became unbalanced. That side became uneven and it overbalanced! I think we need to balance it up a bit! What could help it balance do you think?
Child:	We could take a block away on this side!
Educator:	Yes we could! I think that would solve the problem! What else could we do?
Child:	Put a block on the other side as well?
Educator:	Ah, good thinking, let's try it that way!

Here, the locus of control is shifted from the exclusive domain of the educator to rest with the child as collaboratively the problem is addressed and solved. When educators adopt this approach, they affirm children's ideas, allow them to experiment and make mistakes, and sympathise

with failure or disappointment, all while articulating their thinking and encouraging children to do the same, until a solution is found.

Play creates a natural ZPD, enabling children to experiment in ways they cannot do in regular life.[11] During play, children always act older than their age, outside their usual behaviour, a head taller than themselves. When a dramatic play area becomes a hospital, children experience things they would never be able to do in real life. In their 'hospital' they can use a stethoscope, give an injection, attempt to make sense of an X-Ray, bandage a patient, write prescriptions and administer medicine. While clearly involved in imaginary play, understood roles are enacted based on children's previous experiences, leading to self-regulation with their actions determined by the rules of the game. Learning through play is rich and effective; it enhances children's concentration and engagement, and application to tasks is far greater during play-based experiences than with decontextualised teacher-based activity[12].

In infants' school, play-based, sociocultural pedagogies have been found to be more effective than traditional teaching approaches, enabling children to solve problems creatively, to experiment and test with actual materials and to apply their learning in authentic ways. This was evidenced recently in a longitudinal study conducted in Kindergarten, and First and Second grade classrooms in one large school from a low socioeconomic area of Sydney[13] where intervention using play-based pedagogies resulted in significant gains in NAPLAN results over several years. For example, learning became meaningful when flour, oil and salt were required to be accurately measured for pizza bases and toppings; temperatures were determined prior to cooking; and then pizzas were divided for eating. Similarly, when the strength of various structures was tested using spaghetti and BluTack, children were encouraged to articulate their thinking, to test their theories in an environment where problem-solving was genuine and experimenting was fun, and to reflect on their mistakes.

A framework for learning in early childhood and infants' classes

While domain specific knowledge is a focus of education in primary and secondary school, in the early childhood and infants' years there

is increasing recognition of the value of acquiring the psychological tools necessary for shaping general and domain-specific cognitive function, rather than recommended skills or bodies of knowledge. Specifically, metacognitive elements such as attention and motivation, on-task activity, perseverance, creativity and self-regulation are fostered in dialogic exchanges, as educators scaffold children's learning through encouragement and demonstration, and offer opportunities for immediate, authentic and genuine feedback on cognitive activity.[14] To facilitate this, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)[15] has been developed for use in early childhood settings in Australia[16] as a guide for educators to help provide young children with opportunities to maximise potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning.[17] Having been established around current learning theories and brain research, it advocates the use of sociocultural and play-based pedagogies to strengthen children's communication and language, and early literacy and numeracy. Central to the framework is the idea that 'belonging', 'being' and 'becoming' characterise every child, acknowledging the importance of family, community and culture, capturing the present, and recognising that development is dynamic and changeable, offering endless possibilities beyond tomorrow.

The beauty of the document lies in its flexibility of implementation, with ideologies supportive of all children and families irrespective of their cultural, religious, ethnic, socioeconomic or language backgrounds. While not overtly Christian in its development or philosophy, it accommodates both Christian and secular learning contexts, and the principles, practices and learning outcomes are effective for application in prior-to-school and school settings. The EYLF recommends that educators work in partnership with families as together they develop learning programs to meet each child's individual needs at every stage of their schooling, and to respond to children's ideas, interests, strengths and abilities to maximise their learning.

Solid academic and social trajectories can be facilitated by educators who genuinely care for their students, hold high expectations for their social and learning behaviours and offer challenging experiences to stretch their capabilities. All children must be shown equitable consideration and be given opportunities to succeed irrespective of their diverse circumstances and abilities. Implicit in this is a respect

for diversity, shown by educators who support the physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual well-being of children, and demonstrate an awareness of their multiple ways of knowing.[18] Although children bring differing funds of knowledge into the classroom based on their home and community practices, when offered continuity of those experiences in addition to new information, transitions across milieu are generally more satisfactory and foster security and well-being.

While play-based pedagogies are crucial to learning in the early years, educators also need to scaffold children's understanding using a range of intentional teaching strategies like modelling, demonstrating, questioning, explaining, sharing thinking, problem-solving, exploration and inquiry. Such activity motivates understanding, engages children as active learners and provides opportunity for immediate and authentic feedback on tasks. Assessment should be kept to a minimum in the infants' years, and should play no part in an early childhood curriculum other than observation of children's current knowledge in order to plan for their interests and build their skills. Of course highly qualified staff in all classrooms will be constantly alert as to whether children are progressing toward realistic outcomes or what might be preventing them do so, thus enabling identification of any child who may need additional support.

Irrespective of their age or academic stage, young children need to develop confidence, and a clear sense of identity, autonomy and resilience. Children bring both positive and negative learning dispositions to the learning environment, and as educators we can use these to strengthen or encourage, and to challenge and equip, where necessary. We need to help children resource their own learning through connections with others, technology and natural resources. We also need to help them to acquire communication skills for discerning and making meaning, whether orally, through texts or through digital media, in order to enable them to investigate ideas and represent thinking.[19]

In summary ...

During the early childhood and infants' years, dialogic exchanges in warm and accepting, rich play-based learning environments strengthen brain development, increase children's motivation for learning, enable

them to develop transferable learning strategies across numerous domains and improve their academic and social outcomes over the long term.[20] In recent years, considerable research,[21] teacher education and professional development have focused on this understanding and on the importance of the values, beliefs and customs of the family and community and how these impact learning. There is recognition that knowledge never occurs in a vacuum, nor is it static, but rather it is acquired as children live, work and play in the context of their homes, communities, early childhood and school environments, and as they engage in the cultural activities and linguistic discourses around them. Learning is an active process where new ideas and understandings are built upon those previously known, as children consciously and unconsciously select and synthesise information, construct hypotheses and make cognitive decisions relevant to their interests and stage of development, enabling them to construct new knowledges, and organise and make sense of their world.

When educators engage in active dialogue with children, not merely providing answers, but offering challenges and encouraging deep thinking, then long-term, sustainable learning takes place. Encouraging children to experiment, make mistakes, test theories and trial ideas also motivates learning and becomes the basis for further inquiry and discussion. All young children will bring different knowledges to the classroom according to their cultural backgrounds, family and community experiences, position in the family, and the opportunities they have been given in their early years.

In Christian schools, learning in early childhood and infants' classrooms needs to focus on how knowledge transformation takes place in addition to curriculum content, as meta-learning in the early years has been found to foster sustainable outcomes[22] over the long term. Finally, and most importantly, as Christian educators we are exhorted to be 'salt' and 'light' (Matthew 5:13–16) in the school community, teaching and supporting children's dispositions for learning in an exemplary manner, reflective of Christ and his work in their lives. We need to stand out and in some cases stand apart from the educational ideologies offered by a secular society. Surpassing everything else is knowing God and his love in our own lives, and recognising the importance of sharing that love with the children in our classrooms.

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23 Deep learning in the primary school

Rhonda Robson

> True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.
>
> CS Lewis

Most of us can recall a teacher that really understood them, that 'got' them, a teacher they really connected with. Mine was lovely Mrs Disney in Year 5 (even her name was exciting) and much later Mrs Hine in university. Both these teachers stood out for me as they seemed to see past the shy, insecure learner and challenge me to strive and improve in ways that no other teacher had previously done. I trusted them and was willing to work harder than ever as they truly believed in me. They were true rays of sunshine in my formal years of education and their impact has been far reaching. Why them among the scores of teachers I have had, some woeful, some ordinary and many obviously fine teachers? I believe it was the relationship, their willingness to know me and, bless them, their willingness to say the things that needed to be said; to direct me and guide me, not just inform me and assess me. It was indeed personal. For them I achieved far deeper levels of learning than I did for any others. Surely that was not happenchance?

Child centred vs individualised learning

At a time of standards-based teaching and outcomes-based learning, external and objective measures of teaching and learning seem to fall short of the child centred schooling that Susan Isaacs espoused back in 1932 when she advocated that:

> ... the children themselves are the living aim and end of our teaching. It is their thought, their knowledge, their character and development, which make the purpose of our existence as schools and teachers. And it is the modes of their learning and understanding, their physical growth and social needs, which in the end determine the success or failure of our methods of teaching (p.11)

John Dewey (1938) proposed that the primary purpose of education and schooling is to teach them how to live pragmatically and immediately in their current environment. Much later Adler (1982) suggested three objectives of schooling:

- the development of citizenship,
- personal growth or self-improvement, and
- occupational preparation.

Surely the aim of modern schooling is all about developing independence. As teachers we aim to enable and support youth to be able to think and behave autonomously and productively in society. While arguably such philosophies as Dewey's and Adler's have fostered the postmodern concepts of individualism, as teachers we actually value much of these philosophies, the fostering of the independent and autonomous learner, the development of the confident civilised graduate who can competently negotiate the demands of the curriculum in order to satisfy the state based and national measures deemed necessary to enter university and the workforce, in order to be accordingly considered 'successful'. As Christian teachers we do not doubt the fundamental merit of such a premise; we certainly want our students to be able to be 'successful' graduates. We also seek to be the best practitioners, 'teachers of excellence' in every way, attuned to the latest research, well able to

teach to the state based curriculum within the added bonus of doing so in a caring Christian environment.

The complex task of teaching

Primary education is, in a word, complex. The graduate teacher has to demonstrate proficiency within one year of some 37 standard descriptors from some seven different standards that constitute the current agreed characteristics of the complex process of teaching. An effective teacher has to prepare their students for twenty-first-century learning, which means so much more than teaching literacy and numeracy: it involves knowing the content, knowing their students, managing their students, assessing their students, differentiating for different needs and learning styles, ensuring opportunities for collaborative learning, inquiry based learning, project based learning, problem solving, critical and creative thinking, as well as teaching and applying the latest technology, all while developing a growth mindset. It is complex and exhausting. It is a blend of knowledge, skill, practice and, importantly, interpersonal acuity. An art as well as a science!

Richards (2006) highlighted the complexity of teaching and incorporated affective qualities stating that it is:

> An amalgam of so many elements: interpersonal, intellectual, physical, spiritual, even aesthetic. It changes subtly in form, substance, 'feel' hour to hour, lesson to lesson, class to class, year to year. It involves notions of 'respect', 'concern', 'care' and 'intellectual integrity' that are impossible to define but which are deeply influential in determining the nature of life in classrooms (p. 13).

Christian primary teachers certainly feel the pressure to achieve all of this, and do so in a distinctively Christian way, which is no small task. But do we intuitively grasp the importance of child centred schooling and what that means or are we blindly striving to simply develop the individual without consideration for a Christian premise of a relationship with God first and us second? Developing the individual is certainly commendable, as all are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), but should that be the aim or the outcome? Even Dewey espoused a greater aim. He asked, 'What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of

information about geography and history, to win the ability to read and write, if in the process the *individual* loses his own soul?' (p. 49). While Dewey advocates for educating the whole person, he still focuses firmly on the individual.

Is dependence a deficit or deliberate?

Did Dewey and Adler go too far in philosophising an aim of schooling that championed the importance of developing the *individual* to the point that we have lost sight of the importance of the *child* in education? There is a subtle but important difference. A child is often defined as a 'young human', an 'immature person who has little or no experience in a particular area'. Educating a child insinuates educating a dependent. Andy White (2015) explained how humans are born totally dependent, claiming we are unique among animals in having an extended period between weaning and being able to subsist on our own. We call this 'childhood' and one has to query why God made human beings so dependent; is it a deliberate intention to enable us to learn be in relationship with one another as well as in relationship with him?

Dependency is often seen as a deficit to be quickly corrected, in the race to establish independence. Should dependency be something that merits greater attention? What are we losing in this rush for autonomy and independence? Moreover, is there a tension in fostering autonomous learners that conflicts with the fundamental teachings of Christ? Does not independence promote a sense of man as master?

The word 'autonomous', is often used synonymously with 'independent', as an end-stage word for the completed, 'successful' student. The Greek word 'autonomy', taken to its root, refers to 'rebellion', a desire to act independently from authority. Perhaps a case of be careful what we wish for. If modern education pushes for autonomous individuals, are we not fostering a rebellious generation; one that may not have learnt the importance of community before they have been encouraged to learn to think independently?

Christians seek to highlight the greatest authority the world has ever known and fear independence from God's authority. Groothius (2015) explained that rationally autonomous individuals believe that human reason is capable of functioning just fine without appealing to

God or to his Word. Muehlenberg (2014) stated that in the biblical and spiritual sense, autonomy means something quite different: it is not a virtue at all, but a horrendous sin. The biblical worldview posits a God who is there, who has created all things, and expects of his moral creatures a loyalty, dependence and obedience at all times. In fact, Muehlenberg (2014) explained, the essence of the Fall, and of all sin, is personal autonomy—the idea that we do not need God. That rejection of any reliance upon and dependence on God is the height of what sin means—a radical independence from God. Our goal, as Christian educators, is surely to develop in learners a love for dependence on God, develop a relationship with and attachment to him, for eternity.

Attachment or dependence is healthy

Attachment theories in psychology distinguish only between *effective* and *ineffective* dependency. There is no such thing as complete independence from others nor is there over-dependency (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). The Greek translation for the word dependence is attachment. Attachment is defined as a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969). According to the DSM-V (2015) the extreme on the detachment scale would be a person who might be diagnosed with a schizoid personality disorder. Such persons show apparent indifference to opportunities to develop close relationships, and derive little satisfaction from being part of the family or other social group. Dependence means security, a relationship of trust and bonding.

Secure dependence through attachment actually fosters autonomy and self-confidence. Secure dependence and autonomy are then two sides of the same coin, rather than dichotomies. Secure attachment is associated with a more coherent, articulated, and positive sense of self (Mikulincer, 1995). The more securely connected we are, the more separate and different we can be (i.e., individual). A solid and secure dependence in God is commended throughout the Bible: 'I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.' (John 15:5). Through our relationship with God, our attachment, our dependence, we can make sense of our world, our purpose and our relationships with others.

So, through attachment and dependence one finds independence and autonomy. However, if independence is sought first, surely attachment is compromised. Does the individual lose sight of the importance of connection to others? Of healthy relationships? Of community? What are the implications for teaching? Are there further implications for Christian teaching when autonomous learning is the primary goal?

Do teachers believe dependence fosters deep learning?

Conversations with my Primary School teachers have suggested a much deeper and nobler purpose for Christian schooling than those originally proposed by Dewey and Adler, one that fosters dependence; a dependence on one another, a valuing of relationship which in turn fosters deep learning and ultimately leads to a healthier level of independence. Independence that recognises the need for interdependence. It may in fact seem counter intuitive, even perhaps somewhat radical in concept that we need to encourage dependence in order to effectively move toward independence.

When I asked my Primary School teachers what they believe fosters deep learning, a definite theme emerged; a resounding belief that relationships are crucial, that nurturing the joy of teaching is essential for fostering a reciprocal joy of learning. Engaging students in deep learning does not happen in a vacuum; it is deeply embedded in real-time connections and personal context, fostered within positive and genuine relationships, essentially built on trust. Learning to be a good teacher appears to be so much more than learning how to plan a lesson, master how to ask questions, manage behaviour and deliver content. It is about connecting on an emotional level, inspiring a sense of wonderment and instilling a love of learning that goes deeper than surface knowledge for national testing. It is a shared experience. And it appears to be strengthened when the teachers themselves are in a secure relationship with God.

The teacher's role is undeniably crucial to improving student achievement, as evidenced through the extensive meta-analyses conducted by Professor John Hattie (2009). The NSW Department of Education and Communities (2013) asserted that 'research consistently demonstrates that teacher quality is the greatest in-school influence on

student engagement and outcomes'. Interestingly, the analysis does not just consider what the teacher does, but more qualitative aspects as well. Hattie (2009) revealed that *teacher-student relationships* can improve academic outcomes by more than 70%, which implies that the quality of interactions between teacher and student is particularly significant to the learning process.

Conversations with my teachers suggest that developing the joy of teaching is critical to enhancing deep learning in their students. Teaching without passion produces learning without meaning. Reason is a cognitive process that appears to have little meaning without the fullness of social and emotional resonance. Richard Leblanc (1998) claimed good teaching is as much about passion as it is about reason. One Primary teacher referred to passion as the purpose of teaching, detailing the joy that comes when the 'penny drops', when real understanding is achieved. He described it as an 'intimate joy between teacher and student'. Wheatley (2005) argued that 'it is time to become passionate about what's best in us and to create organisations that welcome our creativity, contribution, and compassion'. (p.57)

A second teacher spoke about 'deliberately and intentionally connecting students with one other and the community, to engage them in real life experiences, so that the learner can apply what is learnt in any number of aspects of their life, whether at school, at home or socially. It is much more than putting pen to paper! This,' she claimed, 'has to happen in a relationship built on trust.'

Many of the teachers spoke often of the need to be a Christian community first, to pray for the students, to enjoy being with the students, to love them. My teachers have fun at school. They are like children themselves at times. 'Unless we change and become like little children, we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' (Matthew 18:3) Not in the sense of being childish, but in looking at the world as a child would, with a sense of awe, wonder and possibilities.

The importance of the teacher inspiring the students was described by one Year 6 teacher who expressed a belief that '... the commitment and enthusiasm of the teacher and how that lends itself to invigorating students serves the purpose of promoting deep learning'. He explained that often when confronted with the prospect of learning complex new skills or knowledge, seeing the educator full of anticipation and

eagerness draws students in, intrigued perhaps by the value placed upon the lesson by the teacher. Such an energetic and affirmative milieu, in my opinion, projects an environment where students are more likely to engage, to explore and to value the learning taking place.

A teacher of young students spoke about the need for the teacher to '... clearly establish the relationship as a loving example of Christ's love for us, that such modelling of the Lord's commandment for us to love one another will provide them with the right environment for deep learning to occur, for it takes time for the students to trust you enough to risk making mistakes. Only then true and deeper learning can occur.'

An Art teacher beautifully captured a greater aim of Christian schooling: 'Within a healthy growth mindset, we want learners to grow in their academic knowledge and learning, taking on a deepening individual responsibility for this. We want to see them grow in their understanding of themselves as human beings with immeasurable capacity for learning and development. They desire to engage well with the wider world of ideas, of seeking productive work, and of change and advancement. This independence is exciting to see in young learners.'

This same Primary School teacher spoke further, advocating for the need to foster dependence, not just independence: 'Deep or good learning requires more within a Christian education.' She explained:

> In the Christian life, the life of growing in God, 'independence' is something we grow out of and 'dependence' is something we grow into. How we explain and teach this growing dependence on God is just as important as the teaching of key academic skills. It is of eternal significance for the young children in our care. The end-stage idea of this kind of learning is the opposite of autonomy. Rather it is the wisdom of weakness—utter dependence on God.
>
> Teaching children to see this need for dependence is the way to the best kind of life for them, now and for the future. To teach, to demonstrate, to love, to pray with them—to develop the eyes to see that their greatest need is God's grace for salvation and life in Jesus as the way of truth that underpins all human learning. It is the recognition that fullness of life is about the wisdom of bringing all—all knowledge, abilities, gifts, talents, resources—before God.

My Primary School teachers have, I believe, captured the essence of truly Christian teaching, a relational experience with a greater aim than just academics. Cherkowski (2012) argued that educators should be encouraged to bring deep human emotions of, for example, love, joy and compassion into their work in the school, instead of leaving it at the door at the beginning of the day, to be picked up at the end of the day on their way home. She urged teachers to infuse their work with all of the rich aspects of their emotional lives; with authentic emotional expressions, as well as personal and meaningful connections with learning community members. Pace (2010) added that concepts about virtue, compassion and positivity may seem simple but they turn out to be crucial elements for broader success (p. 1). Wheatley (2005) asserted that in the future, 'Those organisations that will succeed are those that evoke our greatest human capacities—our need to be in good relationships, and our desire to contribute to something beyond ourselves.' (p.124) Such an organisation is one that truly develops the individual by first acknowledging the need to recognise them as a child of Christ. A precious child made in God's image for eternal life. A school full of teachers just like Mrs Disney.

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24 English Literature

Paul Burgis

> Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?
>
> The Psalmist

The secondary English teacher is one of the main deliverers of the ideas that permeate the teenage mind. Her classes not only build student skills in the use of language, but engage the student with a range of literary preferences, and develop the analysis of language and the meta-thinking that will help to form their consciences and ethics. Even if they, like the famous British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge, reject much of what their teachers espouse or model, students will still be affected in their thinking and writing by the act of rejecting the ideas of others.[1]

One traditional way of considering the teaching of English is to divide it into the development of skills in the use of the language, and engagement with literature. I wish to focus in this chapter on literature. This focus is purposeful, because it is in engagement with the ideas in texts that students can be transformed as individuals, and it is the notion of transformation that draws many English teachers to the profession, Christians included. Paul's letters to churches in Corinth and Galatia are examples of his active conversation with other Christians about how they might think about their vocation in life, status, exclusion, inclusion, the criteria for acceptance into the church, personal relations,

relations to agencies with power and living under the threat of death. I agree that an analysis of language can bring students to a similar understanding: in fact, it can be a more powerful way of undertaking this than literature. Literature, however, is more easily accessible. 'We read,' said William Nicholson, 'to know we are not alone.'[2]

Language skills facilitate literature appreciation

Language deserves some analysis as we launch into English Literature. Whether we adopt a phonics or a whole language approach to early language learning, or side with the traditional or the functional grammarian, we are each in agreement that the students in our classes need to develop skills in reading and writing and listening and speaking. Students need to be able to control their use of language at the word, sentence and whole text level. As English teachers we have a craft and we need to pass on the skills of that craft with tremendous care and thoughtfulness. It is possible to be so enamoured with the teaching of ideas that we become lazy in our craft of teaching students how to elucidate and annotate them, how to structure writing or speaking to persuade or inform or entertain. If we allow ourselves this luxury, we are in danger of undermining our integrity as a teacher of English.

There are some wonderful resources in unpacking the history of words with students such as *The Etymologician* by Mark Forsyth or the *Oxford Dictionary of Idiom*. How do we, as English teachers, enable each student to see words as each having their own long absurd biographies? Such an awareness helps students see words as connected inexorably to their contexts, and it highlights the significance of local and global forces, of the role of faith and politics, of the role of views of family and culture and gender. It brings faith into the classroom in a disarming and generous manner, and it makes the teacher the person who leads in the area of humour. It can lighten the heavy classroom with laughter and wit, and it can value the role of fun in the classroom. The teaching of comedy deserves every bit as much time as the teaching of tragedy.

Wide reading facilitates literature appreciation

Sometimes Christian teachers think that they need to limit the exposure of students to particular texts in order to develop their faith. I would

contend that we need to enrich them with Christian literature but also to enable them to access the breadth of material that is extant. One of the challenges the English teacher faces is that many of us have not read widely enough. English teachers need to be thoroughly acquainted with the breadth of literature in English—be it Chaucer or Marlowe or Shakespeare; or Bronte or Dickens or Lawrence; or Markandaya or Marilynne Robinson or Hillary Mantel. In regard to our Christian heritage, have we read writers such as Augustine or Anselm or Aquinas, or Luther or Calvin or Bunyan, or Kierkegaard or Dostoyevsky or C S Lewis? Then, when we read a recent popular text that challenges our faith, we are able to recognise the history of ideas within it, and we have some disciplines of thought adequate to know how to respond to it.

It is also important to be aware of the history of ideas. Texts like Keith Ward's *The Case for Religion* or Larry Siedentop's *Inventing the Individual* or Charles Taylor's *The Secular Age* provide histories of ideas that are helpful. Texts need to be read in context, so the effective teacher needs to understand the texts themselves, the histories that frame texts as well as their contemporary culture.

Similarly, it is vital for us to read the voices that represent different perspectives. As English teachers we can idolise certain aspects of literature: perhaps the rhythm and evocation of Coleridge, or the poignancy and logic of Helen Garner, or the raw humour and disdain of Monty Python. I confess to loving the work of Les Murray. Yet we have a duty that is beyond making disciples of our students in the literature that we adore. For us, no literary work is sacred. Again I turn to Muggeridge. I note this summary of his own and his mother's view of Rousseau:

> I was reading an English translation of Rousseau's *Confessions* I'd picked up from my father's books. In point of fact, the book was far too difficult for me at that stage, and it was mere pretence on my part to be reading it. I was given to this sort of affectation, and even much later in my life, if I was reading in public—say, in a bus or train—I liked it to be something that would strike anyone who happened to notice as being abstruse or exotic. Later I came to love the *Confessions*, even their many lies, for some elusive quality of luminosity in them that comes out in their very style, so beautifully clear and supple. My mother, for reasons of her own, held Rousseau in utmost abhorrence and,

> while indicating this to me, volunteered the information that he had been born with his blood boiling.[3]

Within this short paragraph I find an honest self-appraisal of Muggeridge's fragility as a reader and of his confession to desire a reputation as a thinker. And I see his appreciation of the talents of Rousseau: he doesn't fawn to him because he is aware of Rousseau's fragility too. When the Bible teaches us that 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God', it is simply teaching us that all people are like us. There is no such thing as fully-earned celebrity: we all share laughter and pathos and nostalgia, and each of us can be self-righteous and pitiless and ugly.

Unpacking the big ideas in literature

We have seen how teaching of skills matters and that teachers need to be well read. In teaching we will constantly bump into the big ideas in life. So how do we go about unpacking literature with them?

British Christian thinker Sir Walter Moberly wrote a book immediately after World War II called *The Crisis in the University*. Within it he unpacked the following bases for university education in Europe:

- The Christian-Hellenic period when the search for Truth was based around The Bible and Greek philosophy was to the fore
- A period of liberalism where the focus was on the impact of learning (integrated into but unhooked from tradition) on the creation of the good citizen
- A period that questioned 'Truth' as a goal, prioritising instead the utilitarian, the technological and the democratic, seeing applied science as the means to develop a prosperous society free from entrenched claims to power.

We could add a fourth, post-structuralist period now where the emphases are: the deconstruction of power-bases, the pursuit of personal visions of the universe, and equity as a primary value. Perhaps in the future we will add, in line with the terminology of German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas, a post-secular period of education.[4] Perhaps it will make 'nimbleness' the twenty-first century emphasis—with our penchant to highly value the navigation of technologies.

Each of the aforementioned periods approached knowledge and literature in differing ways. These influences play out in classrooms across Australia each day. In making the following summaries, I have sought to describe each of the five models with a contemporary voice. In order to be fully authentic to the different periods I would require much more space than one chapter. I believe the following descriptors capture an essential part of the approach taken to English, but recognise that each is a simplification.

1. Creating good citizens: the Christian-Hellenic period in literature

British Christian thinker Sir Walter Moberly, in his book *The Crisis in the University* dates this period as 'the greater part of the nineteenth century'[5]. In this period, literature was seen as a highly-valued, received wisdom that is to be studied assiduously, revered and applied. The Bible held a position ranging from being literal truth through to received wisdom. Mathew Arnold demarcated this time as valuing 'the best that has been thought and said in the world'.[6] Literature is studied to create good citizens. Thus, schooling in this period could have a moralistic tone.[7] From this period we receive a 'high' view of literature and art, that some works are deemed to carry more that is important to the society than others. If we applied this view of literature today we would have a central canon of texts that we would ask students to study. We would have certain ideas with which we wished them to engage.

2. Learning for learning's sake: the Liberal period in literature

The Liberal period (not specifically dated by Moberly) approximates the period from the late nineteenth century through to World War II. Learning for learning's sake became the business of the university. Learning divorced itself from the church, and the academic thinker valued an open field of discovery and endeavour. It is interesting that this did not mean that the canon of literature was discarded. Rather, texts that would not have been acceptable within it became its core texts.

In the Liberal period the emphasis of the canon shifted from valuing those that describe and enhance Christian teaching or values, to those that doubt it/them. Doubt grew in stature as a virtue and faith declined to the point where in some (not all) contexts it became a vice.

3. Utilitarian societal goals: the technological/democratic period in literature

For the English teacher this period (contemporary to Moberly) became a time of action and reaction. The greater value placed on utilitarian goals of creating a society that fed and clothed everyone, that used the advancements of science to better the daily lives of citizens and that sought to distance itself from lofty goals of finding Truth or expressing oneself authentically, meant that one significant pressure on English teachers was simply to train citizens who could read and write effectively. Education became a pathway to a good job with good pay and a good future. The advent of structuralism as a science of how language worked, led to a focus on training the student to understand the patterns of language and to analyse effectively. Punctuation mattered, precision mattered, clear expression mattered, proper use of evidence mattered. Exams—and fairness and uniformity in the delivery of them—mattered. Marks mattered.

This made the English teacher who rebelled against the system potentially a tragic hero in the latterly conceived *Dead Poet's Society* mould. Something of the Romanticism of Keats and Wordsworth emerges in the souls of students even when an examination board treats these texts as stuff to be assessed upon. The teacher who reads for Truth or reads for Rebellion assists students to find an existential authenticity in the midst of lessons that are more like factories than fields. This is a reflection of the greater philosophical war in education between the value of the needs of an industrial society and the value of expression for each individual.

4. The death of authorial power: the post-structural period

All forms of authorial power were declared dead: God, the author, Caesar, the parent, the teacher. In French literary theorist Roland Barthes the metanarrative became the central fraud and the English teacher became the person who assisted young minds to gain the power to deconstruct all truth claims. Initially a critic of bourgeois cultural impositions, Barthes argued that the authorial intention in a text was unknowable. In Derrida and Foucault, Truth was associated with power—the power of men, or of one culture, or of the heterosexual, or of a vested interest.

The English teacher's task shifted from analysis of patterns and deference to authoritative critics to deconstruction, deconstruction,

deconstruction: the skills of unpacking language to see the assumptions of the embedded metaphor or the discursive pattern of the language of power that surrounded a purchase in a local shopping centre. No 'text' could claim to be better than another: a new democracy of 'texts' had arrived. There is a new metanarrative in much post-structural thought. It is that 'Justice' is the centrally valued abstract notion, and that the people who can define justice effectively gain credit for being perceived as having the characteristics that the West has traditionally ascribed to the Christ figure: compassion, generosity, sacrifice, love and goodness. Thus whilst for Barthes and others the author is dead, there is an underlying tension that has led writers like Umberto Eco to see meaning as a negotiation between author and reader.[8]

5. Liberal practice: a post-secular period?

Is there a post-secular period? Jurgen Habermas describes what he regards as the emergence of the post-secular society.[9] The critical clash he highlights is between those promoting a shared or uniform citizenship and those promoting cultural difference. He also highlights the clash of those seeking a positive freedom of religion (those seeking to share their faith) and a negative freedom (those seeking to be spared the practices of people of a different faith-position). He notes that secularists are no different to religionists in that they can easily assume the superiority of their own truth claims. Further, he notes that the citizens who promote what might be called 'the Enlightenment Project'—that religious believers will recede in power and number as the process of modernisation occurs—have now been proven wrong. Religion has not diminished. Thus, the society requires a means to respect and integrate both religious and secular voices. He calls this 'liberal practice' and states:

> Two reasons speak in favour of such liberal practice. First, the persons who are neither willing nor able to divide their moral convictions and their vocabulary into profane and religious strands must be permitted to take part in political will formation even if they use religious language. Second, the democratic state must not pre-emptively reduce the polyphonic complexity of the diverse public voices, because it cannot know whether it is not otherwise cutting society off from scarce resources for the generation of meanings and the shaping of identities. Particularly with regard to vulnerable social relations, religious

> traditions possess the power to convincingly articulate moral sensitivities and solidaristic intuitions. What puts pressure on secularism, then, is the expectation that secular citizens in civil society and the political public sphere must be able to meet their religious fellow citizens as equals.

The critical sentence is the final one. What is the reality of our trajectory as a society? If society is progressing towards a point where religious interpretations of texts (be they statements that amount to truth claims or statements promoting a set of universal or enduring values) are diminishing in influence, the secular voice can adopt a 'triumphalist' position and marginalise religious voices. In a society that is going to be persistently polyphonic, they need to be heard on their own terms. Habermas believes the latter to be reality of the post 9/11 world.

Miloslav Volf reflects a similar respect for this notion in his books *Exclusion and Embrace, Flourishing* and *A Public Faith.* Both writers highlight the importance of allowing individuals to have distinctive voices, emerging from either faith or secular positions. We do not need the world that John Lennon imagined, where people lose the beliefs they hold most precious in order to have peace between us. Rather we require a society that can listen to and embrace another position, whilst being permitted to maintain its own critical distinctives.

The implications of a post-secular world for the English teacher are 'up for grabs'. There is a huge variety of perspectives now on what the English teacher's role is. Many English faculties in religious and non-religious schools are impacted by the personality or world view of their head of faculty. Ostensibly Christian educators might be predominantly Romanticist or Egalitarian or Conservative or Feminist in their rendering of their actual work.

The task of the Christian educator

The task of the Christian educator is to take a Christian metanarrative and meta-affectivity[10] to their role of leading the minds of young people. This requires that young people understand all that has been written so far.

In order to bring this about, the English teacher guides students to discover through their reading:

- that texts can be read as revelatory (the Word of God) or as scripture (words of wisdom)
- that there is a range of views on the relative value of texts; and that some texts have had a profound impact on how we think about God, ourselves, our society and others. The Bible remains central.
- that it is possible to see the Author, Text and Reader each as the potent renderers of meaning, or to see text as having its meaning negotiated. We do not need to ascribe 'truth' to Barthes' 'death of the author'. Umberto Eco makes a strong case that the author remains potent. This enables the transcendent voice to be heard. God can be God.[11]
- that reading and writing and speaking and listening will help young people find useful employment and at the same time to be able to function well in their relationships
- that power operates in texts
- that religious understandings of the Universe are valid (Volf)/ will always exist (Habermas) and that religious interpretations of texts need to be considered in the classroom.

The larger Christian narrative is informed by the core notions that the Christian has about humanity: that we're made in God's image, that we are flawed, that we require forgiveness, and that God is a God of justice and love who, in Jesus' life and death and resurrection, demonstrates this love. This love is extant in Jesus.

The excursion of finding Christian influences in texts and of reflecting upon their implications for how we position ourselves as human beings is an intriguing one. It also indicates how important the idea that people are made in God's image is to so many things that we value.

It is therefore also important to identify contrasting positions in order to deconstruct any remnant of a faith position in a directly atheistic text. Even absurd texts rely on remnants of some form of theological hope to indicate the humanity of the hero. A text like Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus,* for example, identifies the absurd hero as a type: the person who sees their life as absurd but finds courage in being 'Sisyphus', the person brave enough to return to the bottom of

the hill to start pushing the wretched stone back up the slope. Perhaps a classic film like *Groundhog Day* plays on this theme. If we are disciplined in our reading as English teachers we can place Camus in the history of ideas and note that the notion that life is absurd plays out in many places, including in secular philosophy (e.g., Bertrand Russell) and in the Philosophy of Science (e.g., Lawrence Krauss).

The Christian can accept that each individual is free to declare their life absurd.

A text like 1 Samuel 8 suggests that God allows humans to select or deselect the authorities that rule them. The Christian English teacher has the wonderful ministry of allowing the student to grasp that even in their deconstruction of Christian or the theologies of other faiths the critic draws on the sense that some values transcend the immanent frame. It is in the name of *agape* love, not absurd heroism, that I hear students calling for equity in regard to gender issues. It is in the name of creating a community of trust and hope, not non-being, that people wish to expose paedophilia.

'Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?' said the Psalmist.[12] As on the earth, so also in literature...

Endnotes

1 Malcolm Muggeridge, *Chronicles of Wasted Time,* pp. 63–64.

2 William Nicholson, *Shadowlands.*

3 *Ibid,* pp. 34–35.

4 J Habermas, 'Notes on a post-secular society', 18.06.2008.

5 WMoberly, *The Crisis in the University*, p. 30.

6 *ibid*, p. 31.

7 M Grenby, *Children's literature*, 2008.

8 U Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as negotiation*, 2003.

9 J Habermas, *ibid.*

10 By 'metanarrative and meta-affectivity', I mean a broader set of assumptions that allow the educator to treat the people involved in the discussion with the level of love and respect that God has for them. I use 'metanarrative' to refer to the story the educator tells himself and others about the people involved in the discussion—they have an eternal value to God and that God has given them

a voice with which they should be allowed to speak. I use 'meta-affectivity' to suggest the decision to consciously respond in a hospitable and generous way to people who might otherwise be considered the 'enemies' of the Christian position. Collectively it is an intent to 'love one's enemies' (and friends).

11 U Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as negotiation*, 2003.

12 Psalm 139:7.

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25 A Christian philosophy of mathematics

Martin Dowson

> For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.
>
> Romans 1:20

The purpose of a Christian biblical philosophy of mathematics is to provide teachers and students with a way of understanding mathematics and mathematical thinking that is consistent with the Bible and with mathematics without doing violence to either (see Holmes, 1997).

A Christian biblical philosophy is not:

- apologetic, in the sense that the philosophy *assumes* rather than argues for the existence and application of biblical truth;
- theology *per se*, but uses theology to build a broader understanding of mathematics;
- biblical exegesis *per se* but:
  - reasons indirectly and inferentially from the Bible, acknowledging the limitations of the Bible with respect to various issues under consideration, and

> cites biblical texts where these texts are indicative of broader principles or themes relevant to mathematics.

Mathematics and the Bible

In attempting to provide a 'biblical basis' for mathematics it is common to encounter attempts to derive or construct a foundational and comprehensive understanding of mathematics directly from specific biblical texts. Not atypical, for example, are observations that the Bible makes frequent usage of logical arguments (e.g., I Corinthians 15:12–50 or Matthew 12:25–29), contains numerous instances of simple arithmetic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division), and illustrates the axioms of arithmetic. With respect to the latter case, for example, Jesus' (prophetic) observation that 'there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three' (Luke 12:52), illustrates the arithmetic axiom $a + b = b + a$. However, such treatments are limited and problematic because:

- The Bible is not, and is not designed to be, a text book on mathematics. As such, the Bible touches on a very small subset of mathematical entities and operations, provides no systematic treatment of mathematics in either an operational or philosophical sense, and so provides little or no basis upon which to draw general conclusions within or concerning mathematics. For these reasons, over-reliance on the Bible to generate an understanding about mathematics is quite likely to both over-extend the Bible and under-explain mathematics.
- The Bible confirms that basic mathematical reasoning and operations were used by both the Hebrews and the Jews. However, such usage also applies widely to ancient civilisations. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Hebrews or Jews contributed in any substantive way (or in any way at all) to the development or spread of mathematics in the ancient world. On the contrary, the Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks (judging by both their mathematical and architectural legacies) had a much stronger grasp on mathematics than the Hebrews. As such, the Bible contributes little unique historical information

to the study of mathematics.

- Numbers (eg. 7, 12, 40, 666) are used symbolically in the Bible—but so too in many other religious texts. The symbolic use of numbers in the Bible, thus, provides little unique information about the Bible and, of course, no particular information about mathematics.

Given the limitations of attempting to use the Bible to directly address mathematics (see, for example, Keister, 1982), a more fruitful approach is to attempt to ground the truth of mathematics in broader understandings derived from the Bible. In particular, reasoning from the existence and attributes of God as revealed in the Bible may prove to be a less direct but more defensible approach. This latter approach is taken in the present philosophy.

The discipline of Mathematics

Mathematics may be defined as the science of spatial and quantitative entities and relations. However, certain features of these entities and relations, and of thinking pertaining to these entities and relations, pose some profound philosophical questions. For example:

- Mathematical (e.g., $2+2=4$; $2+2 \neq 5$) and logical (e.g., $A = A$, $A \neq B$) concepts and operations are (as far as we know) time- and context-independent; ie., mathematical and logical concepts and operations apply, and have applied as far as is known, universally.
- Mathematical 'objects' are intuitively recognised as exact ('perfect') representations of abstract categories that are not replicated in the physical world. For example, a circle represents (exactly) circular objects, yet no physical (non-abstract) object is exactly circular.
- Mathematical 'objects' have properties that are said to be discovered not invented or constructed; e.g., the number pi (π) is said to be an inherent not imputed property of a circle.
- Mathematical thinking and reasoning is:
  - judged by its correspondence to the external and independent

structure implied by the statements above. For example, 2+2 = 5 is not accepted as a valid mathematical statement (anywhere, any time) because it does not correspond to (what is taken to be) the actual, and not just hypothesised, structure of mathematics.

> limited i.e., Gödel (1931/1964) demonstrated that, at least for more sophisticated mathematics, no self-evident axiomatic basis could account, or be proven consistent, for mathematics as a whole.

These features of mathematical relations and thinking (cognition) suggest that:

- mathematics deals with invariant concepts and operations;
- mathematical representation applies to ideal (abstract) as well as physical (concrete) objects;
- mathematical objects and relations have 'real' properties that exist *a-priori* , and hence are independent of human thought and invention;
- mathematical reasoning is subservient to, and limited by, criteria not invented by mathematicians.

In other words, mathematical concepts, constructs, relations and operations appear to exist independent of human thought and invention. The view that mathematics is independent has been, and is here, termed mathematical realism. As an explanatory system, mathematical realism has a number of distinct advantages over mathematical constructivism i.e., the view that mathematics is a human invention or construction. These advantages include:

Application: Realism can explain the (apparently) universal applicability of mathematics; i.e., from a realist perspective mathematical theorems and ideas work because the world actually is mathematical not just because of an accidental collision between mathematical constructs invented in the human mind and their applicability in the world.

Foundation: Realism can explain why mathematics should provide a firm foundation for analyses in the physical sciences despite the

apparent 'unreasonableness' (Wigner, 1960) of this foundation. As indicated by Wigner in his seminal work, *The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics* (1960, 14), 'the appropriateness of the language of mathematics for the formulation of the laws of physics is a wonderful gift which we neither understand nor deserve'.

Limitation: Realism can explain why identifiable mathematical truths not derived from axiomatic constructions should exist. In other words, the incompleteness of any axiomatic construction of mathematical truth can be explained by a realist account indicating that such truth exists beyond human ability to fully conceptualise this reality.

Motivation: Realism explains why mathematics has provided, and continues to provide, a powerful intrinsic incentive for research and exploration; i.e., the notion that the universe (including mathematic representations of the universe) has actual mathematical properties capable of 'discovery' provides an incentive for investigation that lies outside the person of the mathematics researcher.

Mathematical realism has been explicitly defended by a number of outstanding mathematicians, including Georg Cantor, Kurt Gödel (1931), G.H. Hardy (1967) and Roger Penrose (1989). However, mathematical realism does pose some awkward questions. Not least amongst these questions are: 'Where do mathematical realities come from?', and 'How can abstract mathematical entities (such as numbers and figures) provide a real basis for mathematics?' (see Hersh, 1997). These questions are addressed below.

The origin of mathematical realities

The (apparent) *a-priori* nature of mathematical concepts and objects requires the existence of something actual but not-human in which they exist. Moreover, this 'something actual' must be universal (because mathematical truths are invariant), non-material (unless ideal/abstract mathematical objects are said to arise from physical processes), and superior to the human mind (because human mathematical thought is subservient to, not dominant over, the structure of mathematics).

A universal, non-material, and superior 'something actual' would correspond to God. Somewhat more specifically, Augustine argued that the 'something actual' is the eternal and infinite mind of God in which all necessary truths exist. This argument was, and has been, widely accepted in Christianity. Extending the argument, the consistent and systematic mathematical nature of the physical world can be taken as evidence from which it may be inferred that the universe has been designed by a mind that controls matter and is prior to matter. Somewhat more specifically, the existence of a mathematical structure to the universe suggests (or, at least can suggest) its creation by a rational Creator, who freely chose to actualise the universe in mathematical form.

Realism and abstract objects

From a realist perspective, abstract mathematical objects (such as numbers and geometric figures) can and do provide a real (as opposed to symbolic) basis for mathematics. Three main interpretations of abstract objects, and of numbers in particular, exist. Nominalism asserts that numbers are dependent on physical reality. Conceptualism asserts that numbers are dependent on psychological reality (the human mind). Realism asserts that numbers exist independent of both physical and psychological reality. The realist view of mathematics is evident in the writings of Pythagoras and Plato, and was also embraced by Augustine who stated that the 'incorruptible truth of number' is self-evident.

Philosophically, one of the most significant pieces of evidence for the abstract reality of mathematics is the perception of mathematical truth and beauty. It is common amongst mathematicians to refer to the 'beauty' of mathematics and 'elegance' of particular mathematical solutions to various problems. For example, Bertrand Russell (who was in fact an atheist) wrote that 'mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty … ' (Russell, 2004, 47). Similarly, commenting on Euler's identity ($e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$), White says that the idea that ' … two irrational numbers should combine with an imaginary one to yield … a result so basic to mathematics argues that there is a profound elegance or beauty built into the system … ' (White, 2008 cf. Howell, 2006; Nahin, 2006).

Despite the limitations of human knowledge and perceptual capacities, when the beauty of mathematics (or of anything else for that matter) is acknowledged, it is clear that something intangible yet nevertheless real is being identified. Moreover, the fact that the presence of beauty in mathematics is agreed upon by more than one individual argues against beauty being simply an idiosyncratic perception and for beauty being an authentic reality beyond the physicality and the psychology of individuals. Importantly, if beauty is a 'real' quality of mathematics then this quality implies that mathematics itself is real; i.e., there appears no obvious reason to doubt the mathematical reality to which mathematical beauty points.

Mathematical realism and theism

Mathematical realism has led philosophers and mathematicians to consider links between mathematics and the spiritual or the divine. For example, the Pythagoreans (followers of Pythagoras) believed that 'number is all' and that the 'harmony of the spheres' (movement of the planets) was *determined* by numbers. However, since the Enlightenment the epistemological divide between the religious/spiritual and the scientific/mathematical has become entrenched. However, even in the context of the still current divide, mathematical patterns and relationships evident in the natural world typically lead investigators to reach beyond the material level of reality for descriptive, if not for analytic, reasons (Carter, 2005). For example, scientists such as Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking and Richard Dawkins (despite their disbelief in any, or any personal, omnipotent being) have described the physical world using religious/metaphysical language, have personified the laws of physics and/or mathematics as 'God', and have asserted the importance of 'truth' over and above the simple acknowledgement of 'fact'.

For the Christian student or teacher, however, the more specific question is: How can the Christian belief in a personal God be reconciled with mathematical realism? One possible answer comes in the context of considering God as Triune. If God is three Persons united in one personal being, then both number (three *and* one) and the transcendence of number (three *in* one) is inherent in the being of God. Number is part of who God is, yet God is simultaneously beyond numbering.

Moreover, if the Trinity exists of necessity, then number must exist of necessity because the Trinity directly implies number. Similarly, the beauty of mathematics can also be understood as a derivative of the beauty of God as demonstrated in the Trinity. Thus, mathematical realism both in terms of the numerical and the aesthetic can be seen to be predicated on the existence and nature of God.

A somewhat different, but related, perspective is provided by Alvin Plantinga (1980a) who argues that, since God is necessarily omniscient, necessary propositions (e.g., 7+5=12) are necessarily always known to God, who thus affirms their existence. Thus, because God holds mathematics in his mathematical mind, the universe inevitably and inherently displays mathematical properties. This line of thought grounds mathematics in the mind as distinct from the person of God.

One final perspective focusses on biblical accounts of God as initiating and being centrally involved in mathematical action (or at least in actions that may be metaphorically described in mathematical terms). These actions include numbering stars (Ps.147:4), and measuring the waters in the hollow of his hand (Is.40:12). Thus, God's action, through which he reveals himself, is in some sense (even if only in a metaphorical sense) mathematical. This action may be considered to be prototypical and/or inspirational for human mathematical action and reasoning.

Whether based on God's person, mind or action, each of the perspectives above acknowledges God as the 'real' foundation and inspiration of mathematics. In addition, each perspective implies that God did not create mathematics *per se* but rather number is pre-existent in the person, mind and initiating action of God. Further, theistically, mathematics is true not just because it is internally consistent, or because it corresponds with the physical world, but because it originates in and from God who is Truth.

Naturalism and theism

In terms of the distinction between naturalism and theism as explanatory frameworks, table 1 indicates how a naturalistic-relativist view differs from a supernaturalist/absolutist view with respect to key elements and features of mathematics.

Table 1

Features and elements of mathematics	Naturalistic explanation	Theistic explanation
Subject matter of mathematics: quantity, structure (order and patterns), space, change.	The universe does not have mathematical properties, or has accidental mathematical properties as a result or random physical processes.	God has created a universe with properties that either are mathematical, or at least can be understood in mathematical terms.
Wide applicability and effectiveness of mathematics: Mathematical truth is applicable and useful in distinct areas of application.	The wide applicability and effectiveness of mathematics is evidence of the ingenuity of the human mind in understanding diverse physically-generated phenomena.	The wide applicability of mathematics is evidence of a single creative mind bringing an underlying mathematical consistency to differing areas of creation.
Abstraction and generality: Abstraction is generalisation of particularities, involving identification of the essence of a class of objects, together with systematic organization around that essence.	Abstraction and generalisation are possible because of the naturally arising sophistication of human cognitive processes.	Abstraction and generalisation are possible because God enables the recognition of the essence of particularities that are existent in the mind of God.
Parsimony (search for a single exposition) and complexity (search for dense exposition): The mathematician desires the simplest possible exposition for the greatest number of facts or examples.	Simplicity and complexity are possible: the human mind is able to build coherent and coordinated explanations of random or accidentally ordered phenomena.	Simplicity and complexity are possible because the universe is purposefully designed, and so is coherent and coordinated in whole and in part.
Axiomatic arrangement and logical derivation: Mathematical knowledge may be organised axiomatically. Mathematical proofs may be derived logically.	The axiomatic arrangement and logical derivation of mathematics is made possible by survival-related cognitive capacities developed in the context of evolution.	The axiomatic arrangement and logical derivation of mathematics is made possible by created yet freely-deployed cognitive capacities of the human mind.

Features and elements of mathematics	Naturalistic explanation	Theistic explanation
Words and numbers/ shapes/ functions: The language of mathematics is built upon the correspondence between two sets (linguistic and mathematical) of symbolic representation.	The ability to express mathematical truth in language is the result of human linguistic and mathematical cognitive functions developing in parallel in the context of evolution.	The ability to express mathematical truth in language is the result of one Creator creating physical and cognitive conditions with respect to which commensurate symbolic representations are possible.

The table above is not meant to be definitive, but in general terms indicates that it is possible to explain plausibly the origin of various specific features and elements of mathematics by making inferences to specific qualities of God and God's action. These inferences do not 'prove' God or prove that God created the conditions for mathematics. (Similarly, naturalistic inferences do not prove 'no God' or no mathematical intent on the part of God.) However, these inferences do show that it is possible to provide a nuanced explanatory alternative to naturalism.

Knowing mathematics

The acquisition and application of mathematical knowledge involves both the recognition of abstract entities and the acquisition and application of the laws of deductive logic. These processes include the ability to:

- identify and delimit the size and shape of spatial objects,
- distinguish distance between objects, and thus discriminate between individual objects and groups of objects,
- recognise change, and the causes of change, in and between objects over time, and
- represent all of the above symbolically.

These processes form the basis of logic, algebra, geometry, calculus and other foundational fields of mathematics. From a Christian perspective, the capacity of human beings to recognise the mathematical structure of the physical world, represent this structure symbolically, and then manipulate mathematical symbols as a means of testing and

verifying physical hypotheses (as well as testing the veracity of the symbolic representation itself) are all the result of the action of a Creator who creates an orderly and interpretable world. Importantly, human creation in the image of God implies that thinking humans have the ability to discern mathematical patterns in creation. Further, in making the world mathematical, and gifting mathematical thinking to humans, God is making at least his mathematical, but also by extension his logical, characteristics known to his creatures thus displaying his glory. Hence, the apostle Paul can say (referring to more than mathematics alone): 'For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.' (Romans 1:20)

For the reasons outlined above, mathematical truth can authentically be said to be *discovered*, and inferences from mathematics to the person, mind and action of God are not unreasonable. In contrast to this discovery-based and inferential approach, secular mathematicians have (at least most recently) attempted to demonstrate that the foundation for mathematics lies not in God, but in 'self-evident axioms', thus moving the search for a foundation for mathematics from (divine) ontology to (human) epistemology (Byl, 2004). However, if even our mental processes are created by God, then even if 'self-evident axioms' could provide a basis for mathematics (a proposition which is currently disputed), the derivation of these axioms can be attributed to God's reasoning capacities gifted to humans, not to autonomous, self-generated human reasoning. Thus, from a Christian theistic perspective, mathematical reasoning provides as much evidence of God's mental processes as it does for our own.

Mathematics as theology

Theology may be defined as the study of God. Theology as we have come to know it is the study of God in the Bible (what might be called theology proper), and/or the study of various topics in light of God as revealed in the Bible (the theology *of* a given topic). To the extent that mathematics reveals God, and so God's existence and attributes are understood from mathematics, mathematics may be seen as a branch of natural theology (perhaps supplemented and/or tested by reference

to understandings of God revealed in the Bible). Mathematics as theology, then, may be seen as a study of the divine that in some way draws on mathematics. In such circumstances, mathematics may take a proper place as 'one of the loci of theology' (Plantinga 1980b, 144). Thus, the Christian teacher may both study (and teach) mathematics from a theistic perspective, and/or study (and teach) God from a mathematical perspective.

Conclusion

Humans perceive real things beyond the physical world. Some of these realities (so it has been argued) are abstracted mathematical truth and beauty—and the objects and processes associated with that truth and beauty. Mathematical realism is, however, difficult to uphold without theism. God provides both a necessary and sufficient ontological foundation for all reality including mathematical reality. Indeed, mathematical realists throughout history have at least intimated theism, and have typically conceptualised mathematical truth as existing beyond the physical. From a specifically Christian perspective, the Trinity suggests that mathematical truth exists of necessity in the being of God, thus providing an ontological foundation for the nature of mathematics, and perceptions of mathematical beauty. The mind of God and action of God also provide ontological foundations for mathematics.

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26 Learning science well

Mitch O'Toole

> If students are taught only current understanding, it is hard to avoid the consequence that they will learn that there is only one answer, now known and uncontentious.
>
> NSW Education Standards Authority (NSWESA)

I am going to begin this chapter on learning science well with some personal reflections, move on to a taste of the history of science and delve into current curricula and the implications they have for the teaching and learning of science. The length of this chapter makes it necessarily introductory in scope but I have provided a range of references which interested readers can follow up if they wish. References are provided because they represent a position that I do not have space to explore in detail, not because I necessarily agree with their authors.

I began university in 1972, intending to major in Biology and Education. I encountered my first Geology course in 1973 and in 1974 I studied both Vertebrate Palaeontology (Geology) and Anatomy and Physiology of the Chordates (Biology). I eventually completed a Science Education program, majoring in Geology. The program included two courses in the History and Philosophy of Science (HPS) and I went on to further such work in my Masters and subsequent teaching.

These apparently trivial personal details matter because the second edition of *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn, 1970) was published the year I began undergraduate study; *Criticism and the Growth*

of Knowledge (Lakatos & Musgrave, 1972) appeared to debate his conclusions that same year, *What is this thing called 'Science'?* (Chalmers, 1999) first appeared during my undergraduate years; and the geophysical data from the 19th run of the survey ship *Eltanin* across the Antarctic Ridge was distributed five years before my study of Geology began. Wood (1985) argues that international acceptance of Plate Tectonics can be traced as following the distribution path of *Eltanin* 19, which explicitly confirmed the seafloor pattern of parallel bands of oppositely magnetised rock to both sides of a mid-ocean ridge. This 'planking' had been noticed by Mason and Raff in 1958, an explanation was hypothesised by Vine and Matthews in 1963 and deep sea drilling in 1968 had established progressively greater 'plank' ages with movement away from the mid-ocean ridge. The theory of continental drift had been published by Alfred Wegener in German in 1915, translated into English under the oversight of Lawrence Bragg in 1922 and kept alive by Arthur Holmes in successive editions of his successful *Principles of Physical Geology* from 1937. Continental Drift finally had a mechanism in 1968 and the 'new' model of Plate Tectonics began in earnest.

Or did it? We used *Principles of Physical Geology* in that first introductory Geology course but my lecturers were conservative. They were still cautioning us against 'drifting continents' in 1973. It was in Holmes and there had been a flurry of academic publication but my lecturers still felt that the continents seemed too stable to be sliding around the surface of the globe. The five years since *Eltanin* 19 were apparently not enough time for them to come around. However, by the time I finished my undergraduate program in 1976, they had come to terms with continental plates being shoved around the surface of a round Earth by long belts of mid-ocean ridges.

There had not been a change of such magnitude within science since Mendel/Morgan and the emergence of chromosomal genetics in the 1920s. My HPS classes were discussing the arguments that I was overhearing and sometimes joining in the Geology building. The conservatism of my undergraduate lecturers meant that I lived through a paradigm shift at the same time as the conceptual tools for understanding it were being debated. Then I started listening to palaeontologists and biologists talking about the same fossils. The Biology lecturers used the fossils as evidence to support theories they sought to teach us but

the Geology lecturers urged focus on the rocks and told us to let the theories look after themselves until we were more certain about what we were looking at. It was sometimes difficult to decide whether two accidentally consecutive lectures dealt with the same fossil but, surprisingly, they often did.

I began to teach secondary science classes in 1978 with a growing sense of wonder at the fluid nature of what I shared with my classes in a range of school systems. Science is not the place to look if you want an answer that will still apply a hundred years from now. My personal history sensitised me to that brute fact but such perception is hardly idiosyncratic.

Understanding changing science

Concerns with the history, nature, applications, implications and excitement of science surface in the Australian curriculum: Science as the '*Science as a Human Endeavour*' strand. Both national and state documents make reference to the 'developmental nature of scientific knowledge and processes', their 'provisional character' (NSW Board ofStudies (BofS), 2003, p. 10) and the 'dynamic nature' of scientific knowledge (ACARA, 2015, p. 3):

> Through science, humans seek to improve their understanding and explanations of the natural world. Science involves the construction of explanations based on evidence and science knowledge can be changed as new evidence becomes available. Science influences society by posing, and responding to, social and ethical questions, and scientific research is itself influenced by the needs and priorities of society. (ACARA, 2015, p. 5)

Modern curriculum documents take what might be labelled a 'socio-intellectual interactionist' approach to the ways that ideas in science change. Such a view suggests that scientific development should be understood as a result of the interaction of *social causes* and *intellectual reasons* (Feyerabend, 1975) in response to problems that need solving (Laudan, 1977). This implies that the rational component of paradigm shift and the social pressures within which it occurs can both be fruitfully explored. With all due respect to Kuhn, scientific models do not appear to be undifferentiated paradigms, to be swallowed or

spat out whole. They seem to have a *hard core*, acceptance of which is necessary for communal membership. Around this there is a *protective belt*, which provides the problems that make up scientists' usual work (Lakatos, 1971). There are always awkward facts that don't fit (*anomalies*) but nobody is much interested, so long as the protective belt is wide enough to keep everybody working productively. When the belt no longer provides enough problems, scientists begin to pay more attention to the anomalies and some start to question the hard core of the model. Interactionist science looks like this:

> The continents seem solid: permanent and fixed *(observation)* separated by oceans that are of similar age, if not older *(implication,* if not yet *prediction)*. However, the ground shakes sometimes, some of the land looks like it was once underwater and other places do go under periodically *(anomaly)*. So, rock scientists *(emerging community)* develop a fixed model of the planet's surface with most movement being vertical *(accepted model)*.
>
> However, some parts of the surface look like they were once joined, even though wide seas now separate them. Weather and water people, outside the rock mainstream, start finding more and more connections across the seas *(anomalies)* and suggest that the basic movement might be horizontal, rather than vertical *(alternative model)*. This will solve a lot of problems that the vertical model can't begin to explain but the rock blokes won't have a bar of it. The outsiders can't explain what pushes the continents around (no mechanism: *stalemate,* sometimes called *'crisis')*.
>
> The two major world powers start to use the deep oceans to move around weapons of mass destruction by submarine, so they need good maps *(social need)*. So, lots of money becomes available *(finance)* for ocean research *(multiplying anomalies* and then a suggested *mechanism)*.
>
> This allows the outsiders to show that the oceans are young, not old *(softening hard core)*, and that newly described mountain ranges down the middle of the oceans are pushing the continents around *(data for persuasive explanation)*. Horizontal replaces vertical as the fundamental direction of crustal movement *(new model)*. (adapted from O'Toole, 2012, p. 99)

This is an extremely brief account of the acceptance of plate tectonics embedded in the personal details at the beginning of the chapter. Similar accounts could be generated for the collapse of Phlogiston and the rise of modern Chemistry; for the collapse of Newtonian physics that Einstein precipitated; or for the more recent changes in modern genetics.

This socio-intellectual interactionist model, and all of the documents that seem to draw on something like it, recognise the relatively rapidly changing ideas that distinguish science from other ways of knowing and encourage teachers to try to explain them to children: 'If students are taught only current understanding, it is hard to avoid the consequence that they will learn that there is only one answer, now known and uncontentious.' (BofS, 2009, p. 143).

It seems clear that scientific models are transient. The variations in the way that the atomic model or acid-base reactions are described across the years of secondary schooling provide relatively uncontroversial examples of recognition of this fact in contemporary practice. Recent curricula developments encourage science teachers to make the changes in treatment explicit and share historical narrative to remove the appearance of arbitrariness from them.

So, how does a Christian think about science?

The first and most obvious point is that science and faith do not have a particularly happy history. There have been controversies about cosmology, mainly although not entirely revolving around Galileo (Butterfield, 1957; Carroll, 1999; deSantillana, 1958; Finiocchario, 1999); controversies about the place of beliefs and values (Cantor, 1991; Poole, 1995); controversies about the age of the Earth (Gillispie, 1959); and, of course, controversies about biological evolution (Blackmore & Page, 1989; Hitching, 1982). Classroom engagement in these disputes is inevitable for any science teacher who takes a theistic view seriously.

My personal history and commitments made classroom engagement with these issues inevitable. However, I have found myself drawn beyond my own classroom by wider controversies, beginning with the 1996/7 Roberts/Plimer controversy over Noah's Ark (Dayton, 1997). A geology professor, Ian Plimer, mortgaged his house to finance a legal

challenge to Allen Roberts' attempts to raise funds to work further on what he claimed was remains of the Ark emerging from a Turkish mountainside (Plimer, 2000). The school at which I worked at the time was one of those over which Plimer had earlier expressed profound concern (Plimer, 1994) and we were contacted by a reporter from a metropolitan daily for a comment. This prompted the development of school-approved documentation and a number of subsequent publications to which I refer readers who may wish a more detailed treatment of the perennially vexed issue of evolution (O'Toole, 2005, 2006, 2011). This chapter will take a broader view.

Science is intrinsically and unashamedly reductionist. Galileo ignored the more fruitful work of his contemporary Kepler and his enduring contribution to science lies not in his flawed Copernican cosmology but in his reduction of motion to its essentials and his use of the vernacular for communicating the results of the work he did under house arrest following his recantation in 1633. His reduction of movement to its essentials (mass, distance and time) was a brilliant methodological step. Nothing beyond these three quantities mattered and changes could be measured and predictions calculated. Such reduction made modern science possible. Reality is simply too complex to take in one bite—agreeing to nibble at it in shared and consistent ways has been spectacularly effective in changing our world.

However, this reduction to essentials does not mean that the things Galileo neglected did not matter or were not real—they were merely outside the questions that he was asking at the time. All scientific models are less than reality. Such methodological reductionism produces the focus that characterises modern science but documents such as those of our local curriculum authorities urge that the actual experimental work be considered in the context of the things excluded.

This could be illustrated by the fact that the Minnesota Starvation Experiment is acceptable science (Guetzkow & Bowman, 1946; Keys, Broznek, Henschel, Michelson, & Longstreet, 1950) while systematic denial of sustenance to involuntary Nazi concentration camp inmates were not. The Minnesota volunteers knew what they had agreed to do and they chose to participate (*informed consent*) in the hope that the results might benefit survivors from the horrors of attempted genocide (*social benefit perceived as greater than personal cost*). Methodological

similarity does not make the two processes equivalent. Such concerns underlie the current voluntary moratorium on germ-line research (and consequent work on somatic stem cells) and the movement of scientists from Physics to Biology following the Los Alamos work on the atomic bomb. Enrico Fermi's supposed quip (something like 'Say what you will, the thing is superb Physics') represents a reductionist view of science that rings false in the case of the Italian physicist but true as an expression of the kind of misplaced arrogance repudiated by contemporary Australian curricula.

There is some dispute about whether this reduction to materialism is merely methodological or an essential feature of science and this dispute leads us into the various ways in which the interaction between science and faith can be conceptualised. Some people believe that science defines rationality and things beyond science are either false or purely personal, or in many cases, both. This arrogant reductionist position takes materialism beyond a pragmatic method to the only path to reliable knowledge. We might call this 'Science only, no God' (Dawkins, 2006, can read like this and he can sound like that in person). Some people believe that science is characterised by pragmatic materialism but that other ways of knowing may take other approaches. We might call this 'Science, lots of other stuff, maybe God' (Gould, 1997, but science usually prevails). Some people believe that materialism is a trap from which the unwary might not escape with their faith intact. We might call this 'God only, true science in support' (Goheen, 2004). Some people believe that this latter view should lead science to abandon pragmatic materialism and build a 'theistic science' (Moreland, 1994). Adults with variations of each of these positions will be found in pubs, clubs, colleges, churches and staffrooms. Children with more or less cohesive versions of combinations of them are found in our classrooms (Fysh & Lucas, 1998). We have a responsibility to deal respectfully with such variations in belief about the nature of what we teach.

However, it is well to remember that these conflicts can heat up remarkably quickly, particularly when they involve discussion of evolution. Changing an established position can damage personal relationships (Couzin, 2008). Attempting to distinguish productively between positions can strain professional relationships (Ayala, 2005). Expressing concerns not yet firmed into doubts can limit professional options

(Ruse, 2015). Even advocating tolerance can have professional consequences (General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM), 2008; Reiss, 2008).

It may be that the way forward has already been suggested to us by Australian curriculum documents. Life in general, and school in particular, is composed of many different types of activity and each has its own strengths and its own limitations. The skills developed in one may be useful in others but transitions must be made with care. If we do not take sufficient account of the complexity of our lives we make what philosophers call a 'category error': 'That smells pretty purple but I think that it might taste a bit too tangential.' Scientific reductionism has had amazingly powerful consequences but science itself cannot judge whether those consequences are positive. Science is neither conceptually nor practically autonomous:

> This strand highlights the development of science as a unique way of knowing and doing, and the role of science in contemporary decision making and problem solving. It acknowledges that in making decisions about science practices and applications, ethical and social implications must be taken into account. This strand also recognises that science advances through the contributions of many different people from different cultures and that there are many rewarding science based career paths. (ACARA, 2015, p. 5)

So, how should we think about science? How should we teach it, if that is our calling? How should we learn it, if that is what we are asked to do?

We should recognise the power of the narrowing of focus that characterises modern science. We might call it concentration or we might call it commitment but it is necessary for any scientific work. It also contains within it the seeds of its own decay. Such narrowing always neglects things that will only become important later and its direction is always open to challenge from beyond the laboratory. If the direction is socially acceptable and the model is vigorous and fruitful, the work will yield new knowledge and new applications. Eventually, even the most fruitful model will uncover things that cannot be explained with the tools it provides. Eventually another model will explain all that has already been found, plus the new things, and suggest directions for new

work. That is where this chapter began and what has come between will hopefully have helped readers to see that transient science holds little threat for firm faith.

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27 Can one learn lessons from history?

Edwin Judge

> Not that ... the truth was easy to discover: different eye-witnesses give different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or the other or else from imperfect memories.
> Thucydides

The idea that history repeats itself dies hard. But we no longer live in a fixed universe. The Stoics in the time of Christ believed we would all come back again, doing exactly the same things, down to the last detail. Then the grand cycle would begin once more and so on, for ever. There was no point in trying to change anything. Everything was predetermined. Tragedy arose from trying to do the impossible. The foolish dream of hoping to do better only made one's doom the more pathetic. Sisyphus, in the underworld, could be seen pushing his boulder up the hill, only to have it roll down again the moment it reached the top, to be for ever repeated. He had to learn the lesson of history the hard way. Nothing could change.

By the end of the Peloponnesian War (404 BC), Thucydides had long been writing its history. He was at first an Athenian general, but had lost. He needed to explain the fate of proud Athens (Pericles had earlier thought her at the summit of civilisation, as indeed we still do). So Thucydides' history might help later generations not to make the

same mistakes. (He had not yet realised the ultimate futility of the Stoics.) On this he writes:

> And it may well be that my history will seem less easy to read because of the absence in it of a romantic element. It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which, human nature being what it is, will, at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future. My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last for ever.[1]

Thucydides has certainly not failed as an historian. His principles of evidence, explained immediately before this passage, are accepted as the norm in our profession. He is the classic historian. Moreover, his reference to human nature touches the heart of the matter.

Change in human history

Though the principles of scientific evidence are the same as those of history, we do not now mostly speak of 'natural' history. The 'human' dimension of understanding confronts us with questions of purpose and therefore of personal judgement that simply do not apply at all to the universe as a whole. But in Athens during the age of Thucydides the philosophers were debating the opposite axiom.

It was taken for granted that the universe itself was the one coherent totality of all existence. It was constituted by reason (*logos*) itself, the same power of rationality by which philosophical debate also was to free people from poetic fiction and superstition. Hence the doctrine of changelessness. What is perfect or complete cannot change, by definition. Change implies imperfection or error.

Modern science has, however, demonstrated the historicity of change. It has been discovered not by pure reason, but by history—that is, by finding out what actually happens. Prior to Thucydides and the philosophers alike, the Homeric poems attest the judgement of the *histor*. He is the arbitrator. He must settle the dispute by finding things out. The same Greek stem provides his method: 'I saw' (*eidon*), and thus 'I know' (*oida*).

The philosophers had a term for this: 'empiricism' (in Latin 'experiment'). The great medical philosopher of the second century AD, Galen, rejected the empirical approach to disease. It lacked logical proof. 'You would think you had come into the school of Moses and of Christ,' he said, where God merely says things and does things.[2] The custodians of Moses and of Christ, however, also partly tied themselves to logical proof. We had to wait until the nineteenth century before biblical empiricism gave us microbiology, revealing the cause of infection. Earlier logic proved you had a fever simply because you were too hot.

Testing for truth is one of the great epistemological motifs of the scriptural canon. The paradoxes of the 'inner man', and therefore of motivation and human relationships in general, have not been, and are not likely now to be, revealed by the assimilation of humanity to the natural order as defined by philosophical logic. This is why education on its own often fails to cope with social problems. Thucydides was in one sense right to look to 'human nature' for the uses of his history. We do instinctively like to copy each other. And of course circumstances may seem similar. But his far-sighted empiricism was already in danger of leaving history to become inevitably repetitive.

Finding out for oneself

We learn some things by genetic inheritance, the instinct to walk, for example, practically instantaneous with many creatures. But others we can only master by trial and error, such as how to ride a bicycle. In speech we learn by copying other people. Seeing and hearing lie at the basis of all human knowledge. We may leave to the philosophers any axiomatic or necessary truth, as implied with logic, mathematics or music. All our knowledge of the actual world as experienced and understood, past as well as present, depends ultimately upon our own or (mostly) someone else's having once found it out. Witness again Thucydides:

> And with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else I heard of them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. Not that even so the truth was easy to discover:

> different eye-witnesses give different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or the other or else from imperfect memories.[3]

This noble principle remains the 'Hippocratic oath' of all students of history. It may be blind of course to its own partiality. Thucydides has already spent the opening 21 sections of his book justifying the fact that he began to write at the beginning of the war 'in the belief that it was going to be a great war and more worth writing about than any of those which had taken place in the past'.[4] Such large provisos apply to any student at all times. We are only studying the other person because they interest us. Like Thucydides, we need to identify the reason for our interest.

The preface to Luke's gospel (1:1–4) embraces the same principles of learning as Thucydides. He has followed the evidence of those who were eye-witnesses, applying to it the term that gives us 'autopsy'. But, like Thucydides, he brings to its interpretation the conviction that events of the very greatest importance are being unfolded. At the end of the gospel (24:45–49) Jesus himself explains their historic meaning.

In the nineteenth century, the most recent great age of history writing, the rival powers of Europe each had their national histories studied in comprehensive, multi-volume works. This is probably why we often focus our sense of history on changes in government or warfare. Thucydides had originally provided the model for that. The twentieth-century catastrophes, however, have made it all seem inadequate as history. There must now be an explanatory vision that can embrace the whole world, and more.

David Christian, from Macquarie University, has attracted international attention and funding for 'Big History'. The human experience is approached in naturalistic terms as part of cosmic history itself. The interpretative structure is that of 'increasing complexity', an economic or ecological perspective. No adequate explanation is attempted for how it is that this has culminated so recently, and why from the West. By starting with the people themselves (rather than our own grand perspectives) we may better be able to sort the matter out for every time.

Ancient tombstones often set up a spirited conversation between the departed and the passer-by. In Syria scores of them salute the latter

in Greek simply with 'Don't worry! Be happy!' Who might have been worried, and what for? A whole philosophy of life is assumed surely. It is the principle of the Epicureans: since the world is entirely random, with everything happening only by chance, you might as well sit back and enjoy things while you can. Many of our contemporaries in Australia live by this rule today: 'No worries', 'She'll be right!' But we all know there are often difficult decisions to be made.

One Latin tombstone announces, 'A(ulus) Junius Faustus lies here, poor little boy, two years old. To my impious mother may the gods below and above return the favour for (what she did to?) me.'[5]

Who is really saying this to us? In my class the eighteen-year-old girls thought it must have been the father. But the middle-aged housewives said, the mother. What partialities are involved here, both for them and for us, in response to the boy's message? Are the likelihoods different then and now? Can we ever know a person's real intentions, even in our closest circles? Do we trust ourselves to admit our own inner responses? Why are we offended when others imply they doubt our motives? Do we never suspect ourselves of hypocrisy?

It makes no difference whether the other person is with us or not. Present or past, we are drawn into a personal engagement with the one we encounter. We remain somehow answerable to them. Over it all hangs our instant reaction in any contact; we may like or dislike the other, care or not care, even before we learn what they have to say to us.

The study of human history of course deals with what actually happened. We know when the boy died, and where. We know they used Latin. But we cannot reduce the encounter to a statistical item or some causative factor without dehumanising other people, reducing them to part of a biological process. Human history needs to be understood from personal experience.

Learning history well ought not to begin with generalities. First find the voice of another. Then work out from there, with explanatory details. In this way a general awareness of human culture in other times and places may be won. It is like learning another language. The formal grammar may indeed be clarifiying. But nothing matches the spoken voice for realistic human contact.

One should not start by superimposing such seemingly essential twentieth-century categories as race, class and gender. That would be

a systematic throwback to the philosophical framework from which biblical empiricism has delivered modern science. Take the example of Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians 3:28:'So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus.'

Paul is rejecting the modern analytical troika altogether. How can this be? He is only in this letter treating the race category, Jews and Gentiles. Why bother here with the other two? Perhaps he is reacting against the stereotyping of Aristotelian political science, already 300 years behind him. By 'union with Christ Jesus' he refers of course to his own personal emancipation from socially predetermined frameworks. He is learning with experimental enthusiasm.

In a remarkable analysis of a selection of Pauline letters Claire Smith isolates 55 different words, within nine different semantic groupings, by which the Pauline communities express the exuberant diversity of experience in learning what their 'union with Christ Jesus' meant in practice. They are 'learning communities', and certainly not formalised ones such as the term 'scholastic' might have implied.[6] This illustrates how a sensitive student may work into the history of any culture from direct contact with actual people encountered in the sources.

Who has the last word?

In daily life we can mistrust even the most intimate encounters: 'I know what you are thinking'; 'I only meant the opposite of what you say'; 'I know you too well'; 'You are just like your father!' The assumption of concealed motives was itself projected into the rational scenario of life by the pinpointing of hypocrisy in the gospels. Jesus echoes 1 Samuel 16:7:'Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.' The art of political journalism would lose much of its interest without this. Even before anything happens, the commentators can tell you the concealed motives that will have to lie behind it. But how must we protect the integrity of those in history who cannot answer back?

Their honour remains at stake. We can tell this when each work of history criticises its predecessors for misjudgement of the matter. Why should that concern us in a post-modern culture where the truth is thought to lie only with the observer anyway? Yet my students are

angry with me for dishonouring Julius Caesar. How can he matter, 2,000 years later?

After the decisive battle of Pharsalus (following the crossing of the Rubicon in 49 BC) Gaius Julius Caesar is reported by Asinius Pollio, the historian, who was present, to have said, 'It was their choice. I, Gaius Caesar, after all my accomplishments, would have been found guilty if I had not sought the help of my army.'[7]

This tendentious claim has become the classic vindication of revolutionaries across the ages, and is akin to much justification of aggressive war. Yet Caesar has been celebrated ever since antiquity as the very exemplar of generous and decisive statesmanship. It has even been declared, 'Caesar was a genius and a well-ordered state should be able to employ its great men fruitfully.'[8]

It was the leading historian of the nineteenth century, Theodor Mommsen, himself a liberal and even a radical politician, who pronounced Caesar a genius. His multi-volume *History of Rome* was awarded the first Nobel Prize for Literature. It culminated with Caesar, only half-way through the millennium of Roman history, as though nothing more could meaningfully be said.

The term 'genius' was a Latin one. It meant something like one's inner spirit, one's particular identity, or in Pauline terms one's spiritual gift (for the good of others). Every family (*gens* in Latin) had its own genius. It is a trap in our understanding of the Romans that we inherit their words, but (as always with any words) the usage shifts with changing circumstances.

It would have been monstrous in Roman terms to suggest that Caesar's genius justified his overriding the laws and conventions of power by armed force, and at the cost of a massive loss of life, as though no one else counted against his personal glory. Indeed, that is why on the Ides of March, 44 BC, his own trusted collaborators assassinated him on the floor of the senate-house in Rome.

In modern terms one might use the word 'genius' for a politician who found the way forward out of entrenched conflicts of interest both at home and internationally by private negotiation behind the scenes, without himself or anyone else feeling compelled to resort to force. That is what we mean by statesmanship. So if we do not judge Caesar to be a genius or a statesman, what are we to make of him?

Caesar himself has left a detailed account of his military career. It has commanded the serious attention of other historians then as now for its cool objectivity (written in the third person) and intelligent grasp of the discipline of warfare. Caesar was admired by his men, and by many of his peers in politics, such as Cicero, who supported his opponents but thought he nevertheless had a reasonable complaint against them. Cicero also admired him as a writer and thinker. So what went wrong?

The odds in the civil war that Caesar risked by crossing the Rubicon were in the long term on the side of his rivals. In the previous generation Sulla had demonstrated that the rich resources of the more civilised East were ample for the reconquest of Rome itself. Caesar was a gambler. His Epicurean associates perhaps allowed him to risk much in a universe ruled by random chance. He perhaps assumed that his opponents would quickly capitulate. But again and again they trapped him in the consequences of the risks he took. Yet in the end his bravado gave him the victory at Pharsalus over their superior forces.

Morally Caesar sought justification in the claim that his conquest of Gaul across the ten-year provincial command there had earned him the right to escape prosecution for any constitutional breaches of his preceding consulship (59 BC). Conviction would dishonour his glory. It was not a matter of life or death. The penalty would have been in effect exile, as had happened earlier with Cicero. But that could be reversed by political control, which in practice might come down to funding. Caesar's critics alleged that he only crossed the Rubicon now that his reserves had already been squandered on indulging the personal loyalty of his troops.

By calling on his army for 'help' (*auxilium*), Caesar appealed to the age-old civil rights of a Roman citizen. Roman law did not provide for the exclusive prosecution of crime by the state, as with us. The victim was expected to seek the patronage of a powerful friend who could finance the prosecution. At the street level also there was no readily available police force to protect you. Instead you must appeal to your neighbours or friendly by-standers for 'help' by main force (just as for us, likely to risk your own prosecution if neighbours are too drastic). But at Rome this was the high principle of 'vindication' (literally justice by the assertion of force).

Caesar's statement at Pharsalus amounts therefore to the claim that his honour was vindicated by his troops, and that the huge loss of life was therefore the fault of those who had sought to discredit him. It implicitly admits his failure at the political level to show himself the greatest man of the hour.

This conclusion is of course insufferable to our two thousand years of Caesar admiration. So a loftier justification is invented. It was the *opponents* who had failed by not honouring him, and thus the state itself (that is the traditional form of it, the 'republic' as we say) had failed, and must be replaced by a 'democratic monarch' as Mommsen claimed Caesar was (echoing the ideals of the revolution of 1848 in which he had himself been dismissed from his chair of law for treason).

Caesar of course had no inkling of the possibilities for constitutional reform which gripped the European states of the nineteenth century. Neither he nor any other had a plan for Rome. Having seized control by force, he retreated by stages through a temporary dictatorship into the lifelong one which led directly to his assassination. Caesar did not care: 'I have lived long enough both for life and for glory', he remarked.

Thus we should not say that Caesar founded the Roman 'empire' like his titular namesakes the Kaiser ('Caesar') of the German Empire and the Tsar ('Caesar') of the Russian one. Traditionally that 'honour' is reserved in our convention to Caesar's adoptive son, Augustus. He for his part did indeed face the evil rumour that he was trying to change the way the Roman republic worked.

After 57 years under Caesar's name and financial heritage, Augustus was obliged to insist that from 27 BC he did indeed stand ahead of everyone in authority, though holding no more power than his colleagues in each magistracy.[9] This manifesto had also made clear that his financial resources now outstripped those of all his peers combined, and that his military command consolidated the whole Mediterranean world in a single security system, for the first (and only) time in its history.[10] The Augustan republic was indeed now a great imperial power, much as the imperial 'republics' that dominate the world of the twenty-first century.

Who then has the last word in history? Not ourselves, of course. The scenario must indeed be meaningful from our own point of view. But we must not allow our version to swamp the understanding of our

informants whose voices are still available to us. How can we learn this two-sided lesson from history?

'Judge not lest you be judged yourself', said Jesus, 'for the same standard will be applied to you' (Matthew 7:1–2). It is the same standard we expect in daily life as well. Our culture has built into it this biblical duality of perspective on what happens. The other's viewpoint must be considered. We guarantee this in the forensic structure of legal disputes, with advocates for opposite sides. In political life we recognise the equal status of lawful opposition to government.

Learning human history well depends on not starting with a single predetermined structure of events. Instead we should focus our sight first on the perspective of any particular participant to whom we have access, our eyewitness. Then we may ask how somebody else at the time might have seen that matter. From there we may reflect on our own understanding from our vantage-point. But the final verdict must be left until the last day.

Endnotes

1. Thucydides, 1.22.4, trans. R Warner.
2. Extracts from Galen in E.A.Judge, *The First Christians in the Roman World*, pp. 723–24.
3. Thucydides 1.22.2–3, trans. R Warner.
4. Thucydides 1.1.1, trans. R Warner.
5. A Degrassi, *Inscriptiones latinae liberae rei publicae*, fasc.2, Florence 1963, no. 968, trans. E A Judge, 'The rhetoric of Inscriptions', in S E Porter (ed.), *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric*, Leiden, 1997, p. 821.
6. C S Smith, *Pauline Communities as 'Scholastic Communities',* Tubingen, 2012.
7. Suetonius, '*Divus Iulius*,' 30.4.
8. R E Smith, *The Failure of the Roman Republic*, Cambridge, 1955, p. 177.
9. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 34.3.
10. E A Judge, *The First Christians in the Roman World*, pp. 182–223.

28 Geography: Understanding global complexity

Stephen Codrington

> The study of geography is about more than just memorising places on a map. It's about understanding the complexity of our world, appreciating the diversity of cultures that exists across continents. And in the end, it's about using all that knowledge to help bridge divides and bring people together.
>
> Former US President Barack Obama

The teaching of Geography varies greatly in different parts of the world. As the quote above suggests, Geography in US schools still tends to take a gazetteer approach in which students memorise (or attempt to memorise) facts and features. The approach taken in Germany and several other countries in Europe is to disperse Geography into the teaching of other subjects. For example, the regional geography of countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States or Australia may be integrated into the modern language classes (English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and so on). Consequently, geographical content is often taught by non-geographers, with the result that geographical skills and concepts tend to be poorly developed. Moreover, the distinctive potential of Geography to link the biophysical and built environments through its content tends to be lost.

In countries with educational approaches that stem from British traditions, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India, and of course the UK itself, Geography is usually more explanatory in nature. This tradition views Geography as a subject that—uniquely—integrates the physical and human elements of the environment. From this distinctive epistemological foundation, Geography attempts to identify, describe and explain the processes that have formed today's environments, and which are currently leading to change.

The tradition of studying Geography Christianly

At its most basic level, Geography focuses on three fundamental questions:

- Where is it?
- Why is it there?
- And so what?

From a Christian perspective, it is the third question that is most significant. Expressed a little more eloquently, this third question can be re-articulated as: 'What are the consequences of the spatial patterns we can observe and explain?'

There is a rich tradition of Christian scholarship in Geography. Although Jesus may not have spoken about spatial interrelationships or analysed regional disparities, he had a great deal to say about relationships and justice, both key elements in answering the third geographical question above.

To establish a foundation for the discussion that follows, four principles are advanced as hopefully being helpful to students and Christian Geography teachers:

- As Christians engaged in the study of our world, we should engage with the scientific method, which means accepting that our current positions are postulates that we seek to improve and enhance.
- If some aspects of scientific understanding are incorrect, then Christians should be able to prove this just like any other scholars.
- To discover the secrets and patterns of our planet is to find

truth. And for a Christian, to find truth is to find God (Psalm 19:1–2). Science and religion can work together harmoniously towards this purpose, provided both are prepared to accept their limitations and their different purviews and purposes.

- As a science, Geography uses inductive reasoning, inferring general laws from particular instances. Unlike the deductive logic used in Mathematics, inductive reasoning can never provide certainty, but only high degrees of probability based on larger and larger volumes of evidence. Consequently, our postulates and understandings must always be open to review based upon new data and evidence.

In recent years, there has been a growth in specialised, often ideologically-driven sub-branches within Geography, especially at the university level and in academic publications. We can refer to these new sub-branches of Geography as neologies (the plural of 'neology' or 'new area of study'). Depending upon one's perspective, neologies might include radical geography, humanistic geography, critical geography, feminist geography, neo-Marxist geography, neo-liberal geography, non-ethnocentric geography, anti-hegemonic geography, anti-technocentric geography, or one of many other variations.

Is Christian Geography just another neology? For the Christian, Christianity is relevant to every aspect of life and the environment. There are facets that would warrant inclusion in a Christian Geography teaching program because they are primarily 'Geography' rather than because they are primarily 'Christian'. Thus, mapping, aerial photograph analysis and even the bifurcation ratios of streams still find their place as essential constituent parts of a Christian Geography program because they are means to the greater end of understanding God's world.

The importance of Geography in a Christian education

For teachers and schools that are concerned to encourage the formation of a Christian worldview among the students, there are two main areas in which Geography has an important role to play:

- First, as stewards of creation, humans have a duty to understand the environment—its processes, its fragility and its

interdependencies. There is a clear biblical command that humans serve as stewards of creation (Genesis 1:26–30, Genesis 2:15), and therefore all Christians have a duty to preserve, protect and restore the environment. Implementing this command demands a thorough knowledge and appreciation of the concept of sustainability, and this is achieved most effectively through the unique linking of the physical and human environments that geography provides.

- Second, Geography provides a framework for understanding the needs, circumstances and challenges of people in other places. This is necessary for Christians to fulfil Christ's Great Commandment, which is to love others (John 13:34–35) and take the Christian message across the whole world (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19). Geography is also a powerful tool for providing the understandings and appreciation needed to fulfil Christ's teachings on social justice (e.g. I John 3:17–18; Matthew 25:35–36).

What is a Christian perspective?

Before discussing this question, it is necessary to clarify what is not a Christian perspective. Although some may disagree, a Christian perspective in Geography does not imply censoring contradictory evidence to promote relatively obscure hypotheses such as young earth creationism. Such an approach would place Christian-oriented Geography alongside neo-Marxist Geography, anti-technocentric Geography, and so on, as just another neology. Such an approach, which simply seeks to justify a predetermined position, would be contrary to the development of the attitude of enquiry that has been the basis of Geography since the beginnings of the subject. To extend the well-known reflection of William Butler Yeats, education lights fires; indoctrination fills buckets.

A Christian perspective in Geography will promote a set of ideas and ideals rather than attempting to justify the practices of those who identify themselves nominally as Christians.

To be a Christian is to attempt to take on the nature of Christ—to become Christ-like (Philippians 2:5–11). A Christian perspective in Geography is one that takes a Christ-like viewpoint as its starting point.

For example, a Christ-like view of the physical environment would be as a once-perfect, harmonious creation of God that has been modified through the intentions and actions, virtuous and evil, of people.

In a Christian worldview, people are valued not for their material possessions and wealth, but for their qualities of faith through actions, humility and mercy towards others (Matthew 5:1–12). In other words, values are a most important component of a Christian perspective in Geography teaching, perhaps even to the extent that content is merely a means to this greater end.

In Christianity, the greatest value (or spiritual gift) is love (I Corinthians 13:1–7). Love is esteemed as a means of valuing others (both students in a classroom and the other people being studied in Geography) and as a means of teaching. Thus, a Christian perspective in Geography is as much concerned with *method* as with *content*. These two aspects will now be examined.

Christian content in Geography

Authentic Christian education calls students to become ethical schizophrenics if they are to survive in contemporary society. The problem arises, of course, from the base nature and direction of contemporary society (or worldliness) rather than with the purer ideals of the Christian faith. Consequently, the answer is not to abandon the Christian perspective but to embrace it fully and use it in order to change the imperfect society.

Once one accepts Christianity as an integral part of everyday life, and the challenges of faith through actions seem to demand that this should be so (James 2:14–26), then it becomes impossible to divorce a Christian perspective from any of the subject matter studied in Geography. Most topics commonly found in Geography syllabi lend themselves easily to a Christian perspective, whether they fall mainly into the realm of physical geography (e.g. weather and climate, landforms, soils, vegetation, ecosystems), human geography (e.g. food and health, urban environments, disparities in wealth and development, globalisation, resource distribution and consumption, population and demographic change) or span the two (e.g. regional analysis, extreme environments, climate change, water use and conflicts, environmental quality and sustainability, and resource consumption).

The Christian believes that all things in the world are gifts from God, which have been given to human beings so that through them they may know the nature of God more easily and return that love more readily. Christian geographers should have a sense of great wonder, awe and joy at the world that God created. To share this with students is a necessary consequence of loving them in the Christian sense. Indeed, if the Christian teacher has really experienced God's love and understood God's creation, he or she cannot help but want to share this with others.

Christian methods in Geography teaching

In Ephesians 6, Paul instructs parents to train and educate their children. With the increased specialisation of contemporary society, Christian parents rely on a supportive school system and the church to assist them in this responsibility. The methods used to teach Geography from a Christian perspective should aim to produce a Christ-like individual by the conclusion of the program. This ideal Christ-like student:

- will have a Christ-like perception of and attitude towards the surrounding world. In other words, as outlined earlier, he or she will be loving, charitable, sensitive, faithful, humble and conciliatory—a man or woman for others;
- will be viewed as a whole person. A person is not just a collection of parts (eyes, nose, ears, body, soul, etc), but an inseparable entity which must be educated as a whole (1 Corinthians 12:14–20). Thus, spiritual matters must not be divorced from the everyday matters they influence;
- will be seen to have tremendous potential to respond to God and to do good for others by the well-intentioned and unselfish use of God-given talents and abilities (James 2:14–26). Every individual has different talents (both in type and quantity), but all abilities have been given by God to serve him (Matthew 25:14–30, I Corinthians 12:4–11);
- will come to understand the world, its environments, its challenges and its people through the lens of authentic Christian wisdom (1 Corinthians 4:18–25); and
- will be valued as a creation of God in his own image, and

therefore worthy of affirmation and love (Genesis 1:27, Genesis 5:1–2, Matthew 22:34–40).

Naturally, we should not expect students to be perfect in thought or deed whether they identify themselves as being Christian or not. Students are subject to original sin to at least the same extent as their Christian teachers! The Christian teacher should recognise his or her spiritual weaknesses (Matthew 5:3, 5–8) and be prepared to share these with students who are searching for the same insights into truth.

The principles outlined above seem to imply that several teaching methods are helpful in achieving the intended outcomes:

- Learning should make students more keenly aware of God's works.
- God's absolute standards of right and wrong should be built into the program as a learning process (perhaps through discussion, role-play, structured debates or moral dilemmas). Needless to say, it should be impossible to condone, explicitly or implicitly, evils such as racism, human exploitation, sexism, discrimination, and so on, within this context.
- Teaching should be simultaneously student-related and God-centred.
- Teaching should foster co-operation rather than competition in order to allow students to experience fellowship and sharing.
- Students should be trained to enjoy and appreciate aesthetic experiences as ways of providing insights to God's creation.
- Topics should be shown to have social relevance in order to encourage students to exercise their commitment by developing responsible and unselfish patterns of action, serving other people by using and developing their talents.
- Students' motivation should be directed towards pleasing God rather than pleasing themselves, because it is this orientation that will determine what the students ultimately become (Proverbs 22:6). Students will then be equipped to change the world rather than simply be changed by it.

Much of the time, of course, the communication of Christian ideals in Geography will be unplanned, arising naturally in the atmosphere of discussion which should be found in the classroom practising a Christian perspective in Geography. I recall an example from a lesson I was teaching on cultural change in Papua New Guinea to a Year 10 class. At the end of the lesson, part of which was spent discussing the traditional belief in tribal societies that all natural phenomena could be explained in terms of appeasing the spirits, one student asked me, 'Isn't the same true with Christianity? If you pray to do well in an exam and you don't, doesn't that mean you didn't pray hard enough?'

The student's question made me realise that I had underestimated the full potential of our class discussion, and so we spent the next lesson contrasting the role of Christian prayer to tribal spiritual appeasement. We concluded that the Christian God is certainly not a god of gaps like tribal spirits, which are often used simply to explain away those phenomena that tribal science does not understand.

In many ways, it is the methodology of the Christian approach to Geography, rather than its content, which gives it distinctiveness. The content framework of a Geography program with a Christian perspective should be broadly similar to that of any secular Geography program (though with different emphases of course), but the teaching methodology will be markedly different. Furthermore, these differences will not be superficial, but they will permeate into every fibre of the course.

Thus, a Christian-focussed Geography teaching program will be a search for truth about the environment created by God, the impact of people upon this environment, and the quality of relationships between the people within it. The methods used will reflect Christ's values of love and service to others, and this methodology should explicitly aim to produce students with mature, wise, defendable Christ-like perceptions and value orientations.

An example of a Christian approach: the teaching of spatial justice

A central element in any Christian approach to teaching is the communication of values. One key value to which Christianity addresses itself is justice, and this will be discussed here as an exemplar.

The very nature of the educative process means that teachers are, of necessity, concerned with values. Teachers who profess faith in Christ rightly see one of their most important tasks as being to lead their students to a loving and intimate relationship with Christ in the first instance, and then to love one's neighbours as an inseparable consequence of that relationship.

Thus, through the biblical view of love for our neighbour (Luke 10:25–37; Matthew 25:31–46), we can conclude that love and justice are inseparable, one not being able to exist without the other. Christian teachers therefore have a responsibility to integrate the teaching of justice within all subject areas, including Geography, because of the subject's unique capacity to address such issues.

One effective means to enhance Christian perspectives in teaching is to include a review of biblical passages where relevant and appropriate to the student demographic of the class. To give one illustrative example—the use of biblical passages in lessons on geographical development—questions such as the following might be useful:

Table 1

Exodus 3:7–8	What is God's attitude to suffering and injustice?
Deuteronomy 26:5–8	Does this agree with your last conclusion? Explain.
Exodus 6:5–7	What does God do about slavery and oppression?
Amos 6:4–8	How does God view the unjust rich?
Isaiah 10:1–4	Who are the oppressors in the passage, and who are the oppressors today?
Jeremiah 7:5	How are Christians expected to act with their wealth and affluence towards the poor?
Luke 4:18–19 and 2 Corinthians 8:9	What was Jesus' mission on earth towards the poor?
Matthew 25:31–46	How should Christians act towards the less privileged, and what are the consequences if they do not?
Proverbs 14:31	If the poor are oppressed, who is insulted?
James 2:1–7	Is it wrong to oppress the poor and treat them badly? Explain why.

Luke 6:20–25	Is this passage saying that it is good to be poor and bad to be rich? If so, why, and if not, why not?
Isaiah 3:13–15	How does this describe the developed and the developing nations in the world today?
Luke 14:12–14	How should we treat those in developing nations? What should be our motive?
Luke 6:33–36	Read this to see if your last answer was correct.
Isaiah 1:16–17	Can inaction ever be considered injustice? Explain.
Isaiah 58:6–8	Is selfishness injustice? Explain.
Luke 10:25–37	Jesus says we are to love our neighbour. Who is our neighbour?
I John 3:17–15 and James 2:14–17	Who are the rich people, and who are their brothers? What are some ways Western Christians should act towards the poor in developing nations?
Deuteronomy 10:17–19	From the above, does God love the poor more than the rich? Explain.
Psalm 140:12–13	Which of the rich will live in God's presence?
2 Corinthians 8:13–15	What is the message here for us, in industrialised economies?
Luke 6:20–21	What is the future for Christians in developing nations?
Luke 12:22–31	If we give more assistance to those in developing nations, will we go short? Explain.
2 Corinthians 9:8–11	If this is so, why don't we do more to help those in developing nations?
Matthew 6:24	To what extent is this significant in answering the previous question? Express this verse in your own words.
Romans 12:2	Summing up, what should we do about underdevelopment?

Invariably, when people are asked to recall their favourite teachers from their school days, they are described in terms of 'loving', 'fair' or 'cared about me', while disliked teachers are remembered in words describing the opposite characteristics. In other words, the lasting impression that many students have of their teachers relates to teachers'

sense of justice. This highlights the 'hidden curriculum' whereby teachers not only teach the subject at hand with their words, but they teach values through their conscious and unconscious attitudes and actions. Teachers cannot teach justice effectively if they do not exhibit justice themselves, for it is their attitudes and actions that will continue to resonate with the student after the content is long forgotten.

This places high expectations upon the teacher. The teacher who wishes to communicate justice, and who wants this teaching to be effective, must prepare lessons adequately, show concern for others, keep up-to-date, and practice justice and fairness in all disciplinary matters.

In role modelling justice to students, it is important that Christian teachers spend time in the prayer that is necessary to maintain and strengthen their own relationships with God. It is far too easy for the busy Christian teacher to be devoting so much time doing things *for* God that there is no time left to be *with* God. This is despite the fact that time with God (prayer) provides the very source, foundation and strength for the Christian service that takes so much time in the first place—and provides the grounding for the teacher's own values perspectives.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, many school environments exist in 'Christian' countries such as Australia where everything presented in this chapter will be irrelevant. This may be because the school authorities have adopted the American ethos of complete separation of religion and state, a situation that has even led to the banning of prayer in US schools. Alternatively, teachers may have values other than Christianity that they would prefer to present. The reality is that teachers communicate values to students whether they desire to do so or not. Even trying to convey a 'neutral' values position will make its own values statement—namely the indefensible proposition that a values vacuum can actually exist, or the weaker, naïve position that something can be described, analysed or understood without any reference to a values framework.

Christ commanded his followers to 'Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples' (John 13:34–35).

Christian teachers cannot love their students in the biblical sense without doing their utmost to strengthen students' faith through experience. If Christian teachers have experienced the joy of a Christian perspective and personal relationship with Christ, how can they not seek every opportunity to share this joy?

Christians are encouraged to help one another rather than judge one another (see Matthew 7:1–5). Consequently, faith developed through the teaching of a Christian perspective in Geography can be self-evaluated through the actions it generates (James 2:14, 26). Thus, a Christian approach to Geography will be action-oriented, with actions during and subsequent to teaching becoming the proof or otherwise of the success of learning. At the conclusion of the Good Samaritan parable, Jesus said, 'In your opinion, which of these three acted like a neighbour towards the man attacked by the robbers?' The teacher of the law answered 'The one who was kind to him.' Jesus replied, 'You go, then, and do likewise.' (Luke 10:36–37).

Further reading

Beers, JM, Hittinger, R, Lamb, M, Neuhaus, RJ, Royal, R & Sirico, RA (2015) *The Catholic Church and Stewardship of Creation*, Grand Rapids: Action Institute. [Despite its title, this booklet examines a broad range of geographical, environmental and Christian perspectives as they relate to the issue of stewardship over creation].

Hartig, O (2015) 'Geography and the Church' in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York: Robert Appleton. [This article, which has been updated from an original published in 1909, traces the historical evolution of Geography as a separate discipline within the context of Christian traditions, and especially the Catholic tradition (understandably as much of the article covers pre-reformational Christianity)].

Hyneman, J (2013) *Why are we stewards of creation?*, New York: World Vision International. [This paper examines environmental stewardship, which it distinguishes from environmental dominion, from an evangelical Christian perspective].

Lockton, H (1990) *A Christian Worldview of the Geographer's World*, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. [This paper, which was prepared for the Faith and Learning Seminar at Avondale College in January 1990 relates the various traditions of geography very well to the Christian worldview, and examines the implications of these for classroom teaching].

Sider, RJ (1977) *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, London: Hodder & Stoughton. [Despite its age, this book presents a clear analysis of the challenges Christian face reconciling Christ's teachings to the realities of living in a world with extensive social and spatial injustices].

29 The languages classroom

Joanne Fenton, Melissa Gould-Drakeley and Andrew Kokic

> Students who become strangers in a foreign land are called to be a blessing to the locals by speaking in their tongue ... Similarly, students also are called to become good hosts to the foreigner or alien in their own land ... Both callings ... make up the very heart of foreign language education.
>
> David Smith & Barbara Carvill

I am Jo, one of the three writers of this article. I have a confession to make ... the confession of an unloving neighbour. Several years ago, a new family moved into my apartment block. It didn't take long for the smell of *kretek* (clove) cigarettes and the muted strains of *Bahasa Indonesia* to reveal my neighbours' Indonesian identity. As an Indonesian-language teacher, Indonesians' hospitality was well-known to me. I was instantly aware that a culturally appropriate way to welcome my new neighbours would be to pay them a visit. Furthermore, developing a relationship with them would also be a wonderful means of improving my Indonesian conversational skills.

However, I was simultaneously struck with an irrational sense of panic as fear of my perceived language inadequacies took over. As someone who will never be mistaken for a native speaker, I worried that my neighbours would find my faltering efforts ridiculous, particularly when they discovered I taught their language. Even worse, what if my language and cultural faux pas caused offence and a barrier that

could not be easily repaired? 'I have to live next door to these people,' I rationalised. So for nearly a year, on the infrequent occasions that we bumped into each other in the stairwell, I greeted my neighbours politely in English, remaining secretive about my Indonesian skills.

Without warning, a removal van arrived one morning. My neighbours were moving! To my surprise I felt a sense of loss, like an opportunity had been missed. In my parting words to the husband I finally divulged my secret skills. His response caught me completely off guard as he explained that his family was returning to Indonesia due to his wife's terrible loneliness. She had found it difficult to make friends since she spoke little English, instead spending hours upon hours with only her small child for company.

The impact of the husband's revelation had an immediate and profound impact upon me. My heart was cut to the quick and I was deeply ashamed as I realised the tragedy of my failure to love my neighbours. In that single moment the severe mercy of God shattered my long-held view of language learning. Rather than the mere acquisition of skills, fluency and pragmatics, the true end of language learning is about people and relationships. I was being called to obey the two greatest commandments of Jesus in my teaching: loving God and loving my neighbour (Matthew 22:37–39, Luke 10:27). From this point on, the focus of my students' learning would need to make the needs of others its highest priority.

The philosophical Babel

Why had my approach to language learning been in such a state of confusion for so long? How had it taken me decades, as both a language learner and teacher, to become aware of the foundational truth that the goal of language-learning needs to be loving others? In our shared experience there are several contributing factors.

The most common problem is that there is a complete disconnect between our faith and syllabus knowledge, programs and lesson outlines. Many Christian language teachers simply don't engage with the intersection of languages and the greater gospel meta-narrative. For many years we ourselves taught without ever considering how our practice needs to be shaped and informed by the Bible. We considered

how the display of our Christian character could model Christ to our students, but our thinking ran no deeper than this. Essentially, despite being Christians, we operated out of the same paradigm as non-Christian language teachers.

In such a void, what invariably occurred was adoption of the prevailing self-referenced view of languages teaching. Similarly, we suspect that many of our Christian colleagues have merely followed syllabi and language textbooks without considering their various inherent agendas, which commonly give little attention to relationships.

Even when we began to grapple with what it might look like to teach languages 'Christianly' we didn't know how best to proceed. We began our journey with a 'Bible concordance' approach, 'baptising' topic areas and lessons with somewhat relevant Bible verses. This approach has great potential to do more harm than good through loss of connection with context, greater purpose and pedagogical narrative. It is superficial at best and, at worst, contrived and doctrinaire. Since such an approach is completely ad-hoc and disconnected, it fails to promote an environment where students can make meaningful connections between course content and the application of their faith in real-world contexts. Consequently, from a Christian perspective, despite its sincere and well-intentioned approach, the outcome is unfruitful and unsatisfying for both teachers and students.

Nailing the framework

Eventually we realised that this approach was the equivalent of trying to renovate a structurally unsound house. In essence we had been choosing the prettiest wallpaper we could find to cover the dry rot that beset the building.

Realising that relationships are the heart of language learning was a catalyst to change. We needed to go back to the beginning to develop an overarching framework strong enough to underpin our program and reshape our ideas, content, teaching practice and the enduring understandings we envisaged for our students. It is vital that teachers invest time at the macro level establishing a clear framework so that students will be able to make connections at the micro level.

At Macarthur Anglican School we chose Jesus' two greatest commands in Mark 12:29–31 to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength' and to 'love your neighbour as yourself' as the bedrock for our programs. These verses remind us that love is an action which finds its full expression in relationships, firstly with God and then our neighbour, with the latter an outworking of the former. These texts have brought a level of cohesion to our Kindergarten to Year 12 teaching program that previously did not exist.

Taking a Christian view of relationships as the foundation of our teaching speaks to the intellectual, social, emotional, moral and spiritual aspects of our students' lives. In a youth culture where relationships are central, such a framework has the ability to engage our students' hearts and minds. It promotes deeper engagement with their personal world than is the case in a purely content or skills driven approach.

Sharpening the design

In recent years, there have been a number of influences that have significantly sharpened and inspired our thinking. Smith and Carvill's work, *The Gift of the Stranger (2000),* has been highly influential and, in our opinion, needs to be mandatory reading for all Christian language teachers and members of the school executive. At the heart of Smith and Carvill's approach is the view that the Christian language-learner has a two-fold calling: to be a blessing *as* a 'stranger' and to be a blessing *to* the 'stranger':

> Students who become strangers in a foreign land are called to be a blessing to the locals by speaking in their tongue, by listening to their stories and sharing their own, by asking good questions, by comparing and contrasting, by learning from them. ... Similarly, students also are called to become good hosts to the foreigner or alien in their own land, to receive the stranger graciously, and to practice a kind of hospitality which is a blessing to both the guest and the host. Both callings, we propose, make up the very heart of foreign language education.[1]

The other particularly helpful stimulus to our thinking process has been the Intercultural Language Learning (IcLL) pedagogy, which is

embedded in the Australian curriculum. Although not a Christian methodology it has a number of elements that have influenced our teaching. According to Liddicoat et. al., the key principles of this approach are engagement, interaction and reflection. It includes both intracultural (self) and intercultural understanding. Most importantly, this methodology emphasises the fact that language and culture are intrinsically linked.[2] In other words, if we are to use language authentically, we must understand the culture of the people whose language we speak. IcLL accentuates the significant role that culture plays in shaping our beliefs as well as our presuppositions about life and relationships. While still falling far short of the biblical view of relationships, it is important from a linguistic point of view to view language as a product of social contexts, rather than as something that can be studied with no reference to people and their culture.

One of the strengths of IcLL is that it is reflection-based which benefits all of our students. Socrates famously said, 'The unexamined life is not worth living' and IcLL enables teachers to intentionally create space for students to reflect on matters of significance. As students learn to question, test their identity and examine their actions, there is scope for vigorous discussion and multiple viewpoints to be heard. As students consider the interplay between language, culture and identity, they can reach new understandings through their reflection.

One of the biggest drawbacks of the IcLL view of culture that we have encountered is that it does not take into account the fact there is an ultimate biblical truth which can be known and which needs to control every aspect of our lives. Furthermore, the premise of IcLL is that all cultures are merely different, with no consideration given to the impact of sin. All cultures, including our own, have elements that can and should be critiqued in light of the gospel.

Teachers have a valuable role to play as students begin to question the impact of culture in their lives. We have a unique opportunity to teach students skills that will help them to discern the difference between biblical truth and the cultural practices that influence their lives so that they can learn what it means to be 'in the world', but not 'of the world' (Romans 12:1–2). We can encourage students to live in a countercultural way, as aliens and strangers in the world while awaiting Jesus' return (1 Peter 2:11–12). We believe that one of the major

contributions of languages teaching is that it can enable students to bridge the tension of appreciating and participating in the cultures of the world without conforming to their ungodly elements.

As we have examined our teaching and learning framework, another element of IcLL that has been influential is the concept of the 'third place'. When interacting with people of another language and culture, students will encounter points of discord and discomfort between their own worldview and that of the alternative culture. According to Lo Bianco et al the 'third place' is a place of compromise, where different points of view are recognised and mediated: 'An intercultural interaction is neither a question of maintaining one's own cultural frame nor of assimilating to one's interactant's cultural frame. It is rather a question of finding an intermediary place between these two positions—of adopting a third place.'[3]

However, from a Christian perspective there are some matters where compromise is not possible. Just as for a Muslim there is no 'third place' around issues concerning *haram* (forbidden) items such as pork and alcohol, Christians too will find areas where we cannot bend to appease cultural differences. Consequently, something that we are introducing in our Language classrooms is the concept of a 'fourth', transitional place. We know in our sinfulness that when we are confronted with difficult intercultural issues we often reach hasty or simplistic conclusions which are not necessarily biblical. By introducing a 'fourth' place we can teach students to suspend judgement and leave space to further examine complex matters in light of biblical truth. In this way, we can model the need for deep thought as we seek to love God and our neighbour in truth.

Ways of building on the foundation

With our Christian foundation in place, we have been able to be far more intentional about the qualities and understandings we want to develop in our students. We have begun re-shaping each unit of work from a Christian relational paradigm, selecting concepts, skills and content that enable our students to live lives of faith in action. It is our aim to establish an Indonesian Kindergarten to Year 12 overview

which explicitly shows the sequence of what it looks like to be a loving neighbour.

Most of the examples below taken from our programs can be adapted to any language. However, our programs also contain many examples which have intentionally been drawn from elements specific to the Indonesian language and culture because they will promote reflection on what it means to love others. We suggest teachers be intentional in seeking the unique points of interest within their own language that will achieve this goal.

First example: examining our identity

One of the first activities our Year 7 students complete is viewing a video clip we created emphasising the many influences on identity, including ethnicity, gender, family and socio-economic status. The clip concludes with a reflection on Colossians 2:6–7 and the idea that a Christian's whole identity is to be found in Christ. We believe that it is important for our students to examine who they are before they can deeply reflect on their interactions with others. Without this explicit focus on understanding self, students may not fully understand their reactions to other people and the multiple worldviews held in society. This examination of identity culminates in Year 12 with the understanding that their words, actions and ethics need to align with their personal worldview.

Second example: meeting Indonesians

This might be stating the obvious, but it is impossible to effectively teach our students about relationships in the languages classroom without providing opportunities for students to interact with native speakers. This idea is clearly articulated in Carvill and Smith's work (2000). When we (Melissa and Jo) learnt Indonesian at high school we did not meet a single Indonesian, only seeing Indonesian people, language and culture through our Australian teachers' eyes. How sad it would be if our students' experience mirrored our own! When we look to the example of the Good Samaritan we see that he was intentional, going out of his way and crossing the road to show love to his neighbour (Luke 10:25–37). Despite the challenges and constraints we may face in creating opportunities for our students to interact with

native speakers, we, like the Good Samaritan, benefit considerably by being proactive and intentional in our efforts.

The impact of such relationships can be profound and long-lasting. One of our most memorable teaching moments occurred when our Year 12 students farewelled Irfa, a native speaker who had worked alongside them for two years. Since she was held in such high esteem, we encouraged our students to express their gratitude in a personal way that communicated effort and love. Each student delivered their own speech in Indonesian expressing how Irfa had helped them to learn. As Irfa listened, she was overwhelmed to the point of tears. As she then spoke to us about how welcomed she felt as a Muslim in our school, it became an emotional and unforgettable memory for us all.

Third example: developing meaningful relationships

Through establishing and maintaining relationships with people from Indonesia we have been able to teach our students to think about how their conversation can show care and concern for others. It took us a long time to realise that even conversation has traditionally been taught in a self-referenced manner. No doubt all of us have felt the annoyance of having a conversation with someone who merely talks about themselves, never asking a question in return. Yet, in the vast majority of Australian classrooms, this is how conversation is taught. Typically, students learn how to *answer* questions with little thought given to true interaction. It is critical we teach students to *ask questions* and *listen actively to others* so as not to promote a 'selfie' culture of conversation.

To rectify this fault, we have designed a unit of work focusing on conversational intelligence. Students learn phrases enabling them to ask questions of their own, showing their interest in the other person by commenting on what has been said. They also learn to maintain and repair conversations in order to overcome the inevitable challenges that arise. We want our students to see themselves as equal participants in a conversation rather than to put themselves at the centre of it.

Fourth example: transacting abroad

In many textbooks, shopping is dealt with by teaching students expressions and vocabulary for buying and selling. The focus is on the transaction with the goal being fulfilment of the consumer's desire. Yet shopping,

particularly in an Indonesian culture context, is a social practice and involves people.

In Indonesia, one of the most common ways to shop is bargaining. Generally, people either love the process of bargaining, thriving on the challenge of beating the seller down to the lowest possible price, or they avoid it at all costs, happily paying a higher price for the convenience of shopping in the air-conditioned comfort of the malls. Within our new framework, we have re-structured a unit of work on bargaining to take into account the relational dimensions of the exchange, rather than focusing solely on the transaction. When bargaining, buyers and sellers establish relationships that are important to both parties. Students are encouraged to take time to engage in small talk and share a joke with sellers as a form of socialising and a means of showing respect. This will, however, make the transaction more time-consuming and therefore less convenient. We want our students to consider the personal cost entailed in being relational.

Fifth example: global interconnectedness

The starting point in a Year 10 environmental-themed unit is the idea that Christians are stewards of God's creation.

The content has been shaped by the relational frame to highlight the importance of environmental interrelationships with our neighbour through the study of orangutan endangerment. One of the biggest contributing factors to the near-extinction of the orangutan is palm-oil plantations. This issue can be viewed as Indonesia's problem or alternatively as a problem of Western consumerism, which drives the economic rationalism behind the destruction of the natural habitat. We want our students to see that their individual actions have an impact on others. If they shift blame and do not take personal responsibility for their choices, it will have a snowball effect on future generations, including those of their children and grandchildren.

Conclusion

We do not want in any way to suggest that a relational framework we have outlined is the 'correct' or even the only approach that Christian language teachers can use. Smith and Carvill's hospitality model demonstrates an alternative and richer frame. Our approach is simple,

practical and lends itself easily to reshaping ideas and practice. We share it and our experiences merely in the hope that they will encourage other languages teachers to take seriously God's call to hold out the word of life to our students and train them in wisdom. We hope that teachers will see that it is not impossible or too hard to take small steps in faith, trusting in God's equipping for the task and his power to achieve his purposes.

How can we assess the impact of the changes we have made in our program? It is important to recognise that we have not radically modified our language content. Instead, we have changed the focus of our activities to reshape our students' values and attitudes. While values and attitudes cannot be assessed formally, they are still part of the curriculum and are often reported on.

Moreover, in the Australian Languages curriculum both the Communication and Understanding strands allow for intercultural reflection. Activities such as classroom discussion and reflective writing can draw out these attributes, and teachers can help make biblical qualities explicit through assessment as learning tasks. Ultimately, the value of the changes can be seen in the character and attitudes of the learners leaving our classrooms.

We have had the joy of seeing some of our students make meaningful and significant connections between our subject content and their personal relationship with God, in a way that would not have occurred prior to restructuring our model. We would like one of our students to have the final say:

> For me, the [reflective journal] task was very challenging, as I have been brought up in a very Australian family where religion hasn't played a large role in my upbringing. Learning about Islamic society and culture and comparing it to my own challenged all of my beliefs. It forced me to ask questions and really test myself. Through learning Indonesian, I was actually able to strengthen my Christian beliefs. [It] also helped me to develop as a person and to understand who I am, what I believe, and why.

Reflection questions

- What sort of paradigm do you currently operate out of?
- Is this framework clearly visible to students?
- What are the natural intersections between faith and your language?
- What examples of love in action are in your programs? Where is there opportunity for development?
- What might a scope and sequence of Christian relational understandings look like based on your programs?
- Who can you network with? What other resources can you access to refine your thinking?

Endnotes

1 David L Smith & Barbara Carvill, *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality and Foreign Language Learning*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, p.58.

2 Liddicoat, AJ, Papademetre, L, Scarino, A, Kohler, M (2003) *Report on Intercultural Language Learning DEST*, Canberra.

3 Lo Bianco, Joseph, Ed.; Liddicoat, Anthony J, Ed.; Crozet, Chantal, Ed. (1999) *Striving for the Third Place: Intercultural Competence through Language Education.* Australian National Languages and Literacy Inst., Canberra.

30 Visual arts as an expression of humanity

Ann Gribble

> Who but God would then be imaginative, generous, and selfless enough to make a whole race of beings in his own image, granting them creativity, the gift of imagining and making things, allowing them to use the very stuff of His own handiwork....?
>
> Harold Best

There is a vast range of creative endeavour. I am going to confine myself to looking at the visual arts as an area that enables humankind to demonstrate, document and critique its humanity.

First, some comments about God and creativity. As a part of being made in God's image, we share in God's creative work. Just as his spirit hovered over the deep, inspiring and directing creation in Genesis 1:2, God's spirit also inspired the craftsman/teacher Bezalel[1] with 'skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts to make artistic designs ... and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship'.[2] As part of being human, we become 'sub-creators'[3] with God. Like God (in his image) we are also moved to create. Best says: 'Creativity is first of all a word about being human ... *imago dei* was graciously bequested to each of us'.[4]

To some the arts, particularly the visual arts, are dangerous. The fourth commandment—'You shall not make for yourself a carved image'—was the basis of the eighth-century Byzantine iconoclastic controversy and the destruction of religious artwork in the Reformation. Like any

work of humankind, the arts can be and are misused, but 'If we believe that all of life is to be brought under the lordship of Christ, we must learn to develop a Christian discernment in our use of contemporary media, for one way or another it will influence us.'[5]

Arts teachers have the opportunity to engage students in programs that reflect an understanding of how knowing, being and doing, individually and in community, can result in imaginative and creative processes and invention which are transformative for both artist and audience. The collaborative aspects of the performance arts of Dance, Music, Drama and Film have a particularly unique power to illustrate the notion of learning in community.

Some of the ways that visual arts can do this are as an expression of belief, as a reflection of the world around us, as social comment and/or as a communication. This list is by no means definitive or mutually exclusive. All of the examples used below have been used in the classroom within the context of specific programs.

Art as an expression of belief

The oldest artworks we have found express belief. These come from prehistoric times, perhaps as early as 30,000 BC. They were probably a result of ceremony and ritual that was undertaken to bring about that which it was representing; for example, the return of animals to a particular place or the continued fertility of women—both things necessary to the survival of the individual and the group.[6] The earliest civilisations all demonstrate wide varieties of extremely competent arts. Almost all Ancient Egyptian art was hieratic, and supported the belief in the pharaoh as god-king and the belief in the afterlife. Artists and craftsman displayed excellence in sculpture (both freestanding and relief), architecture, painting, jewellery making, goldsmithing, spinning and weaving, and illustration.[7]

Christian themes dominated Western art from the time of Constantine to the Renaissance. During the Middle Ages, art (mainly in the form of church architecture and sculpture) was essentially didactic. Ordinary people were illiterate and the Mass was conducted in Latin.[8] The church building itself with its soaring columns, stained glass windows and sculptural decoration, where harmony and light

become 'mystic revelations of the Spirit of God', illustrated the teachings of scripture in much the same way as illuminated manuscripts.[9] For example, the West Tympanum at the Cathedral St Lazare, Autun (1130–1135), shows the last judgement. On Christ's right, the saved are taken up to heaven by angels, and on the left, the damned are tormented by demons and devils. This image would have had considerable impact on those entering the church, as they looked up to the image of Christ sitting in judgement.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries in China, landscape painters of the Sung Dynasty were depicting their understanding of the universe as an ordered, balanced creation. This reflected the philosophy of Daoism or 'the Way'. The viewer was invited to participate in the experience by journeying through the landscape, following the path or the stream, perhaps finishing his journey at a small monastery nestled in the mountains.

In *Gate III,* (1970), the New Zealand artist Colin MacCahon painted the words 'I AM' in letters that are over a metre high. His reference is to the words of God in the burning bush to Moses. Moses asks God what is his name, and God's reply is 'I am who I am'.[10] McCahon was reacting to the threat of nuclear war and destruction by seeing these words as a gateway, a way through to the promised land. The painting reflects McCahon's ongoing struggle with conceptualising the nature of salvation. He uses black and white text and abstract expressionist gestural brushstrokes to create a picture space that communicates his troubled mind and asks the viewer to wrestle with spiritual concerns.[11]

All these works demonstrate a range of beliefs. The artworks show how (for a variety of reasons) humankind has been moved to express belief in a visual way, from the systematic schemes of Egyptian society to the individual struggles of Colin McCahon. In gaining both historical and personal insight into the beliefs of others, we become more human as we seek to understand the 'other'. This calls for us to use our moral imagination as we look and comprehend the artwork as its audience. Having understood another's point of view, students can begin to contemplate, articulate and visualise their own beliefs, which they will, in turn, present in a visual form for the inspection of their audience.

Art as a reflection of the world around us

The earliest representations in Western art are found in Egypt, Sumer and Mesopotamia. The painted frescoes on tomb walls in Egypt show the life and work of the deceased and the people around that person. The works are often made to be read along the walls and represent the lifestyle of the wealthy, who could afford to have tombs that were lavishly decorated. The very beautiful *Geese of Maidum* from about 2750 BC demonstrates the artist's observation and skill. The geese are gracefully and naturalistically rendered although this is less important than the decorative patterning, and show a real joy in the beauty of the birds.[12]

In *The very rich hours of the Duc du Berry* (1412–1416), painted by the Limbourg brothers in Flanders, we see the recording of the activities of the year, month by month. This beautifully illustrated book, a wonderful example of an International Gothic illuminated manuscript, incorporates prayer and martyr calendars with the astrological calendar. The bright, jewel-like colours and activities of the seasons show a joy in life and living; both peasants and courtiers show delight in the season's activities. Likewise, woodcuts of the Japanese printmakers Hiroshige and Hokusai reflect the appeal of landscape, city life and activities of Japan in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

British land artist Andy Goldsworthy works using only site-specific natural materials. He creates works which are often transitory in nature: sand or rock sculptures that will wash away with the tide, painstakingly sorted leaf designs that will blow away when they dry, 'rain shadows'[13] that will disappear as soon as the rock dries out or gets wetter. Goldsworthy photographically records his works. They are often fragile, unbelievably beautiful, time-consuming and back-breakingly difficult to make. Goldsworthy's works communicate his closeness to the earth and his interest in environmental issues: 'Working with nature means working on nature's terms. I cannot stop the rain falling or a stream running ... Movement, change, light, growth, decay are the lifeblood of nature, the energies that I try to tap through my work.'[14]

George Gittoes is Australia's best-known war artist. He has documented conflict and suffering throughout the world from Somalia to South America. He uses film, photography, drawing, painting and mixed media. In his painting *Kibeho (Rwanda)* 1995, we are confronted with

the image of a soldier holding a child's decapitated head and another child with its hands cut off (a symbol of powerlessness). Here is an interview George Gittoes (GG) had with George Negus (GN):

GG: Well, I think the art world in many ways is asleep. And a lot of art to me ... like, art itself has committed suicide in that it's just become this strange kind of ...

GN: Art for art's sake?

GG: Yeah, art for art's sake. And I can't see how art is much different to the great writers like Dickens and Tolstoy. Anyone who loved humanity—that's who I can relate to. It doesn't matter what medium they worked in. And I think that's our job. It's to understand what it is to be human. No, it's not about what you can live with. Quite often it's what you can't live with. It's what you remind people about that is hard to live with and that's what my work does, I think.

GN: You're putting it in our minds, as distinct from our living rooms.

GG: Exactly.[15]

The point is obvious. As humans we can look at ourselves and our world and observe both the wonder and joy of life, and of God's creation and its hopelessly fallen nature. In the classroom, students see how artworks are a mirror that might show us just one tiny aspect of ourselves or our world and help them in their search for meaning. In studying such works, students are enabled to look for topics they are passionate about, and find ways to communicate this to an audience.

Art as social comment

Picasso's painting *Guernica,* 1937 was prompted by the bombing of the town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil war. In this work, Picasso fused many images that he has used before, for example the horse, the bull and the weeping woman. In this painting, the images have become strong symbols of human suffering. The black and white painting was and is a powerful invective against war, and is, according to Robert Hughes, 'the last great history painting ... that took its subject from politics with the intention of changing the way large numbers of people

thought and felt about power'.[16] A copy of *Guernica* hangs in the offices of the United Nations in New York. When the delegates arrived to vote on the invasion of Iraq, the painting had a curtain hung over it so that it couldn't be seen.[17] This acknowledgement of the possible influence of the image demonstrates that the artwork can be an instrument for transformation. In many respects, *Guernica* becomes a voice that has the power to 'shatter settled reality and evoke new possibility in the listening assembly'.[18]

Such prophetic possibilities are seen more and more in the art of the streets. Barbara Kruger does enormous billboard posters that attack consumerism and sexism using such phrases as *I shop therefore I am; Buy me, I'll change your life; We have orders not to move; Your body is a battleground*. Graffiti artists like Jean-Michel Basquiat connected with the young[19] during the 1970s and 80s, epitomising the angry, rebellious black youth of the street. His vital images of life, death and alienation emphasise postmodernism's distrust of authority and tradition. Such artworks have the ability to cut across the stories that are being perpetuated by power and reveal the 'myth of the imperium'. In the classroom, students discuss how artists are commenting on society and begin conversations that explore how they can both understand others' works and communicate their own ideas. Such artworks have the ability to cut across the stories that are being perpetuated by power and reveal the 'myth of the imperium.'[20]

Art as communication

Most visual art assumes an audience, and is therefore trying to communicate a message. The earliest Christian art of the catacombs under Ancient Rome was used almost exclusively to educate. The artworks are done in the Roman style, but used themes that communicated a Christian message; for example, *Christ as the Good Shepherd* from the early third century.[21]

The work of Frida Kahlo speaks so strongly to people that it has attracted a cult following. Involved in a car accident when only fifteen, she began to paint as an antidote to boredom.[22] She painted about her pain and ongoing struggle to regain health, and this can be seen in *The broken column* of 1944. Here she paints her body torn apart revealing

her spine as a classical Greek column, shattered. Pins and nails pierce her whole body, which is held together by a white surgical brace. The meaning in her work is very accessible and evokes enormous sympathy and understanding. Kahlo is uncompromising in her portrayal of her appearance and suffering.[23]

Gordon Bennett is an Aboriginal artist who did not discover his aboriginality until he was in his early twenties. *The outsider*, painted in 1988, is a strong image of powerlessness and loss of identity. Painted in the style of van Gogh with thickly applied paint and heavy brushstrokes, the work in fact appropriates two van Gogh paintings—*The starry night* and the *Artist's bedroom at Arles*. Bennett inserts an Aboriginal figure into the painting whose headless body sprays blood forming both the swirling patterns of van Gogh's night sky and Aboriginal dot patterns. The figure reaches for two white classical marble heads (to replace its own?), but cannot pick anything up because its hands are transparent and ineffective. The headless body represents a loss of identity, and the transparent hands, reaching for the white marble heads of white Western culture, are powerless to pick anything up. Like van Gogh, Bennett sees himself as another alien outsider, unsure of where he belongs. However, this is more than just a personal statement. 1988, the year the work was painted, was the year of the Bicentennial. Bennett is also expressing the alienation of Aboriginal people in their own land.

Thomas Smith, critiquing Chad Myers, writes:

> Myers subscribes to the anthropological axiom that human beings do not apprehend social reality directly, but always through the 'cognitive filters' of cultural meaning-systems, especially our 'natural capacity to use (significant symbols), primarily language'.[24]

While contemporary visual art often uses language, most artworks rely on non-verbal communication to convey meaning. Meaning in visual art can be read from signs and symbols, called 'visual literacy'.[25] Artworks such as *The broken column* and *The outsider* have such accessible imagery that they are able to communicate meaning in a powerful and transforming way.[26]

Student artmaking

Artworks contribute to the documentation of ourselves personally and collectively, past and present. As students look at the world and are moved by the things that affect themselves and others, they can find ways of communicating their ideas through the visual arts. As artists, students can bring together artistic elements and build on accumulated skills, knowledge and visual literacy to imagine and create a body of work that articulates and communicates their own ideas, opinions, perspectives, world views. This gives them a real and powerful voice, and can be transformative both for themselves and others. There are not many other curriculum contexts where students have the opportunity to determine their own learning direction and content, but this is the case in the arts, particularly in the senior years.

Assessing the value of the visual arts

The imaginative and creative process has much wider implications. Thomas Groome sees that by creative imagining as a social process 'we move to interdependence as selves and as societies with a sense of responsibility to "the other" whose life is impinged on by our own social praxis and by the praxis of society. It prompts us to act together for the life of the world and gives hope that our solidarity can be humanizing for all. As such, creative social imagining has an emancipatory interest.'[27] Groome sees that our creative imagining of how another person exists can lead us to greater interdependence. This is where the visual arts can play an important role as they expose the 'other' for audience scrutiny. As the audience finds meaning, a link of understanding is made—humanness in solidarity is found and this, says Groome, has the power to enable us to act together for good.

John Wall says that 'moral practice requires a fundamental capability for creative transformation, imagination and social renewal'.[28] He argues that as Christians in the image of God, we are called to continually recreate our fallen world, not by applying fundamentalist principles, pharisaical sets of rules, or looking only to tradition. We are called to apply our faith creatively to continually recreate (in the image of our Creator) our 'complex, plural and fallen social world'. Wall explains how we can do this:

> Just as a painter draws together a diversity of colours, impressions, and influences to create a work of art ... so also, in the intersubjective realm, moral selves should on some level inhabit difference and conflict in such a way as to create ever more profoundly meaningful and reconciled life in common.[29]

Our God-given human creativity can use the visual arts as a part of our search for meaning in the world. This transformative activity can also model how we could use this *same* creativity to create and recreate our culture and society, individually and collectively, endeavouring to 'act together for the life of the world', to create an 'ever more profoundly meaningful and reconciled life in common'. As we engage in this, as well as contributing to it, the visual arts can help us to critique and evaluate the creative process—'imagination, transformation and renewal'.

I think that this process is passionately expressed by Middleton and Walsh. They explain how 'we need to hear each other and the whole creation that we might join together in fulfilling the story of redemption'.[30] To do this we must apply discernment that 'dismantles the idolatries of past and present and points forward to a new path of faithful improvisation'.[31] Having made that discernment, we must, in community, allow the Spirit of God to capture our imaginations[32] to liberate ('emancipate' in Groome's terminology) us 'from the constrictions of the dominant culture. It is only when we can imagine the world to be different from the way it is that we can be empowered to embody this alternative reality which is God's kingdom and resist this present nightmare of brokenness and confusion.'[33]

If the arts can shed some light on our historical journey, help to explain our confused times or illuminate an alternative and better reality to explore, then it has helped us in our search for meaning, and thereby has made us more human. The arts can also help us to exercise imaginative and creative processes that, when unleashed, can empower us to act together for good and bring about an 'impossibly possible' transformation of both ourselves and our world.[34]

Endnotes

1 A reading of the text that sees Bezalel as an able craftsman inspired by God makes more sense than a reading that sees Bezalel inspired *so that he might become* a craftsman. (This view arises from a discussion with Dr Thomas Smith.)

2 Exodus 31:1–5.

3 J R R Tolkien coined this term in *Tree and leaf*, Allen & Unwin, 1964.

4 Harold Best, 1994, p. 2.

5 Robert Banks and J Paul Stevens, 1997, p. 47.

6 Donald Williams and Barbara Vance Wilson Caves to Canvas, McGraw Hill (3rd edition), 2008, p. 4.

7 Ibid, p. 31.

8 Ibid, pp.86–87.

9 HW Janson, *History of Art*, Prentice Hall, 1977, p. 285.

10 Exodus 3:14.

11 Adam Art Gallery, Wellington New Zealand, 2003.

12 Donald Williams and Barbara Vance Wilson, pp.29–30.

13 The artist lies down on a rock when it is raining lightly. When the rock is wet, he gets up and takes a photograph of the resultant 'rain shadow'.

14 Andy Goldsworthy, *A Collaboration with Nature,* H N Abrams, 1990, p. 160.

15 George Negus, *Tonight*, ABC, 2004.

16 Robert Hughes, 1991, p. 110.

17 Robert Hughes, 2007.

18 Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor, *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*, 2003, p. 152.

19 Basquiat still does influence the young. His artwork was very influential on my HSC Visual Arts class of 2007.

20 Thomas Smith, 2007, p. 4.

21 Williams and Wilson 2008, p. 73.

22 Williams and Wilson 2008, pp.274–275.

23 Interestingly, I taught a girl some years ago who suffered enormously with Lupus. She was greatly influenced by Kahlo, and was able to express her suffering in a similar way.

24 Thomas Smith, 2007, p. 5.

25 NSW Board of Studies, 1999, p. 26.

26 I have taught many students who have confessed to a greater understanding of an Aboriginal perspective of white occupation after studying *The outsider*.

27 Thomas H Groome 1991, p. 105.

28 John Wall 2005, p. 45.

29 Ibid, p. 60.

30 J Richard Middleton and Brian J Walsh, 1995, p190.

31 Ibid, p. 191.

32 In the same way the Spirit of God captured the imaginations of Bezalel and Oholiab, the artist/craftsmen/teachers who built and decorated the temple.

33 Middleton and Walsh, ibid, pp. 191–192.

34 John Wall, 2005, p. 47.

Reading list

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Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New: Art and the century of change,* Thames and Hudson, 1991.

J Richard Middleton and Brian J Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*, IVP Academic, 1995.

John Wall, Moral Creativity: Paul Ricoeur and the Poetics of Possibility, OUP, 2005.

31 Physical & health education

Garry Gannell

> Athletic activities focus on certain aspects of dynamic living: namely health, skilful movement, wise movement decisions, willing and doing, releasing self to go beyond self, beauty and drama, perfecting and enlarging, joy and disappointment, joyful busyness, and dramatic expressions.
>
> Marvin Zuidema

While it can be argued that there may be some fundamental differences between the foundations of and reasons for teaching physical education and health education, the fact that these two subject disciplines are seen to be interconnected in every educational jurisdiction in Australia, and in many places in other countries, means that it is appropriate that consideration be given to both disciplines in this chapter.

Physical education

Although physical education is more than simply sport, the value one accords to teaching it can often be influenced by one's own school experiences and personal history in growing up with sport. While teaching basic physical skills in isolation can help develop a student's fine and gross motor skills, balance, co-ordination, strength and endurance, observation of the practices in schools and personal experience point to the

reality that physical skills are not taught in isolation, but rather within the context of sport, incorporating some level of competition. Any discussion on the teaching of physical education in a Christian education context would be naïve if this aspect were overlooked. Furthermore, Australian culture has a strong tradition of involvement—or at least interest—in sport. The cultural importance of sport and exercise is another factor that helps us in our discussion of the teaching of physical education in a Christian school.

Why teach physical education in a Christian school?

A quick search on the Internet will reveal a vast range of suggested benefits to students who are exposed to a broad physical education teaching program. Such benefits include improvements in many aspects of physical fitness including fine and gross motor skills, cardiovascular endurance, coordination, balance, strength and flexibility. Less obviously, and perhaps even in some contexts, contentiously, other suggested benefits include positive developments to psychological and social skills, leadership development, the provision of a suitable environment for the release of many tensions, and providing opportunities to test the students' self-control, perseverance and skills.

No school, and indeed no subject discipline, exists in a vacuum. For this reason, some of the mooted benefits outlined above need to be considered in light of how the wider culture, including the families of the students, view different aspects of sport. Consideration might need to be given, for example, to the emphasis that some parents and the culture place on competition, winning, the treatment accorded to sporting heroes, other winners and, of course, losers. Related to this is the very real danger that the Christian school will mirror the culture's technical and scientific approach to sport in a way that can endanger the very nature of playfulness and pleasure that is one of the main initial attractors for children and young people when it comes to being involved in play and sport. Some of these considerations might be thought to take greater precedence for the subject specialists in the secondary schools (especially as physical education specialists are often required to coach their school's representative teams). I believe that there is good reason for a generalist teacher who is called on to teach

to think about these issues so as to guide the students as they begin to build the foundations in this subject.

This thinking needs to be broad. Here is a caveat—have you noted that even this discussion reflects some Australian cultural conditioning, as I've focused on competitive sport and less so on fitness and motor skill development, while not even mentioning other aspects of the subject area such as dance or how the subject can, or should, engage the students with physical or intellectual disabilities?

It is therefore important for the Christian physical education teacher, working with children and young people of any age level, to think broadly about the different aspects of the subject. It is necessary to move beyond building their philosophy and justification for their subject by referring to a simplistic and out of context use of scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 9:24–27, 1 Timothy 4:8 or 2 Timothy 2:5, or even the sometimes helpful but potentially limiting literature around 'Muscular Christianity'.

Care needs to be taken in how even seemingly positive fruit from the pursuit of teaching physical education is viewed. Take, for example, one aspect of Galatians 5's 'fruit of the spirit': self-control. The development of 'self-control' is often presented as a by-product of training in the physical realm. There can be no doubt that for a Christian, self-control is a key Christian virtue. But, as is so often the case, an over emphasis on a single virtue can raise that virtue higher in status than is helpful. Biblically, it is the surrender of oneself to Christ, rather than self-control, that is at the heart of the Christian faith and being reconciled to God. So the question has to be asked: 'How does this play out in the sporting field?' Self-control is widely, and rightly, viewed as a positive attribute and, as noted, it is without doubt a biblical virtue, but if misapplied it can lead to a moralistic approach to life where adherence to certain behaviour, rather than a heartfelt response to the call of Christ, is paramount.

The physical education teacher will also need to consider whether competition is ethically defensible given that it always produces a zero sum outcome; there is always a winner and a loser. How do we compete or cooperate with one another in the quest for excellence?

How to teach physical education Christianly

The answer is embedded in the biblical worldview where the teacher sees him or herself, and the students, in the same way that God does. It is only through the perspective that allows individuals to be seen as being in the image of God, flawed and fallen yet the object of Christ's redemptive work, that will allow both the teacher and the students to engage in this subject discipline in a way that is consistent with the broad tenets of Christian education. Such things cannot be explicitly taught in every lesson, but need to be consistently modelled by the teacher and encouraged within the students. Aspects of this will include a wide range of attitudes and practices including:

- developing deep and genuine respect for an opponent, and oneself;
- focusing on the process and the experience more so than the final outcome;
- enjoying the sense of transcendence that can come when one loses oneself in play;
- a willingness to acknowledge the source of physical prowess and an avoidance of pride and hero worship;
- an understanding of the difference between confidence and cockiness;
- being willing to use one's gifts without diminishing the importance of the gifts of others;
- a desire to take appropriate risks and to learn from failures without anger or blame;
- a desire to adhere to the spirit, ethos and rules of the chosen sporting discipline;
- graciousness in winning and losing;
- a balanced understanding of the importance of the sporting activity in light of the personhood of all involved.[1]

Some of the students who do have a relationship with Christ would also benefit from their physical education teacher helping them to see how they might use their movement skills (specifically in dance but

also in other areas) to express their faith in God and their gratitude for his work in their lives.

Health education

The breadth of topic areas encapsulated by the health syllabus in most jurisdictions means that there will be times when the physical education teacher will be teaching content that is clearly consistent with Christian principles, and at other times is highly controversial. Even the approach that might be taken towards a topic that would enjoy broad support among Christian parents and teachers can be approached in a way that undermines clear biblical principles.

A stark example of this difficulty is the conflict that captured some media headlines in Australia during 2015–2016 with regard to the 'Safe Schools Program'. This program was broadly presented as an anti-bullying program which would almost certainly fall into the purview of a school's health education program. Controversy followed this program as it emerged that the co-founder of the program, Roz Ward, told the Safe Schools Coalition National Symposium in 2014 that the 'Safe Schools Coalition is about supporting gender and sexual diversity. Not about celebrating diversity. Not about stopping bullying. About gender and sexual diversity. About same sex attractive (sic). About being transgender. About being lesbian, gay, bisexual ...'[2] This issue is but one example where Christian schools, and Christian teachers who teach health education, may need to think carefully about how to comply with government expectations and regulations while maintaining an authentically Christian approach to their teaching. Of course, this challenge is inherent across all subject disciplines but the challenges may be seen to be greater in this discipline because of the immediate relevance of the topics to the developmental stages of the students being taught. There is little space to do more than raise this specific issue.

Why teach health education in a Christian school?

The biblical approach to life and worship is a holistic approach, incorporating body, mind and spirit. Appropriate care of the body, without straying into the error of 'body idolatry' is consistent with this biblical

view. Much of the content in health education syllabuses supports this. Topics included in a properly structured health education program that support this foundation would include: understanding the nature of health and the influence that genetics and environment might play; nutrition; drug and alcohol education; understanding and accepting one's own body; being a positive part of a community (including careful and respectful relationships; appropriate use of power; recognising, avoiding and reporting abuse); and a mature and wise understanding of both appropriate and inappropriate risk taking and learning first aid.

Other topic areas that are widely accepted as part of a health education curriculum include understanding the physical, physiological and psychological changes that come with adolescence, human sexuality, and how the students express their sexuality within relationships. These topics might have once been seen to be the exclusive responsibility of parents to teach but our society has moved on from this view and it seems that many parents, from schools across all sectors, are happy for schools to take the lead in teaching the students about these topics.

Biblically, the responsibility and privilege of nurturing and teaching children lies with parents. Schools, and therefore the teachers, are enlisted to support parents in this and it is not good when parents abdicate their responsibility and leave it entirely in the teachers' hands. Of course, if parents cannot or will not teach their children about these matters, it is better that the school takes on this responsibility rather than the Internet or the media. So, what is the right response to the issue of teaching content that falls into this category? For the purposes of simplicity in this discussion I will call this category TOPRASS (Topics of Parent Responsibility and School Support).

First and foremost, I believe that teachers need to see that they are in partnership with parents and that they make the most of every opportunity to model this attitude to both the students and the parents. Full use needs to be made of whatever appropriate tools and strategies exist to engage the parents in advance when teaching content that falls into the TOPRASS category. Digital communications tools (such as the school's own website, SMS, email linked information systems, Twitter, Facebook), as well as parent meetings and letters home can be used in concert to engage parents. It is even appropriate to give parents a voice in the decision of what health topics rightly fall into the TOPRASS

category. This consultation needs to be authentic and be presented in such a way that any reasonable parent attending will not have the slightest sense that the consultation was simply tokenism or an attempt to avoid difficulties in the weeks to come.

One way of doing this is to genuinely offer the provision of assistance and resources to parents who wish to take the responsibility of teaching some or all TOPRASS content themselves. These parents should also be given the opportunity to elect to have their children removed from relevant lessons, provided they are helped to understand the possible implications that this might have (both socially and academically) for their children. Of course, any communication from the teacher to the parents will need to make clear that both the school and the health teacher are in a very real sense 'serving multiple masters'. First and foremost, the practices of the school and the teacher must be founded on biblical principles, and the engagement and equipping of parents is consistent with this principle. The school therefore needs to encourage and where possible equip parents to also act in a way that is consistent with biblical principles.

Further, the school and teacher have legal responsibilities to the state which must be considered. Alternatively, should the school choose not to comply with state requirements, a risk assessment and damage mitigation strategy needs to be developed by the school. These decisions are beyond the purview of the classroom teacher, but the classroom teacher may well be called to have input into the discussion with the school's authorities and will need to have thought deeply about these matters. These cases are of course extreme, and in most cases the health teacher, working in partnership with the parents, should be able to address TOPRASS content, and indeed all content, in a way that reflects an authentically Christian perspective.

What is a Christian perspective in health education?

A Christian perspective in health education flows naturally from a biblical view of humanity. People are made in the image of God and are worthy of respect and value. This extends to the students respecting and valuing themselves, their parents, their teachers and their peers. This is played out in every subject in the way that students are encouraged to

treat each other in discussions, in conflict situations and in all aspects of the relationship milieu of the classroom. It extends to a different level when talking about looking after one's own body, relationships, sexuality, use of drugs and alcohol, risk-taking behaviour and being part of a broader community. Care needs to be taken by the teacher to ensure that the moral and relational standards taught explicitly in the Bible are communicated in a way that avoids seeing compliance as a pathway that leads to justification and forgiveness. The Christian health educator should work as an integral part of a whole school approach, clearly articulating and encouraging the perspective that compliance to the Bible's moral and relational teachings is a pathway we follow, flowing *from* forgiveness and justification.

Assessment in physical and health education

Unfortunately, teachers are often tempted to limit assessment to those things that are easy to assess, and to overlook assessing some of the more important aspects of the subject because it is just 'too hard'. In physical education, for example, the emphasis on assessment is on a checklist of skills that can be somewhat isolated from the real world competitive experience. Alternatively, authentic assessment such as that proposed by Dr William Russell (see Further reading) emphasises the use of tasks that are meaningful and often simulate real world scenarios, focusing on the process, the product and the use of higher-order skills in multiple domains. Russell's reference to multiple domains here demands further consideration.

This is neither easy, nor straightforward. Russell's criteria for physical education assessment, for example—that it be as game-like as possible, that it requires cognitive development and application in a game-like situation—may be judged to address the psychomotor and physical domains, leaving the affective domain unassessed. At the *Assessment in Different Dimensions Conference (2009),* the difficulty of authentically assessing in the affective domain at the tertiary level was acknowledged. At this conference, Birbeck and Andre put forward the example that students' ethics could be assessed in a group work activity where the following were assessed:

- Did the student meet their agreed commitments?

- Did the student fulfil their agreed role within the group/team structure?
- Did the student defend their ideas?
- Was the student willing to confront team members who were not meeting their obligations? Was the student willing to take risks?
- When decisions were reached by consensus did the student commit?[3]

In this approach, the teacher might feel somewhat unburdened by avoiding the difficult situation of judging the students' motivations and values, as they are judging the students' actions and, only by implication, the students' values. But the question here remains of the ethical basis of such an assessment—should the focus of the assessment be more explicitly revealed to the student?

At this point, the Christian educator needs to think carefully about the possible unintended consequence of assessing students in the affective domain. This issue is somewhat fraught as consideration needs to be given to conflicting realities. The students tend to place more value on teaching and learning that they know is assessable. Also, the Christian teacher may be less interested in assessing a student's attitude, knowing that such assessments have the potential to lead to the student simply 'parroting' the attitude that they believe the teacher would want to see. The argument that the teacher would not assess the actual attitude, but rather the process the students have used to arrive at their beliefs may have some validity, but this approach is often not believed by students if they deem that the teacher views one particular attitude as being 'more Christian' than others. Further increasing the complexity of this issue is the fact that in both physical and health education, understanding content is important, but of greater value is the sound lifelong application of the knowledge and attitudes that the teacher is trying to inculcate.

Without a doubt, strategies such as responding to various scenarios may have merit, but the Christian educator would need to be aware of the criticisms historically levelled at some approaches to values clarification exercises in the classroom, where the development of 'behaviour ... [as] the result of free, uninfluenced, autonomous choice, based on personal

analysis of a given situation coupled with the moment's emotions and desires' was encouraged.[4] A Christian school is likely to hope that such a process would lead to a more all-embracing values outcome than this.

Conclusion

Health and physical education in Christian schools provides opportunities for students to engage with concepts and activities that are developmentally and culturally important and that, if well taught, support a holistic approach to Christian education. The Christian educator must have a clear, well developed philosophy and approach to both disciplines that reflect:

- a biblical worldview;
- an awareness of the inherent dangers that lie in the culture in these discipline areas;
- a biblical view of the role that parents should be playing in the education of their children; and
- a willingness to work in partnership with those parents for the sake of children and to the glory of God.

Endnotes

1 A number of these ideas are inspired by Zuidema, M (2006) *Foundational Thoughts on a Christian Philosophy of Play, Sports and Athletics*, Calvin College, 2006 http://www.calvin.edu/weblogs/pivot/more/some_foundational_thoughts_on_a_christian_philosophy/ last accessed 20/7/2016.

2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daQCF8CyHhs last accessed 20/7/2016.

3 Birbeck, D & Andre, K (2009), 'The affective domain: beyond simply knowing' in *Assessment in Different Dimensions*, Melbourne 19–20 November 2009. RMIT P 45.

4 Conti, LM, 'Values Clarification Destroys Conscience' in *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*, Ignatius Press, 2515 McAllister St., San Francisco, CA 94118, November 2000.

Further reading

Russell, W (n.d.) *Authentic Assessment in Physical Education* http://jonesytheteacher.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/ped-393-authentic-assessment-in-physical-ed1.ppt (last accessed 15th July, 2016). This PowerPoint provides a helpful introduction to Authentic Assessment in Physical Education although its discussion is limited to assessment without reference to any Christian perspective.

Watson, NJ & Parker, A (2013) *Sports and Christianity: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, New York: Routledge. As noted in its Foreword, this book attempts to provide a 'treasure of careful and measured studies of aspects of our lives—sports, play—that in earlier generations were not studied with so much attention and precision'.

Part D

Contributing through Christian education to character formation

32 Student thinking made visible

Thomas Smith

> But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.
>
> Jesus

A recent fashion in Christian education has been to call for it to be transformational. Brian Caldwell in his keynote speech to the 2013 Christian Schools National Policy Forum[1], said that Christian schools should be open to the will of God to be self-transforming schools. He said that 'all schools in all settings can secure success for all students in an era where society and the economy are changing constantly and dramatically'. This fashion, in educational philosophy, is timely for Christian schooling discussions as increasingly it comes under pressure from the effects of the postmodern secular hegemony. Few Christian schools would argue with Caldwell's thesis because they know that Christian teaching should encourage students to so relate to their creator and sustainer that they will seek a meaningful life as God's agents in their society. Christian teachers long to see their students transform their thinking to the thoughts of Jesus, as it were.

At the time of writing, Christian schools are increasingly focussing on helping their students think about life-issues from a Christian point

of view. The current debate in most Western societies concerning the rights of groups of people and the subsequent restriction on the freedom of expression of others is grist for the mill for schools. These debates in society are needed and Christians will need to play their part in the 'rights' discourse because they believe that the Lord of the universe is the ultimate protector of the interests of all people.

One Christian school in Sydney's north-west has maintained a special interest in the development in their students of a Christian world view. The school executive has worked with the writer for over six years to help their teachers understand how best to encourage their students to use biblical viewpoints to understand their immediate world and to resolve life-issue scenarios. What follows is an account of how this school made use of scenarios with open-ended questions to identity some processes its students use to understand and resolve life-issues.

Learning to have an integrated understanding of God's world

From its inception, the school considered that Christian education should involve helping students transcend their current understanding of themselves and their world. The Bible instructs believing parents to work continually with their children to learn God's way for living. This is a major way that children can be helped to transform their thinking. The key strategy is found in Deuteronomy 6:7–8, which sums up the command to parents and by extension to schools, 'Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates'.

Strawn[2] indicates that this means all parts of a child's life, including the social and cultural, are to be dominated by God's commandments. Children are to be so imbued with God's ways that they will be able to interpret their everyday life using the world view of God's instruction. This command still applies today and it is a major way Christian school teachers can wisely counter the post-modern hegemony of our Western society.

Students will acquire world views irrespective of whether people help them acquire one or not, as has been shown by Habermas[3] and Edlin.[4] Newell's concept of world views provides the useful description that they are 'values systems' that people use to interpret situations and actions.[5] In his work, 'Worldviews in Collision: Jesus as Critical Educator', he interpreted Jesus' struggle with his society as a struggle between world views. Jesus, who had a Kingdom of God world view, was involved in a life and death struggle with the religious leaders of his day as he sought to, as Newell writes, 'clarify the true meaning of God's covenant with Israel while subverting the dominant world view'.[6]

Christian teachers, following in Jesus' steps, would be wise to discern the clash of world views occurring in their students' experiences and to seek to challenge them to transcend their society's post-modern offerings for life meanings by considering Jesus' world view.

One way of helping students to be able to interpret the Bible text is to teach the skill of taking the viewpoint of biblical characters. This pedagogical strategy may help students gain a vicarious experience of Jesus' ministry.

Taking the viewpoint of biblical characters to discover one's world views

One way of helping students develop their world view is to get them to find and take the viewpoints of the protagonists in a Bible narrative. To take another person's viewpoint is a form of transcendence because it requires fore-projecting of what the other experiences until they think they can see the other's situation from their viewpoint. It is usually only a temporary time of transcendence unless one is challenged by the usefulness of the other's viewpoint.

Research has shown the validity of this teaching strategy. For example, Scheindlin, from the Jewish Sinai Akiba Academy, referred to Proust, who had explicitly demonstrated that people can form a subjective consciousness from within the mind of another through reading a novel. Proust laid down two conditions for this process to be successful: the reader must be able to identify with the protagonist in the novel and must be able to therefore learn about their own mental life in the process (cited from Oatley by Scheindlin .[7] This process

is equally applicable to students when they read the scriptures, and teachers can help them to take the viewpoint of characters in the Bible who had significant experiences of Jesus. This process is equivalent to taking the third person perspective which students in Year 6 and over are able to do.[8]

The following steps are the generally accepted steps for taking the perspective of a biblical character. The meeting of Jesus and Zacchaeus is used as an example:

- Ask the students to consider the cultural and geographical context of the biblical event: What part of the country was Jesus in? That is, did the Bible writer consider the geographic situation to be important to understand the event? For example, Jesus met Zacchaeus in Jericho on his way to Jerusalem and his crucifixion (Luke 19:1–10). To understand the universal benefits of Jesus' death it is necessary to know that traitor type oppressors also matter to God.
- Then have the students discover what Jesus events had occurred through the preceding chapter/chapters. What reaction did the people have to Jesus in those events? How does this reading fit into the overall story of this Gospel? For example, in the chapter preceding the Jesus and Zacchaeus meeting, the righteous wealthy ruler had talked with Jesus (Luke 18:18–30). The ruler found that he was unable to enter God's kingdom because of his love of wealth. The disciples' response to this encounter was amazement at how hard it is to enter God's kingdom (verse 26).
- The students are then helped to analyse the text to say what actions Jesus carried out. For example, Jesus entered Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. Zacchaeus climbed a tree because he wanted to see Jesus. Jesus asked to come to Zacchaeus' place for a meal. The villagers were upset at Jesus consorting with such a traitorous man, etc.
- Ask the students to discuss how they might feel if they saw/heard Jesus do that action, (wonder?, awe?, fear?, jealousy?; etc.). The teacher may need to discuss the heaviness of the tax

system used by the Romans and the unfair dealings of some Jewish tax collectors. Maybe that is why Zacchaeus was a wealthy man! Encourage a wide class discussion so that every student can feel secure about saying what they would have felt.

- Then ask the students to choose one of the characters in the passage and to try to understand what that person might have felt, thought and said. Year 7 and 8 students could write a paragraph, in the 'first person', of what the Bible character probably felt and thought about Jesus' actions. If time permits, people who took the third person perspective of the same Bible character could share their insights in groups. Time spent doing this exercise is valuable because it helps the students to bring their whole being into discourse with the passage.
- The class could then share the various perspectives or views of the Bible protagonists. When this has been achieved the teacher may add the class's insights into the story and repeat the whole event. Watch how differently the students listen to this new way of hearing.
- At this point many of the students may have gained sufficient understanding of the meaning of the event to begin explaining what the passage is saying to us today.

The connection between world views and viewpoints

Viewpoints are patterns of understanding that students use to interpret situations. Considered metaphorically, they are 'templates of meaning' that allow people to bring pre-formed understandings to match closely with a new situation. Viewpoints are often aspects of world views that are used to perceive the importance of a situation. Once the meaning of a life-issue event is determined, the students are then able to use their personal viewpoints to make a judgement as to the best way to resolve it.

An example of a biblical viewpoint is apparent in Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees when he healed people on the Sabbath. In Matthew 12:9–14, where Jesus healed on the Sabbath, his opponents saw his action of healing as a violation of the Torah. Their viewpoint was that the (Torah) law must take priority in people's actions; therefore no healing on the Sabbath! For Jesus the issue really was, 'Who has the

true knowledge of God?' Jesus' opponents recognised this too; they raised the question of his right to act in the way that he acted.

Newell writes that Jesus' action in healing the man on the Sabbath showed an alternative to the viewpoint that the Torah always takes priority. Jesus' viewpoint is that God is a merciful being, shown by: 'If any of you has a sheep and it falls in a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.' (verses 11–12) Jesus' viewpoint resulted in a man being mercifully healed on the Sabbath. The Pharisees' viewpoint resulted in them consulting as to how they might destroy Jesus (verse 14).[9]

Viewpoints guide the direction of the cognitive appraisal a student makes of a text or event. Scheindlin argued that pure logic is rarely able to solve people's dilemmas, such as whether or not to vote for an environmental party to protect the environment or, alternatively, to vote for a conservative party that will reduce unemployment. He said that the choice of a party will depend on previous emotional judgments in these areas.[10] (Scheindlin, pp. 180–181). These judgements are integrated over time to form the viewpoint mechanisms that students use to form a judgement on issues such as which political party has the best policy.

Viewpoints draw on fore-projections to discern meaning

Martin Heidegger's theory of the fore-projection process provides a model that coherently suggests how students evaluate life-issues. Heidegger said that people see a whole situation in terms of a reality that consists of the detailed experiences of everyday existence (the parts). When students consider a new text or situation, they project previously learnt meanings onto it: 'A person who is trying to understand a text is always performing an act of projecting. ... to understand [he] projects before himself a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges.' The initial meaning emerges because the person is looking at the text with expectations of certain meanings. Students continue to sequentially check their fore-projections against the text until they feel they have penetrated into the meaning of what is there.[11]

A case study for teaching viewpoints and taking the other's viewpoint

The Christian school in the north-west of Sydney mentioned previously carried out research to discern the processes its students used to resolve the life-issue of bullying. The results of its Year 7 life-issues survey suggested that students (age about 11 years) use personal viewpoints to determine the meaning of that life-issue and the means to resolve it. The Year 7 project had initially sought to determine whether a number of students who enrolled in Year 7 had a higher proportion of problematic behaviour than those who had enrolled earlier.

The Year 7 investigation used an open-ended survey asking five questions about a bullying scenario. In essence the scenario was of a Year 7 boy being bullied by James in class and the teacher dealing with the bullying. During recess, James gave the boy a hard time. The class leader spoke to James and, in effect, rebuked him for his action. James sneeringly replied: 'At this school you are all soft. You don't know what it is really like outside.'

The survey questions were:

- Q 1. What would you say to James (the bully) if you were the class leader?
- Q 2. Why would you say that?
- Q 3. How should I treat students who are seen as unpopular?
- Q 4. If you think about your opinions what do you test them against?
- Q 5. What did the bully mean when he sneered and said: 'At this school you are all soft. You don't know what it is really like outside.'

Discussion of the Year 7 personal viewpoints scenario results

The Year 7 students appeared to process their interpretive thinking along similar lines to that of fore-projection, as seen in the sequence of phrases found within the students' answers. For example, when students were asked: 'What would you say to James (the bully) if you were the class leader?', many students provided an answer similar to that of Student 18: 'Stop it; if it was you, you would be very scared. Respect

other people.' Student confidentiality precluded allowing follow-up interviews to identify the steps students used to get to their answers.

Table1.

A comparison of the proportion of personal viewpoints used per question

Personal viewpoints chosen per question	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
Simple personal viewpoint	19	69	85	54	54
Complex personal viewpoint	90	41	26	46	54
Not answered or misunderstood question	6	5	4	15	7
Total number answers	115	115	115	115	115
Proportion of complex personal viewpoint	0.78	0.36	0.23	0.40	0.47

Table 1 shows that the five questions elicited quite different proportions of personal viewpoint responses from the students. The results were unexpected and were considered important. Question 1 elicited the highest proportion of complex personal viewpoints, 0.78 (Table 1). Its analysis considered the number of simple and complex personal viewpoints used. A complex personal viewpoint uses two or more simple personal viewpoints. For example, student 18's answer above contains three simple personal viewpoints (other examples are in Appendix 1). This contrasted sharply with the small proportion of complex personal viewpoints that Question 3 elicited (0.23). A pupil's greater use of complex personal viewpoints suggests deeper thinking or thinking that goes beyond stereotype answers consistent with the school ethos. It was considered important to determine why the five questions varied greatly in the proportions of complex personal viewpoints students used to answer them; because this might have implications for the questions teachers ask in their lessons.

Question 1 asked, 'What would you say to James (the bully) if you were the class leader?' The high percentage of complex personal viewpoints (0.78) used to answer this question suggests the students carried

out deep thinking. The reason for this may be that few would have previously thought about how they would act in a real bullying situation.

Question 3 was the question least likely to require cognitive effort by the students. It asked 'How should I treat students who are seen as unpopular?' Because the school has consistently promoted an anti-bullying stance it was likely that the majority of students would not need to give the question a lot of thought in terms of Gadamer's (1978) fore-projection theory, little modification to their fore-projections being required to provide an interpretation that best explained the situation.

Question 2, 'Why would you say that?' produced the second smallest proportion of complex personal viewpoints (0.36). The students would already have been aware, to varying degrees, of their personal beliefs about the seriousness of the situation and would not have needed quite so deep a thinking process to test their fore-projections.

Question 4, 'If you thought about your opinions what did you test them against?' generated the third highest proportion of complex personal viewpoints, (0.40). It appeared to require students to think more deeply because they were asked to determine the 'rightness-truthfulness' of their opinions. The proportion of complex personal viewpoints appears lower than a question like that would be expected to elicit. This can be explained by the large number of students who chose the 'Teaching God's values' (T) and 'Clarifying my beliefs' (Cl; against my inner beliefs). It is speculated that in the context of the Christian school's ethos these two personal viewpoints would appear to require less deep thinking because they would already be part of most students' cultural-values and school ethos repertoire.[12]

Question 5, 'What did the bully mean when he sneered and said: "At this school you are all soft. You don't know what it is really like outside"' had the second highest proportion of complex personal viewpoints (0.47). That question encouraged students to take the third person perspective of the bully and then to compare that with what they believed about the cultural-values of their school life. Cognition of this type requires deeper thinking as evidenced by the greater proportion of complex personal viewpoints used.

Implications for Christian teachers

1. In this chapter, the concept of personal viewpoints has been suggested as a means to describe the guiding mechanism used in the thinking processes undertaken by students when fore-projecting to understand and resolve a life issue. As such, teachers should provide students with opportunities to self-consciously use their personal viewpoints when undertaking new work, especially in Biblical Studies and Personal Development type subjects.

   The teacher might also test their students' personal viewpoints on a topic to judge their learning and to gain a more accurate measurement of their broader learning.[13] To maximise the benefits of incorporating the students' personal viewpoints into a lesson, teachers could pre-test their students' personal viewpoints on the pertinent issue before introducing a life-issues subject. This would identify entrenched student thinking that already exists with regard to the life-issues being considered.

2. The life-issues questions in the Year 7 survey differed in their ability to engender complex thinking (explained by the different task each question asked the students to perform). Questions that asked students what they would do in a difficult life-situation appeared to engage them in deeper thinking. Similarly, questions that invited students to take the third person perspective of protagonists in a life-issues scenario appeared to be more likely to result in students undertaking deeper thinking.

   Therefore, it would be propitious for educators to choose the type of questions for a life-issue lesson that will challenge students to consider their habitual and somewhat stereotyped way of resolving the issue. Questions that ask the students what action they would take to understand and resolve a realistic life-issue are more likely to engender complex personal viewpoint thinking than questions of fact or doctrine.

3. There appears to be support for the theory that when students take the third person perspective in considering a life-issue there is an increase in their use of complex personal viewpoints and it is speculated that this indicates deeper thinking. Many of the students who did take the third person perspective were able

to hypothesise reasons the bully acted as he did. Consequently, when teaching life-issues subjects such as Biblical Studies or Personal Development it will be important to ask the students to take the third person perspective of the protagonists in the narratives or scenarios.

Application to faith issues

Christian teachers would do well to model ways of transcending Western culture through discourse on life-issues as presented in the Bible. Students can be invited to vicariously experience Jesus as people in the New Testament experienced him within the context of real life situations. Most students can readily enter the viewpoint of biblical characters and thereby experience how others learned about Jesus by taking the third person perspective. The critical part of this pedagogy is to then help students reflect on their own viewpoints and to modify them to become viewpoints based on a Kingdom of God world view.

Appendix 1

Samples of simple viewpoints and complex viewpoints

Simple viewpoints

Q 1 'If I was student leader I would tell James the effects of the type of humiliation he inflicts on others.' (Student 100)

Q4 'I imagine what felt right.' (Student 106)

Complex viewpoints

Q 1 'I would say, "In this school we love God and he tells us everyone is equal. Please leave the boy alone. If you are having trouble at home or in school you can tell me or the teacher."' (Student 25)

Q2 'Because if I don't people will still be picked on while James' stress or hurt will still be piling up. I prayed because I know God will protect him and help him.' (Student 29)

Endnotes

1 Caldwell, B (2013) *Leading The Self-Transforming Christian School*. Keynote speech to the 2003Christian Schools National Policy Forum. Accessed http://www.csa.edu.au/resources/csnpf-2013 /1/08/2016.

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33 The English teacher in a society that measures

Paul Burgis

[People's] chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.
Westminster Shorter Catechism

We live in a society that measures us. Students need to achieve certain academic levels to matriculate. Once in work we are likely to be assessed on the quality and quantity of our contributions.

The English teacher doesn't operate as an autonomous pedagogue. Curricula are set externally and examinations are the blunt instruments driving the agendas of the vast majority of schools. For better or worse, firstly, our society needs to separate students according to a set of criteria so that we can establish which students do which courses at university; and secondly, we need to recognise that part of our teaching is connected to the notions we have of the value of work.

Measurement and higher education

We need to define student academic achievement carefully so that it can be assessed which students can benefit from university.[1] In the Christian-Hellenic and early Liberal periods outlined in my chapter in Part C, when most citizens worked in agriculture or manufacturing, few students competed for positions in higher education. The later

utilitarian period, also outlined in my chapter in Part C, was driven more by the belief in Western societies that access to education was the road to prosperity and peace than it was by changes within the academy.[2] The move to value deconstruction did not remove the need to measure the accomplishments of eighteen year olds according to an agreed standard.

Whilst we are in a state of flux in our understanding of the purpose of our work, we still have the pragmatic task of getting students ready for examinations. Markets keep selling goods, even in wartime.

Thus, a kind of Faustian wager exists now in our society. Schools ostensibly measure academic excellence, whilst not being sure what it is or will be in the future. We thus ask students to trade their minds on the current trend in return for a qualification that will allow them to access the power that an education promises. Whether or not they are really adequately equipped for the future is anyone's guess.

Governments and newspapers measure schools by their marks. English academics and teachers are permitted to state what should be valued to achieve a high mark in English. The teacher is thus left to instruct students in the theory of how to adopt the trending values, or to reject claims to truth or power in order to maintain the relative standing of her school as an academic institution. Meanwhile students, given the hegemony afforded to a high pass in an end of school examination, learn to treat ideas as the pragmatic means to an end. They can claim their place in the best tertiary institutions by becoming better and better at writing in the fashion of the day. Increasingly the status of individual institutions is measured by league tables and websites as if a good education is a thing that is divorced from the philosophy of learning that guides it.

Ironically, the status of the institution becomes the important thing. The 'rebellion' that 'exposes' power is a sycophant to this structure. This raises the very real possibility that we are teaching our students that it is not justice or love or personal integrity or kindness that ultimately matter. It is the pretence of things—including the pretence of rebellion—in order to gain a foothold on the bottom rung of the ladder to achieving power. It was Muggeridge who stated that educational institutions were becoming the new standard in hypocrisy, ahead of the churches.[3]

Measurement and work

In the Christian-Hellenic and Liberal periods the notion of vocation was still strong. Consider three broad definitions of work:

- Work as a 'job' that pays the bills and allows the individual to have a separate 'real' life
- Work as a 'career' that allows access to power
- Work as 'vocation' that sees family and professional responsibilities as a continuum, actions taken for the good of others.

Both Weber[4] and Taylor[5] have noted the importance of Calvinism to the development of a strong work ethic—where work is viewed as a social 'good'. In the nineteenth century in Britain and her colonies, there were enough religious orders and ministers to indicate that they were known locally,[6] meaning that children engaged with the idea that a person could choose a vocation rather than a career or job. Work was of value whether or not it was paid. The notion of vocation has shifted over the twentieth century but the vocation idea, noted above, is still extant.[7] Aligned with this, sport was largely though not exclusively amateur[8] and many teachers and nurses worked in vocational settings.[9] Perhaps as part of a focus on reducing the patriarchy that existed in our society we decided to highly value the notions of career and to devalue the idea of vocation. Perhaps it was part of what Taylor identifies as the creation of an imagining of the person as a 'buffered self', no longer porous to spiritual definitions.[10]

Have we sought at least in part to solve the problems associated with gender and class by using advancement in career as the gold standard? To work without a chance of a higher pay or advancement in status was to limit the potential to be economically independent. The work that has become most highly valued is work outside the home.[11]

This impacts the English teacher in that she works with many authors and texts who viewed their lives as a vocation. It gives her a chance to explore authenticity. Whether it be a character like the 'Whisky Priest' in *The Power and the Glory* or the actual life of a poet like Shelley or Coleridge, or the way that the characters in Paul Gallico's *The Snow Goose* took on their task of saving a bird and saving men from the guns of war, vocation was highly valued. In a utilitarian society the equation

is that work is for pay and status and independence. There is both a challenge and an opportunity for the English teacher in this circumstance.

Vocation as the outcome of education: four approaches to work

How should Christian teachers respond as moral and ethical agents to the challenges of education and its outcome, work? The rest of this chapter will look at four approaches to work:

1. Work is valued, as is the worker, for their own sakes

In quite a famous interview on the BBC in 1979 two of the Monty Python writers defended their film *The Life of Brian* from a claim that it was blasphemous and should be boycotted.[12] At that point in Britain's history, the established church still had some ground to defend. If you watch the interview you will hear the bishop and the commentator (Muggeridge) seeking to argue that the film will degrade the youth of Britain and undermine their understanding that the Incarnation is the central act of human history. It is clear that both men believed that it was the cooperation between church and state, in some form, that would provide the good society.

John Cleese clearly held—and the laughter in the audience suggests he was not alone—that it was the freeing of the society from the claims of religion that was important. To Muggeridge and the bishop we might rightly ask if it is valid to seek to link Christian faith to the type of political power that is able to control culture. In the light of Habermas' commentary I think we could also spear John Cleese's (secular?) cow and ask if the inability of some secularists to respond to religious belief with anything other than ridicule and suppression has contributed to the rise of extremism. Both suggestions have a populist ring to them but neither is sufficient. Miroslav Volf has written an excellent commentary on the importance of allowing all voices, including religious voices, a place in the public square.[13] Christians have a rich heritage in being a minority—we do not need to be privileged.

Under the pressure of performance for a final examination our response need not be to simply teach students to write according to the *zeitgeist*. Remember Anselm's phrase 'faith seeking understanding'.[14] We can encourage reflection that has integrity. In this we value the student's vocation (I am a student who seeks to tell the truth as I

understand it) over their career (I am a student who will write what is required to access power).

The task of the teacher is not to create students who create polemics. As teachers we can see past the political divide and value the role of the educator as the one who assists students 'to understand'. Can we teach our students this? No subject is off limits. Yes, the secular voice of Cleese should be heard. Recognise the reasons for his criticism, understand why people see things as funny. Yet don't be afraid to criticise the critic. Cleese should not represent a new orthodoxy or hegemony.

And to this end, I suggest we continue to allow students to access Jesus' parables and sermons. Continue to note the line of thought from the theological and philosophical discussions of the churches to literature. For example, Dostoevsky's chapter on the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* is the basis of the creation of the character of Mustapha Mond in *Brave New World*. Let's not treat Huxley's text as if written without access to the whole history of Christian thought. With this and other texts, we can engage with the history of ideas, and the contested arguments within them.

Consider William Blake's 'Poems of Innocence and Experience'. The poems of innocence are those with a childlike quality.[15] 'The Lamb' is almost a nursery rhyme. In contrast is 'The Tyger'. It represents the loss of innocence, perhaps primarily of the rural scenes of England as the Industrial Revolution took effect, but also of the individual in relation to their faith in a good God.

I enjoy Blake. Yet it is not my point here to simply appreciate him. I am interested in the underlying structure of thought that his poetry exemplifies. In work like Blake's, the teaching of English shifts from being about finding and resting in the true God—which was the goal of Luther and Calvin and the Reformers—to relinquishing oneself of the burden of deceit that faith or industry provides. This period of literature gave society a new canon, and a new role for the canon to fulfil. The English teacher has a new archetypal hero in his or her canon—the writers who expose the hypocrisy of faith, or its inevitable decline in the life of the thinking person, or its prejudice or ignorance or cruel mythology.

And the English teacher, whether he be early-modern European or contemporary, gains a certain power in being the person who reveals to

the student the new canon. In the time of the great liberal arts schools of Europe, knowledge of the Bible and of Homer was rich and infused in the culture. This made the voices of those who contradicted the power of the church or traditional social order very influential.

It is not hard to see that this remains a central aspect of the imagination of all of us in Western cultures. Moving forward from the so-called Liberal period to today we see many writers who set their novels in earlier epochs, or who revisit historic events in order to engage with the powerful act of the loss of faith. Consider the novels of Hardy or Elliot, a poem like 'Dover Beach' by Arnold, or 'In Memoriam' by Tennyson, or more recently a novel like *Night* by Elie Wiesel. I ask you to conduct an exercise in your own reading and to identify the number of books that characterise people of faith in a negative position in order to be able to promote a vision of human autonomy or self-actualisation or personal freedom.

It is important to recognise two different possible approaches here. It is valid, in Christian terms, to provide a profound challenge to the mind and ethics of a person. Jacob wrestled with God, and David was challenged by Nathan over his adultery with Bathsheba. And each of the above books shine a light on hypocrisy or self-delusion or the intellectual challenges with which people of faith must engage.

Yet are there ways of replying to the edifice of doubt that these texts collectively build?

Christian English teachers need to be aware of the repetitive theme of the loss of faith in a secular society. It is important also to recognise that in this act the writer is dependent upon the possible claim to truth that a religious position might have. Effective literature moves from the 'given' to the 'new'. It is very interesting to think about the lack of a new 'given' within our society. If faith is truly dead, then why does literature keep resurrecting it? Does literature resurrect faith, only to kill it again, because the alternative is nihilism?

Consider for a moment what reality is like should the atheistic Darwinian be right. The universe would be formed by a trillion trillion impersonal causes and effects. Whether we be religious or irreligious, we are wholly and completely the result of these random forces. The argument that is implicit in some of our literature that religious people are in some way more prone to violence or patriarchy suddenly means

little. We are just another variety of living thing. Violence and patriarchy are just other responses to life—like the tiger's teeth or the spider's poison. Nothing is better or worse. Those with religious belief might have a genetic or learned characteristic that makes them more or less likely to survive. No one can say. It is possible in such a universe that even the person of extreme religious violence, the person I would oppose with all my being, might end up winning out, and the religious pacifist or rampant capitalist or soft socialist who opposes them would have nothing of any value to say in return except that 'the fittest will survive'. And therefore, if survival of the fittest is the driving mechanism, the literature of those who oppose religion is written simply as another means of trying to make their genetic or learned characteristics survive.

And if we follow the line of Sartre and seek to espouse a society based on authentic existential acts, or like Derrida claim that everything can be deconstructed except justice (and why not justice?) we are in no better position. A counter-claim might be that justice matters. Your claim might include a notion of love. We might both hold to a belief in the Rule of Law. Alternatively, we might set our collective goals around ridding the earth of sexism or ageism but if someone else decides that we are living in a state that is caught between powers like Ukraine or Syria, and acts with power against us, on what moral grounds can we reply? They may have their own injustices to revenge and their own authenticities to follow.

Against this background the Christian English teacher has no need to be defensive. A Christian vision of humanity is in fact a beautiful one and can be appreciated as such. Its beauty lies in that the human being is valued because they are created by a good God, their 'darkness' is honestly recognised, and redemption is the underlying theme that really matters.

And this vision is in line with an understanding of work that values the person who works in and of themselves and not for the status they attain.

2. The development of the conscience and its role in vocation

Myths and legends have always been useful for the English teacher because they open the student to the idea that something can be true

that is not scientifically true. Thus something can be declared beautiful or good without the need for empirical evidence.

One of the central beliefs of Christians is that people are made in God's image. Part of this imaging is that we have a will, a freedom, and that our conscience is critical to us living as Christians each day. We act in sin against God via this will, and it is our will that we submit to Jesus, as in Philippians 2 ('Every knee shall bow and tongue confess'). Our consciences are essential to our humanity. The call of Paul for us to claim every thought captive to the obedience of Christ is a call to redeem our consciences.[16] It is not a call to relinquish freedom, but to enact it, to find ways of acting in love when the temptation is strong to act in self-interest.

Plato's story of the 'Ring of Gyges'[17] came originally from Herodotus.[18] It is the tale of a peasant (Gyges) who finds a lost chamber. Within it is a dead king. On the king's finger is a ring that, when worn, makes Gyges invisible. Gyges lives in a land ruled by a tyrant. He is thus successfully able to commit adultery with the tyrant's wife, kill the tyrant, and usurp power.

In Plato the ring stands for the invisibility that we all possess. We each have a mind and that mind is invisible to everyone else. Perhaps in these days of the internet we can see this even more clearly, with the possibility that a person can from some invisible cyber-space give secret praise or hurl insults at others.

The PDHPE teacher might assist students to strengthen their bodies, the Art teacher might assist students to control the movements of their fingers, but the English teacher has the development of the conscience as one of their primary intentions.

The wonderful thing about the ethics of this relationship is that the teacher can say to her students that they will always be guaranteed to have authentic control over the part of themselves that is being developed in the English classroom. God gives humanity moral freedom in Genesis, and the act of Jesus on the Cross is a free act of love that requires a free act of love in response. The English teacher highly values the moral freedom of her class.

And to boot, given that each of us has a ring of Gyges, even if the teacher wanted to be a despot of her students' minds, she couldn't. She can't even see what they are thinking if they don't offer it freely.

Any reading of the Sermon on the Mount[19] will result in the reader understanding that the call by Jesus to act in certain ways is a choice, not a compulsion.

This means that the teacher can open a discussion with students about how the conscience should be trained. Much of our literature values human autonomy—whether it be the sensual freedom of Dylan Thomas or his call to not go quietly into that good night. Yet it allows also for the question as to whether human autonomy is the answer. Studies of dystopias like *Lord of the Flies*, or *Brave New World*, or *Animal Farm*, or *Blade Runner* each explore the notion of how humans deceive others to gain power and how they easily abuse their invisibility to others and their autonomy. A book like Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* or Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* exemplifies a vision where the conscience of the individual submits itself to a love that is greater than it.

Similarly, any discussion about the inner life of the individual opens the class up to rich poetry: Hopkins, Donne, Les Murray; poets who are honest about their inner lives. We share their joy and their wonder and their grief.

In this way, we are fulfilling the Christian-Hellenic wish to create the person and to allow them to imagine and to access God. We are also fulfilling the Liberal aim of allowing critique. We take a further step than the secular teacher. They just doubt their faith. We doubt our doubts as well.

This connects to the notion of vocation in that it values the idea of agency. The student whose purpose is beyond the utilitarian develops a moral courage. The student in the class is an agent—someone forming authentic positions, not mimicking accepted paradigms. In this we are actively creating citizens who are able to question religious and secular authority with respect. Yet we are deconstructing the notion that the church is to be read only as the keeper of tradition and conservatism: they can understand that the church exists in the margins of the mainstream.

3. The development of the beautiful and the good and their role in vocation

It is right and proper that the student of English should encounter pathos and despair. Be it Lady Macbeth's or Othello's laments, or the cries of pain of Hopkins, or the sadness of Tennyson's 'Lady of Shalott',

the student grows emotionally and personally from seeing that she is not alone. Texts by writers like Markandaya[20] provide an insight into the pain of poverty. Others have felt a pain that is greater than, or similar to hers.

Yet how can they also open the student to joy and gratitude? Theologian J I Packer said that in Christianity, 'Doctrine is grace and ethics is gratitude and something is wrong with any form of Christianity where this is not the case.' This attitude is the opposite of the atheist Bertrand Russell who stated:

> That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair can the soul's habitation be safely built.

Miroslav Volf captures the possibilities open to the Christian English teacher in *Flourishing.* He notes the dual importance of pleasure and meaning. He writes:

> In choosing between meaning and pleasure (that is, in thinking that we need to choose between meaning and pleasure) we *always* make the wrong choice. Pleasure without meaning is vapid; meaning without pleasure is crushing. In its own way each is nihilistic without the other. But we don't need to choose between the two. The unity of meaning and pleasure, which we experience as joy, is given with the God who is love. It is why we need religion in a globalised world.

The Christian English teacher values both meaning and pleasure. Her theology informs her as to why she does this. This brings joy to her

classroom and the way that she teaches. She can critique the vapidity of hedonism. She can disempower characters who have no lightness of being—the Bertrand Russells of this world.

4. The creation of the 'redemptive' classroom and its role in vocation

Finally, the Christian English teacher has the opportunity to note the significance of redemption. Many of the West's favourite stories are redemptive.

This theme reveals to us our deep hope that our lives could be valuable both in the transcendent and the immanent. The chief purpose of people, says the Westminster Confession, is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

The English teacher can teach texts that feature dystopias (e.g., *Frankenstein, Lord of the Flies*) in order to critique the uncritical use of the progress metaphor in the society, or texts that highlight hypocrisy in the church (e.g., a film like *Spotlight*) but she also has a tremendous opportunity to teach texts that help the student understand why the good society matters or why personal integrity matters. This will bring her to the theme of redemption.

Redemptive texts repeat the gospel meta-narrative: flawed individuals or groups find salvation in an act of grace or kindness; people can change and grow and contribute. The purpose of an education in English is to learn to love.

Thus, as students engage with their final examinations and its 'sorting hat' we can aspire that they have personal authenticity, a conscience, an appreciation of aesthetics and a commitment to the common good, all qualities that will assist them to transcend any cultural over-valuing of representation at the cost of personal integrity.

Endnotes

1 I assume an understanding of my chapter on English Literature in Part C The periods that I refer to in this and subsequent paragraphs are explained in that chapter.

2 W Moberley, *The Crisis in the University*.

3 Malcolm Muggeridge, *Chronicles of Wasted Time*, p. 56.

4 M Weber, *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

5 C Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

6 https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1477827/2010_11churchstatistics

7 H Silver & J Brennan *A Liberal Vocationalism* pp. 15–16.

8 Polley, M *The History of Sport in Britain, 1880–1914:Sport and money, Volume 4*.

9 On teaching, see K Sullivan (ed), *Education and Change in the Pacific Rim: meeting the challenges*.

10 Note that Sullivan is critical of vocationalism. On nursing see: AM Rafferty, and J Robinson, *Nursing History and the Politics of Welfare.*

11 *Op cit,* C Taylor.

12 E Rudd, E and L Descartes (eds), *The Changing Landscape of Work and Family in the American Middle Class.*

13 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ni559bHXDg

14 M Volf, *Flourishing*.

15 Anselm, *Proslogium*.

16 W Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience.*

17 2 Corinthians 10:5.

18 Plato, *The Republic*.

19 Herodotus, *The Histories*.

20 Matthew 5–7.

21 *Nectar in a Sieve*.

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34 Developing the virtuous learning character

James Pietsch

> … a complete and flourishing human being needs all the basic strengths of character … The 'virtues' are the different strengths of character which together contribute to someone becoming a fully flourishing human being.
>
> NT Wright

What approach should we take to developing the character of our students in accordance with our uniquely Christian vision of the future which looks forward to the new creation, the bringing together of heaven and earth in one reality? This question requires us to reconsider once again what should be the purpose of education, and more specifically, the purpose of Christian education.

In a book titled *What's the Point of School*,[1] Guy Claxton challenges the idea that the purpose of schools is to transmit knowledge and information to students. Instead, he argues that schools should be places that teach students how to learn. Schools should teach students about how to deal with uncertainty, what steps they can take even when they do not know how to solve a particular problem. Schools should build resilient learners who are not put off by initial difficulties, but persevere when faced with challenging problems, resourceful and reflective learners who know how to learn in teams and individually. This emphasis on teaching students how to learn, Claxton argues, should

be evident in each classroom as students learn about Shakespeare, the periodic table and quadratic equations.

The development of students' capacity to learn, associated with approaches such as 'Building Learning Power', 'Visible Thinking' and 'Habits of Mind', represents a significant challenge for educators today. There is a growing awareness of the need to reshape education towards a focus on preparing students to be lifelong learners, and approaches such as these represent important frameworks designed specifically to achieve this goal. But the purpose of learning activity within Christian schools needs to reflect the specifically Christian vision of human flourishing found in the New Testament—a vision that focuses on the development of Christian character, encouraging specific behaviours and habits that result in the formation of character and the development of Christian virtues.

This chapter will examine ways of building a learning community with the specific goal of developing *learning character* informed by the vision of human flourishing found in the New Testament. *Learning character* refers to the interplay between the students' developing capacity to learn and the formation of character. Developing learning character will result in more than just students who are powerful learners—it will result in students whose learning is characterised by a deep sense of compassion, grace, kindness, humility and justice.

Expansive education

The model of developing learning character fits within the body of approaches to education described by Lucas, Claxton and Spencer as 'expansive education' (2013). Drawing on Yrjö Engeström's notion of 'learning by expanding',[2] Lucas, Claxton and Spencer identify many current approaches to education which seek to do four things. Expansive approaches to education, first, adopt goals that extend beyond conventional achievement on examinations; second, expand on our notions of intelligence and the kinds of dispositions that will enable young people to succeed at school and throughout their lives; third, see learning as something which takes place in many different contexts as well as the classroom; and fourth, recognises that teachers also have the capacity to be ongoing, enthusiastic learners as well.

There are many expansive approaches currently being implemented across different countries using a range of conceptual frameworks within which to describe the process of learning and associated ideas about intelligence, mindsets and culture. They include Project Zero run through Harvard University,[3] Art Costa's Habits of Mind framework[4] and approaches focused on teaching philosophy to young children.

The term 'expansive education' refers to a unique aspect of educational activities when compared with other human activities. All human activities, according to Engeström (1987), involve the transforming of objects to achieve outcomes that meet human needs. Unlike other human activities where the object is typically some material good or service transformed to meet a human need, educational activities focused on learning (as distinct from educational activities focused on 'schoolwork') have as their objects for transformation the members of this community of practice themselves. Drawing on Marx's interpretation of Hegel's dialectic, Engeström argues that human activities evolve over time in an attempt to resolve the fundamental production/consumption dialectic. But in expansive learning activities, the production/consumption dialectic resolves into a synthetic unity that drives the activity to a point of expansion or generation, producing new forms of human activity that have been made possible by the strengthening of learning capacity. Students at school grow and mature to be people who are able to participate in *other* forms of human activity that exist separate to the original learning activity.

The purpose of schooling, therefore, could be described as the process of recognising what characterises the human activities that our students will one day be engaged in, and what learning character will best prepare them for these activities. This definition of purpose summarises the purposes of all educational practice, Christian or otherwise. But what are the human activities that our students will one day be engaged in? We may answer this question with reference to our understanding of life in the twenty-first century and identify the ways in which our current practice needs to change away from transmission approaches to learning towards participatory approaches. Certainly, this is the intention of expansive approaches to education outlined earlier.

For us, however, as people of the Kingdom of God who look forward to the restoration of all things, there is a much larger picture of the

types of human activities that students could be engaged in, associated with their participation in the new heavens and the new earth. With this understanding of the future, we seek to develop students' learning character, teaching them the 'language of heaven'[5] in anticipation of this eschaton evident throughout the Bible. While not all students will choose to be a part of this new creation, the speaking of this language by teachers, other students and staff creates an opportunity within our schools for students from different faith backgrounds to gain an insight into God's plans and purposes for creation. The speaking of this language also challenges the dominant tongues of our age that speak of individuality, self-fulfilment and greed. It has the potential to generate ways of thinking, acting and doing that communicate something of God's character and the virtues that will characterise the coming kingdom of God.

Identifying strengths or developing the whole person

How, then, might schools pursue the development of learning character? There are two different possibilities suggested by different approaches. The first is to provide a context within which the character strengths of young people are encouraged to grow. The second is to identify the character strengths that are important to a particular community and to put into place strategies for developing these character strengths.

The character strengths approach suggests that the best way to educate young people is to encourage existing strengths to grow and flourish in individuals, like a gardener providing the conditions for a plant to grow according to its nature. The role of the teacher is to identify the character strengths of each student, building up different strengths in different students. In contrast to this approach of 'playing to one's strengths', the approach of 'Building Learning Power' views each of the dispositions as appropriate to promote with *all* students. Claxton et al.[6] describe these dispositions as muscles which need to be exercised individually, but all contribute to the development of powerful learning.

In a similar manner, Paul encourages his readers to put on the whole range of virtues—we cannot seek to become experts in one area (such as kindness) while neglecting to be self-controlled or gentle.

Christian education, therefore, is about developing the *whole* person so that all students, irrespective of their character strengths or weaknesses, have an opportunity to put on each of the different virtues that characterise the Christian vision of a restored humanity. While all students are encouraged to become better learners within the framework offered by Building Learning Power, students are also encouraged to become people who reflect the character of Jesus. All students, therefore, are encouraged to become better collaborators and better at learning independently. All students have opportunities to develop their capacity to think logically and all students are encouraged to imagine new possibilities. As well as becoming better learners, all students are encouraged to consider how they might become people of compassion and grace.

Claxton and colleagues regularly describe the classroom as a learning gym in which different 'learning muscles' are exercised at different times: '[*Building Learning Power*] ... uses our knowledge of learning and the mind to create a coherent picture of the kinds of mental agility and emotional stamina the good learner has, and to make sure that schools give all these aspects the work-outs they need in order to develop.'[7]

We often use the analogy of a fitness coach in a gym. Such coaches are able to construct broad, balanced and effective exercise regimes that will help people get fitter, because they have a model of what the different ingredients are that go to make up 'fitness'. They can get us to work on all those things, and gradually, in concert, they add up to improved fitness.[8]

This same fitness metaphor is adopted by Wright (2010) to describe the process of character formation through habits of practice: 'Working on one or two (muscles) isn't enough: there's no point having super-fit legs while the rest of the body is flabby, for example, ... In the same way a complete and flourishing human being needs all the basic strengths of character ... The "virtues" are the different strengths of character which together contribute to someone becoming a fully flourishing human being.'[9]

The activities that students engage in, therefore, both inside and outside the classroom, can be designed to promote the development of habits, dispositions, ways of acting and thinking that can become character-forming over time. All students should have opportunities to

build their learning character whether they (or us) identify these characteristics as strengths or weaknesses. While students might pursue their own individual interests within different areas of the curriculum and develop expertise specific to their interests (what might be described as finding their 'element' by Sir Ken Robinson),[10] all students are encouraged to become more powerful learners and people committed to the project of restoring a broken world.

Peterson and Seligman[11] make a similar case for the necessary development of virtues. They identify six virtues which are related to twenty-four character traits—wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. 'Good character' requires the development of each of the six virtues they identify, drawing on a range of cultural, spiritual and ethical traditions (reflecting closely Aristotle's four cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and courage). But Peterson and Seligman and their colleagues, in the development of their 'signature strengths' approach suggest that the existing character strengths of individuals provide the initial focus of teachers' attention as they attempt to strengthen students' character. The approach described here as the development of learning character challenges teachers to promote each of the different elements of learning character, building up the learning capacity of each student irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses.

Pathways to character formation

Tom Wright identifies within the New Testament an ongoing discussion about the formation of character.[12] The key to the development of virtues, according to Wright, is the transforming of the heart and mind. It is not by following rules that we become truly human, nor is it by simply being true to our inner selves. The first way involves identifying rules for living within the biblical writings and then obeying such rules to the best of our ability. The second is to reject the notion of rule-following, instead living 'authentically' by being true to our inner selves which have been transformed by the Spirit of God.

Wright plots a third path which brings together these perspectives within a theory of virtue. Rules and guidelines help us to know what types of behaviours are more likely to build the character associated

with the kingdom of God. But the end result is not primarily obedience (although obedience is an outcome), but the transforming of our character is such that our inner being is characterised by love, faith, hope, compassion, kindness, humility and gentleness. However, this is our second nature rather than our first, and it only becomes second nature over a considerable period of time. Appealing to our inner selves as a guide for ethical decisions represents an unwarranted short cut. Yes, the end result for those who await the coming new creation is a renewed heart and mind such that we reflect the character of God in this world. But the transforming of our hearts and minds does not happen overnight—indeed, it could take a lifetime.

Developing the virtuous learning character

How, then, can schools be places that promote the Christian virtues of love, kindness, patience, self-control, grace, compassion, humility and seeking justice? Requiring adherence to a code of conduct is unlikely to change people's character. Nor can we expect that students will simply know within themselves how to live in a manner that reflects the character of the kingdom of God. The third path suggested by Wright involves promoting behaviours (which would be described by Peterson and Seligman as situational themes) that become habit-forming, resulting in the transforming of character. In the context of schooling, therefore, character formation can occur through students (and teachers) engaging in carefully-designed learning activities which, over time, result in the transforming of its participants. As with the current emphasis on twenty-first century learning, we need to be open to replacing our transmission approaches to learning and development focused on rules by participatory models that view character development occurring within a community of practice.

In *Virtue Reborn*, Wright identifies five related elements of Christian communities associated with virtue formation that he locates around a *circle of virtue*. Each element informs the next element around the circle such that it doesn't matter where someone starts in this circle of virtue—eventually, all five elements will come into play to provide a context within which the people of God are challenged and encouraged

to become people of Christian virtue. These five elements are outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Wright outlines how these five elements operate and interact with each other in healthy Christian communities—typically in the form of church communities. However, these five elements are also evident in schools that see their role as sharing the vision of the 'complete' humanity outlined in the New Testament. Schools whose purpose, character and practices are shaped by the teachings of Jesus provide a context within which habit formation and subsequent character development are possible, incorporating the same five elements identified by Wright.

> **The first element identified by Wright (common to churches and schools) are their 'texts' or 'voices'.** Just as churches come together around the reading of scripture, so schools have their own 'texts' or 'voices' (using the notion of voices from Bakhtin's theory of dialogical spaces[13] that promote habits of mind in particular) and ways of doing that are foundational for the development of character. Many of these voices are heard through scripture in Christian schools, through the teaching of the Bible and conversations about the Christian world view that emerge from the biblical story. Unlike most churches, however, schools are communities in

which multiple voices contribute to the learning conversation. This conversation may include the voice of scripture, alongside other voices drawn from scientific communities, historians, geographers, scholars in many different fields as well as the voices of teachers and students. This conversation can be shaped, prompted and directed towards the development of learning character.

The second element identified by Wright is the sharing of stories. Claxton describes the activity of teaching as an 'epistemic apprenticeship'[14]. Whether we do so intentionally or unintentionally, teachers communicate certain beliefs about learning. Is the practice of learning mathematics, for example, about avoiding making errors, or is it about taking risks and exploring where different ideas might lead? Teachers regularly tell stories that communicate beliefs about students' capacity to improve their understanding—whether our learning capacities are relatively fixed, or whether it is always possible for us to develop as learners. Teachers also tell students stories about how learning occurs (intentionally and unintentionally). Does learning occur primarily through drill and practice, through the communication of ideas with others, or by asking the teacher what the correct answer is? Claxton argues that all teachers, whether they are conscious of it or not, are 'epistemic coaches', training students to think about learning in a particular way. He suggests that teachers need to be conscious epistemic coaches, identifying those learning dispositions which they are trying to build up in students each lesson. He argues for a 'split-screen' approach to each lesson where teachers are encouraged to consider how they might teach content and strengthen dispositions known to support learning.

Similarly, all teachers communicate something about *learning character*, intentionally or unintentionally. Sometimes we do this through the feedback we provide students (see Julia McGonigle's chapter for a discussion on how feedback is related to character development). We do this through the stories we tell about the benefits of learning. Students may be encouraged, for example, to approach their learning as a pathway to personal empowerment, increasing their chances of happiness and prosperity later in life. Or they might view learning as a pathway to a life of service, whereby

their skills, knowledge and capacities can provide support and comfort to other people.

Learning might be viewed as an individual endeavour in which each individual is competing with those around them to gain the 'rewards' of learning (which might be in the form of grades, acceptance into a university course, or simply the praise of the classroom teacher). Or our individual learning could be seen as a process intimately linked with the learning of those around us and that we learn best when we learn from and teach each other. Finally, learning might be connected with our self-image and ego, or it might be an outworking of our intellectual humility. The stories that we tell about 'learning power' as a means of self-advancement or as a means of serving others provide powerful insights into the values and virtues that are most valued within our school culture.

The third element is students follow examples, most notably their teachers. We model how to interact with different conceptual ideas each lesson, but more importantly we model what learning looks like in our various disciplines. Our learning practice informs our students' practice. What do we do when we get stuck? How do we deal with the fact that our understanding of each subject area is also incomplete? We need to model the same learning character that we hope our students will one day exhibit, being intellectually humble, people who ask questions that extend our thinking, who collaborate with others displaying grace and compassion rather than arrogance and ego. We need to be people who listen to our students to hear their perspectives and value these perspectives as sources of new ways of understanding our subject area, approaching our learning as an opportunity to become a voice for justice in the world.

The fourth element in Wright's circle of virtue development is engagement in a community. As we reflect on our goal of building learning character, we seek to establish communities of practice within which students (and teachers) are able to transform themselves, growing in understanding and maturity.

The fifth element in Wright's circle of virtue is a common language to talk about learning character and establishing common practices in each class. This language associated with learning character should be evident across the school such that all members of the school community recognise that 'learning' and 'growing as people of character' are features of the school community, not just for students, but for all participants in this community of practice—as teachers, parents and other staff working within the school are also encouraged to be people of grace, compassion, humility and justice.

In summary, learning character is promoted in schools in many different ways. Teachers model learning character, encourage students to adopt different aspects of learning character, tell stories about what 'good' learning involves and promote the development of learning communities that are characterised by expansive learning activities which have as their outcome the development of learning character. Schools support the development of such communities of practice through the way they structure learning activities, the language that is used to describe learning and the way that all members of this community show an eagerness to learn and grow in maturity and understanding.

Endnotes

1. Guy Claxton, *What's the Point of School: Rediscovering the Heart of Education*, Oneworld Publications, 2008.
2. Y Engeström, (1987). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit.
3. Ritchhart, Church and Morrison, *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners*, Jossey-Bass, 2011.
4. http://www.intel.com.au/content/dam/www/program/education/us/en/documents/project-design/skills/habits-of-mind.pdf, Costa and Kallick, 2002, p. 21, Partnership for 21st century Skills.
5. An expression used by former Bishop of Durham NT Wright in *Virtue Reborn, SPCK*. Also *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, HarperOne North America, 2010.

6 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlYRhoWtoiM.

7 Claxton et al., ibid, 2010, p.14.

8 Claxton et al., ibid, 2011, p.45.

9 Wright, 2010, ibid, Chapter 2, section 3.

10 Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica, Viking, 2009.

11 Christopher Peterson & Martin EP Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*, Volume 1, American Psychological Association, 2004.

12 Wright, ibid.

13 Bakhtin, MM (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin and London: University of Texas Press.

14 Claxton et al., ibid, 2013.

35 Building learning power

James Pietsch

> ... the world is full of all kinds of possibilities of the God of hope. It sees reality and [humankind] in the hand of him whose voice calls into history from its end, saying, 'Behold, I make all things new', and from hearing this word of promise it acquires the freedom to renew life here and to change the face of the world.
>
> Jürgen Moltmann

Research in education continues to contribute to our understanding of how students learn and how schools can be more effective places of learning for both teachers and students. However, much research pertaining to education and learning is yet to find its way into classrooms where the practices established in the nineteenth century for educating the working classes remain. This is despite the clear case for reforming our educational practice given the significant societal, cultural and technological changes that we have experienced over the past two hundred years.

Any case for change rests on assumptions and attitudes regarding the purpose of education. Only once the question of purpose has been answered can we then turn our attention to evaluating different strategies for achieving our goals as educators. In a book titled *What's the Point of School*, Claxton challenges the idea that the purpose of schools is to transmit knowledge and information to students.[1] Instead, he argues that schools should be places that teach students how to learn. Schools

should teach students about how to deal with uncertainty, building resilient learners, encouraging students to be resourceful, reflective and developing amongst students the capacity to learn with others. This emphasis on teaching students how to learn, Claxton argues, should be evident in each classroom as students learn about Shakespeare, the periodic table and quadratic equations.

This represents a significant challenge for schools whose activities have been framed by programs focused on delivering content rather than developing learning dispositions. Furthermore, it represents an additional challenge for Christian schools who have not only understood their purpose as teaching content, but have also placed particular emphasis on teaching content associated with the gospel. If the purpose of schooling is not the transferral of knowledge from teachers to students, but rather the development of students' capacity to learn, then what would this look like in a Christian school?

The purpose of this chapter is to outline a model for Christian education that is focused on the development of *learning character*. This approach has emerged from collaborative discussions amongst staff members at St Luke's Grammar School NSW Australia who, over the past three years, have been focused on reshaping classroom practice to provide students with opportunities to become more powerful learners. Drawing on educational research from many different theoretical perspectives, this approach identifies a range of dispositions associated with powerful learning and situates learning activity within a larger purpose for education—that of character formation, drawing on the specifically Christian vision of human flourishing found in the New Testament.

Building learning power

The model of education that has been foundational for developing this framework is Guy Claxton's *Building Learning Power*.[2] Claxton and colleagues identify a range of learning dispositions that contribute to students' capacity to learn across the curriculum. They suggest that teachers should maintain a dual focus each lesson on learning how to learn as well as learning how to make sense of the existing curriculum. As students learn about geography, science and mathematics, students

should also be taught explicitly how they can become more powerful learners.

Claxton et al. (2011)[3] describe the 'supple learning mind' as one which is able to be reflective, resourceful and resilient and has the capacity to learn in social contexts (strong in 'reciprocity'). In developing this approach to learning they suggest that the basic vocabulary of learning needs to be usable—neither too much nor too little information for teachers to generate ideas on how to change their practice. The model, therefore, begins with the four Rs, but underneath each 'R' are four or five 'finer-grain learning capacities. (p. 40). **Reflectiveness** describes the strategic and self-managing aspects of learning and is subdivided into Planning, Revising, Distilling and Meta-learning. **Resourcefulness** is the cognitive category and includes Questioning, Making Links, Imagining, Reasoning and Capitalising. **Resilience** refers to the emotional engagement with the content and includes Absorption, Managing Distractions, Noticing and Persevering. Finally, **Reciprocity** is the heading for the social side of learning and includes Interdependence, Collaboration, Listening/Empathy and Imitation.

Developing a language for talking about learning is a critical step towards developing a culture of learning amongst students and staff. The four categories for thinking about learning and their respective learning capacities give students a way of describing their own learning and reflecting on how they can strengthen their learning capacity. Furthermore, the structuring of this language into categories and subcategories enables staff and students to navigate their way around a conceptual space describing learning at different levels of detail.

One of the attractive aspects of *Building Learning Power* is its flexibility. Different schools across the world have developed their own language, drawing on the model initially developed by Claxton (2010). They have restructured the 4 Rs, added in new Rs (such as Respect) and replaced various learning dispositions with other ideas identified by each school as valuable for prompting learning discussions amongst staff and students. In our context, we need to ask ourselves the question: How do we make this model our own? How do we link it to the ethos of our school?

Restoration—a fifth R?

As a Christian school, our hope at St Luke's is that developing *learning character* might become the defining feature of our educational activity. This has seen the inclusion of a fifth R, **Restoration**—associated with the Christian virtues of grace, compassion, humility and justice. Instead of placing it alongside the other 4 Rs, however, we believe that God's project of restoring a broken world provides a foundation upon which our emphasis on learning dispositions can be constructed. Throughout the teaching of Jesus (and subsequently the teaching of Paul), we see the development of a radically different vision for humanity. It is not the empowered individual described by Aristotle whose moral goodness is a source of pride and self-fulfilment. Rather, it is in the giving of ourselves towards the restoration of others and the world around us, working for the good of others rather than ourselves that we find what makes us truly human.

The concept of Restoration is a way of describing the Christian hope—the hope that looks forward to the restoration of creation and the establishing of the new heavens and the new earth. It is this hope which also energises Christian involvement in the present. Jürgen Moltmann (1967) suggests that Christian hope:

> ... sees reality and mankind in the hand of him whose voice calls into history from its end, saying, 'Behold, I make all things new', and from hearing this word of promise it acquires the freedom to renew life here and to change the face of the world.[4]

We anticipate our involvement in the new creation by making every effort to be people whose lives reflect the character of the new creation that God is bringing into being. As Christian educators, our goal as teachers is to speak to these virtues with our students, to present a picture of human flourishing that challenges the dominant paradigm of self-fulfilment and self-empowerment evident in many secular theories of education.

In many school contexts the 'good news' of Jesus' death and resurrection has been reduced to a set of statements of belief that we present to students for them to believe in the same way that a teacher of science might set forth the wave-particle theory of light or describe the structure

of the atom. We provide reasons for these beliefs and hope that our arguments might convince some. Rather than merely continuing to engage in this battle of ideas, our intention is to be clear about the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection, while at the same time engaging students in a broader conversation about the hope of the gospel—the hope of forgiveness, of experiencing God's mercy, of being restored and what this looks like in people's lives. We want to describe the character of the Kingdom of God and ask our students to 'come and see' what this looks like in the context of a learning community. As a Christian school, we hope to provide our students with an insight into how they might locate themselves within the biblical narrative of Restoration.

This biblical understanding of God's work of restoration provides a foundation for the development of learning character through an explicit focus on certain competencies and character traits. How, then, might we describe the interplay between the character traits of grace, compassion, humility and justice and our understanding of learning competencies? To answer this question will require some clarification of the language used to describe habits, virtues and character traits.

Routines, habits, dispositions and virtues

Almost all vision statements developed by schools include the identification of desirable character traits (or virtues) which the school hopes its students will have at the conclusion of their formal schooling. So the concept of virtue is not a foreign one in education. But the process by which virtues are formed through educational activity and the connection between virtues and the outcomes typically associated with educational activity such as the development of understanding and the capacity to learn have received little attention in educational research. To develop an educational theory of virtue we begin with Tom Wright's book *Virtue Reborn*.[5]

According to Wright, virtues grow out of the habits that we form over a long period of time. They become part of our character, imprinted within and evident in our spontaneous action. They are the *second* nature that we take on rather than the nature into which we are born. Character formation begins with establishing habits of action, habits of mind and, in the context of this discussion, learning dispositions.

But prior to developing habits and dispositions, we engage in certain routines of action that become habitual over time. Habits refer to those actions or ways of thinking that are no longer the result of conscious reflection, but happen automatically. They are ways of thinking and acting which become grounded in our brains and bodies so that we can perform certain tasks 'intuitively'.

Certain categories of habits, however, become indicative of different character traits. People who have developed a collection of associated habits may be described as having a certain disposition. For example, a fastidious person regarding their appearance (a disposition) may be known by a range of habits which identify them as such—routinely brushing their hair, checking the length of their nails each week, flossing every couple of days, etc. The disposition of being fastidious about one's appearance describes a person who displays this collection of associated habits.

Habits, therefore, refer to specific actions, while dispositions refer to a general approach which is characterised by certain habits. This distinction is evident when comparing Art Costa's 'Habits of Mind' approach[6] and Claxton's Building Learning Power.

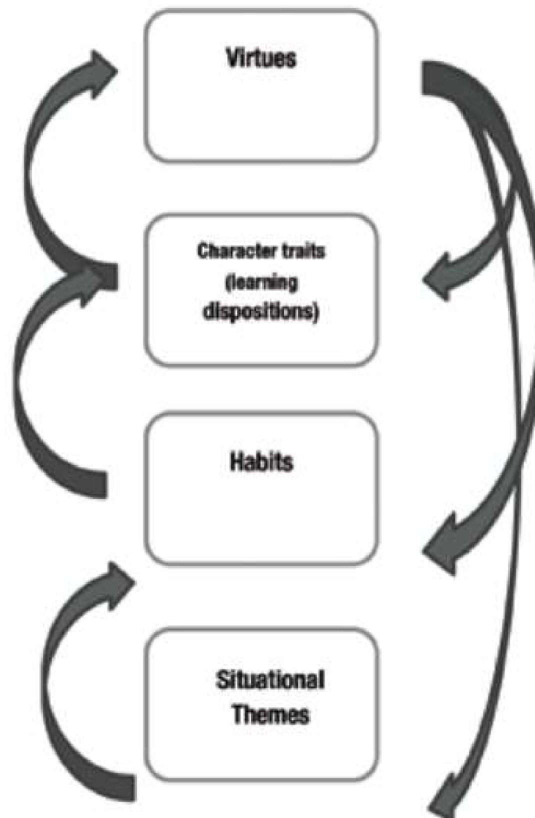
Art Costa's approach uses the language of 'habits', although he defines such habits as being associated with multiple behaviours that could be regarded as 'dispositions' (Costa, 2009). He identifies sixteen 'habits' of mind that teachers can promote amongst their students, each of which describe a category of behaviours (some may be conscious, some may eventually become automatic). For example, one habit is 'Creating, Imagining and Innovating'. Within this habit, there are a number of different behaviours teachers encourage their students to adopt—trying a different strategy when they get stuck, generating new ideas, developing fluency of thought and seeking ways to promote originality. Students who are strong in creativity are more likely to generate new ideas automatically when faced with problems, rather than have to remind themselves of the need to do this.

In parallel with Costa's Habits of Mind, Guy Claxton describes dispositions of powerful learners. One such disposition is *Imagining*. But the definition proposed by Claxton and how he describes what this disposition entails sounds quite different to the set of behaviours outlined by Costa. Imagining, according to Claxton, refers to being able

to let your mind explore and play with different possibilities, rehearse things in your mind, ask 'what if?' questions and using your imagination to think of new experiences. This definition refers to tendencies and characteristics of thinking rather than specific activities. While there are many behaviours associated with *Imagining* identified by Costa and others, Claxton prefers to focus on the approaches to learning that become more automatic over time.

We might represent the relationship between these different ways of thinking using a parallel framework drawn from Peterson and Seligman (2004). They argue that virtues are formed from different character strengths: these in turn are built up by *situational themes*—'specific habits that lead people to manifest given character strengths in given situations'. Situational themes in schools emerge from the traditional curriculum through which students are encouraged to develop ways of thinking and doing. Drawing together these different models, we can develop the following diagram through which these different aspects of learning character can be connected.

Diagram 1



By engaging with situational themes emerging from our study of English, mathematics, science and other subjects in school we identify various strategies, routines and techniques which support our understanding of these different subjects. The regular use of these different strategies, routines and techniques lead to the development of a smaller number of habits. In turn, these habits contribute to the development of a smaller number of character strengths or learning dispositions (Peterson and Seligman identify 24, Claxton identifies 17 dispositions and Costa identifies 16 'habits of mind'—many of which can be located at this level). These, in turn, support the development of a smaller number of virtues.

This describes the left-hand side of the diagram whereby each level informs the next level. However, virtues also interact with each of these different aspects of learning character. They are the fundamental aspects of our character and our humanness and, therefore, also provide a foundation from which learning character grows. People of compassion and grace will become learners who are focused on teaching as well as learning. They will be people who recognise habits that they need to change, and habits that they need to work on. Finally, they will be people who make different choices regarding what they learn about and the environments in which they feel most comfortable learning.

In reflecting on this diagram, we need to remind ourselves that the purpose of education is not just about developing an understanding of situational themes, thinking routines, or even dispositions. It is about the formation of character. Educators, irrespective of their faith position, must begin their task by developing a clear picture of human potential. What is our image of the 'complete' (adopting the Greek word *teleios* which is best translated as 'complete' rather than 'perfect') person and how do we provide students with opportunities to become complete human beings?

The person who is gracious, compassionate and kind will approach their learning in very different ways to achieve very different ends. Good learners demonstrate grace—they care for those with whom they learn, and recognise that if someone has a limited understanding of a concept or idea, this merely reflects their current state rather than their actual potential.

Good learners demonstrate compassion—they seek to serve other people and support the learning of those around them. It comes as no surprise that one of the most powerful ways to learn is to teach someone else. Compassionate learners recognise that they can contribute to the learning of others and their own learning by explaining their thinking and reasoning to other people. This idea that teaching and learning are intricately connected is evident in Russian where the one word *obuchenie* refers to teaching/learning without distinguishing between them. Teaching as a strategy for learning reinforces the idea that we are made to be other-person centred rather than self-centred and that we flourish as learners when we seek first the learning of others.

Good learners display humility. In an article appearing in the *New York Times* in 2014, Laszlo Bock from Google identified humility as a necessary fundamental virtue if someone is to be a lifelong learner. They need to know how to step forward in collaborative tasks and also how to step back and allow other people to present their ideas. Humility is a precursor to learning. By recognising our own limitations we look for ways to improve our understanding by listening to others, learning from experts and seeking the wisdom of those who have gone before us.

And finally, good learners seek to know and understand the world around them so that they might be a voice for justice. Good learners want to be involved in restoring a broken world, a world that is fractured by injustice, oppression, hatred and violence. They want to understand the world from a position of concern and love rather than a desire to control. They adopt an 'epistemology of love' (Wright, 2014) seeking the truth in such a way that both the knower and the known are dependent on one another.

Love is the deepest mode of knowing, because it is love that, while completely engaging with reality other than itself, affirms and celebrates that other-than-self reality. This is the mode of knowing that is necessary if we are to live in the new public world, the world launched at Easter, the world in which Jesus is Lord and Caesar isn't.[7]

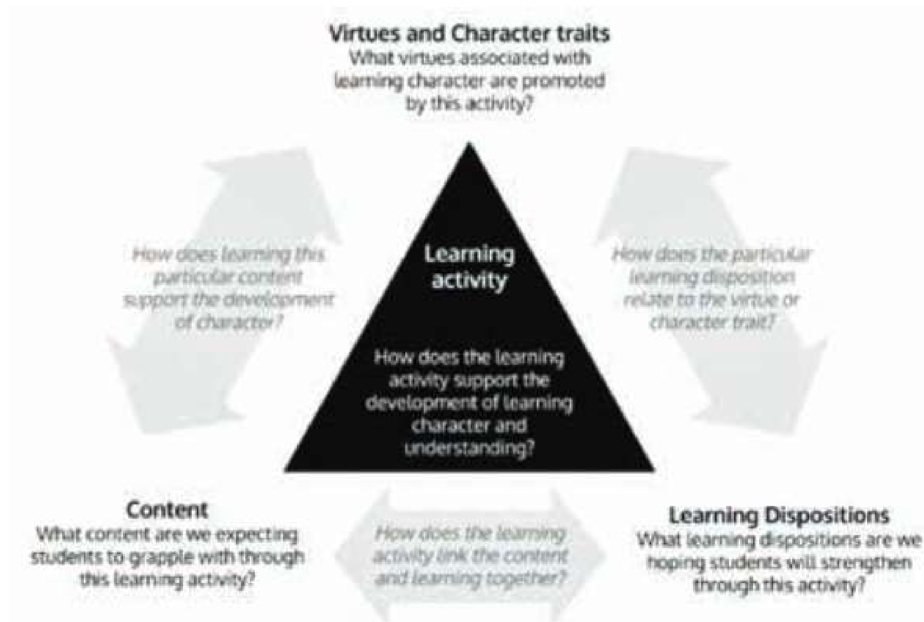
Our task as Christian educators, therefore, is to identify the habits associated with each learning disposition which, through being strengthened over time, can result in the formation of specific character traits associated with the restored creation. We recognise that the learning dispositions themselves can serve multiple masters and as educators we

need to be constantly asking the question regarding character—what virtues and character traits are we building up through the competencies and habits of our classrooms? As we consider how best to reflect on our practice, we need to return time and again to this question of character formation. How might we be explicit about the character traits that we hope to promote amongst our students?

Current implementation strategies at St Luke's

To assist staff with the planning of lessons, we at St Luke's are currently developing protocols that teachers can use when designing lessons. One such protocol is provided below which has been used in a range of different subject areas across the secondary school. The tripartite focus for each lesson including content, learning dispositions and virtues can be represented using a template similar to the lesson overview provided below which can be shared with students each lesson.

Diagram 2



This approach to lessons places learning activities at the centre of the lesson. This lesson brings together the three elements of content, dispositions and virtues such that learning about, in this case, how to calculate the cost of electricity becomes a stimulus for developing the capacity to distil key ideas and reflect on how the cost of electricity is related to issues of justice (in terms of different people accessing electricity and using resources prudently rather than wastefully). Such

ways of representing lesson outlines create a summary for students to appropriate as they reflect on the purpose of each lesson and also encourage teachers to consider how each learning activity is related to content, specific ways of thinking about learning and thinking about learning character.

While there is still much to be done to achieve the goal of seeing every lesson shaped by a desire to build learning character, we have reached a point at St Luke's where there is a common language for talking about learning that is used by students and staff alike. Our staff members recognise the need for them to be learners as well, and they are in the process of giving each other feedback on how they can be changing their practice to encourage students to become more powerful learners. Students in the school are able to reflect on their learning using the language of our framework and tend to respond positively when given opportunities to take greater control of their own learning.

The evidence we have collected so far suggests that much progress has been made towards realising the vision of creating a community of practice within which all participants are learners who are reflective, resourceful, resilient and relational. The shaping of character, too, remains a key focus for the school as members of our community reflect on how their practices promote different habits which, in turn, lead to the formation of character. It is our hope that the activities our students engage in do indeed promote compassion, grace, humility and justice and that our students are eager to be participants in the larger, world-wide project of restoration.

Endnotes

1 Guy Claxton, *What's the Point of School: Rediscovering the Heart of Education*, One World Publications, 2008.

2 Claxton et al., *Building Learning Power*, https://*www.youtube.com/watch?v=WlYRhoWtoiM.*

3 *onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/hec.3130/pdf.*

4 Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, Fortress Press, 1967, p. 26.

5 NT Wright, *Virtue Reborn,* 2010, SPCK.

6 Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick*, Habits of Mind across the Curriculum*, Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2009.

7 NT Wright, *Surprised by Scripture*, HarperOne, 2015.

36 The impact of marking and feedback on student character

Julie McGonigle

> And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our testing, because we know that testing produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us.
>
> Romans 5:2b–5a

The extract above presents a causal relationship between testing and the development of character. Ordinarily this testing is interpreted as general human suffering. However, this chapter presents the results of a pilot study that questioned whether, when transferring this maxim into an educational context, testing has a causal relationship with the development of good character in students. Testing, by nature, suggests that which is hard. Therefore, the question is, do challenging educational processes produce good character in students? If so, what are the implications for schools?

The pilot study focused on one educational process in particular: marking and feedback. Marking and feedback is arguably the most personal form of communication that exists for any student in a school. Yet almost no research exists as to the impact of that communication on the character of the child.

The pilot study was carried out in the spring term of 2016 in a secondary school in England. In this school, marking and feedback follows a **PARA** approach: **P**raise (acknowledge what the student *can* do), **A**ction (give them *improvement* targets), **R**esponse (student immediately responds to targets), **A**cknowledgement (teacher acknowledges that the targets have been fulfilled). The sample focused on year 10 and year 12 students whose teachers had been judged to have exceptionally good marking and high expectations.

The results of this pilot study show that all of the students involved made a link between the process of marking and feedback and the development of their character. The four virtues that they linked to this process were determination, courage, accountability and humility. 100% of students involved stated that the 'praise' section of the marking process (specific acknowledgement of what they *can* do) develops in them determination and courage to further tackle academic challenges. Conversely, the lack of praise or a focus on unachievable or opaque actions was a discouraging factor.

One class stood out as markedly different from the others. They had a seemingly irascible desire for increasing challenge and noted perceptibly negative feedback as developing in them humility and accountability. Further research of this class concluded that their resilience was largely created due to having the same teacher for three years in a row. This had developed a strong sense of trust and understanding between teacher and students. Therefore, they trusted that they would have the necessary help to meet the high expectations placed upon them.

Conversely, the research found that a lack of trust was more prevalent in classes who had only had a teacher for a short time and was especially prevalent amongst the most disadvantaged students (who often also lacked the trust relationship at home). This lack of trust meant that students in those classes required much greater focus on the 'praise' section of the feedback in order to give them the courage and determination to tackle the next academic challenge. (Please note that the school involved is situated in an area of significant social deprivation).

Character matters

The Matthew effect (25:29) is a biblical metaphor synonymous with the idea of accumulated advantage. This haunting parable has been applied in a wide range of spheres including education. The psychologist Keith Stanovich applied it to the reading process and ED Hirsch applied it to the achievement gap, eventually leading to the 'Massachusetts miracle' through the birth of the core knowledge curriculum: '... knowledge builds on knowledge: the more you know, the more you are able to learn'. (Hirsch, 1988, p. 111)

Many believe that 'everyone who has will be given more' (Matthew 25:29). In education this belief has motivated wide-ranging reforms from a primary focus on the early years' foundation stage to the current reversal to a core knowledge curriculum in many of England's most successful schools.

Romans 5:2b–5a presents us with another causal relationship: '... testing produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope'. Unlike the Matthew effect, this causal relationship is seldom used in the education sphere. Rather, in the sphere of education the concepts of testing and character development are often pitted against one another.

Take, for example, Paul Tough's widely read book on character education, *How Children Succeed*. This book is marketed as follows:

> The story we usually tell about childhood and success is the one about intelligence: success comes to those who score highest on tests, from preschool admissions to SATs (Standard Assessment Testing (UK) for 11-year-olds). But in *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough argues that the qualities that matter most have more to do with character: skills like perseverance, curiosity, conscientiousness, optimism, and self-control.

Implicit in that introduction is a separation between character education and testing. The character skill is more important than success in the test. While this may be an unintentional establishment of a dichotomy, it is a highly dangerous one.

So, does this passage from Romans help us to understand how to escape this dualism?

If we take a broader view of testing and call it challenging learning or hard work, what if it is challenge and hard work in schools that *lead to* students developing the habits of virtue? What are the implications of that for both character education and for schools in general?

The implication of that for schools is first and foremost that character development and the academic process are inextricably linked. They *cannot* be seen as different sides of the road. Together, they *form* the road. It is simply unacceptable for a school to think they are doing a good job on character education if they have a character education class and yet low or mediocre expectations throughout the rest of the school.

Testing produces character. Therefore, if we want to produce young people of good character we must have educational processes that are testing; i.e., highly challenging.

It is also the case that if the educational process does produce good character then all of our core business needs to be intentional about that character. We need to give students the language of virtue through all of our processes, making visible the development of character so that students can engage with it and take responsibility for it.

Character education through core business

However, as seen from the Paul Tough extract this is often not the case. While many schools are concerned about character education, more often than not it stands alongside core business rather than being inextricably linked or even an outcome of core processes.

One core process that has almost never been linked to the development of character is that of marking and feedback.

Almost the only research that has focused on the implications of marking and feedback is Professor Julian Stern and Anita Backhouse's 2011 empirical research into the 'spirit of assessment', which primarily focused on marking and feedback:

> Assessment in both schools and universities is often portrayed as impersonal or, if personal, as negative or destructive (Stobart 2008; Price et al., 2008) ... As research in schools suggests, much assessment 'tend[s] to lower the self- esteem of pupils' (ARG 1999, 4).

Recognising formative assessment, in the form of marking and feedback, as the most personal form of communication between teachers and students, they were puzzled that the 'spirit' of this communication receives little attention:

> ... assessment feedback is one of the most personal, individual, and (potentially) touching forms of communication between educator and pupil/student (Johnston, 2004). It is or can be a form of 'real dialogue', in Buber's terms.

Based on the work of John MacMurray and Martin Buber on community and dialogue, Stern and Backhouse put together a series of six questions that asked primary school students and college students to consider the personal and dialogic nature of the feedback they receive. (This was a way of judging students' views on whether marking and feedback has a 'spirit' that impacts the child.)

The results of this work were interesting. The primary school children noted the impact of the teachers' personal engagement:

> '... the things that the teacher said makes me want to improve'. In contrast, there is a sense of loss or being 'left out', in the comment from another pupil: 'I thought it was a good piece of work and she [the teacher] hasn't marked anything (both pages).' The pupils, in discussion with the researcher, returned to the issue of wanting to be valued, themselves, for their work, and of wanting to be proud. If they did not feel proud, either because of the teacher's comments or their own feeling of not doing well, then this was demotivating. (Stern and Backhouse, 2011:341.)

The children were also keen that teachers did not just recognise what was wrong with the work:

> 'All she has done,' says one pupil, 'is marked mastakes agine!!!', and another says that 'Pointing out moor spellings mastakes makes me feel very bad inside.' Magnanimous teachers would not 'only market bad things', but would put 'good and bad at the same time', as 'we need marking that shows us what we are good at and what we need to improve on.' (Stern and Backhouse, 2011:342.)

It was clear that they wanted dialogue and not monologue or non-specific ticks:

> One pupil said, 'I think instead of a tick ther should be something like good tranclating english into french', whilst others said 'Please write a comment' or 'Please say why you like it!'. In discussion, the children were very vocal in their condemnation of unqualified ticks and 'goods'. They recognised the need for corrections being highlighted but felt that a balance was needed, and really wanted to see dialogue. Conversely, where there were extended comments (more than two or three sentences) some of the children dismissed them and said in an exasperated voice, 'Oh, I can't be bothered to read that—there's too much!' (Stern and Backhouse, 2011:343.)

The conclusion of this research was that marking and feedback can be more or less dialogic which in turn contributes significantly to the nature of the learning community. By linking what is often seen as a technical process to the wider purposes of schooling, it was hoped that this would also link the process to positive rather than negative teacher performativity; i.e., teachers performing the function with *meaning* for the students rather than as an act to avoid *judgment* from school managers.

Bringing it closer to home

Building on this evidence, in February 2016, I carried out a pilot study in one secondary school in England to consider the impact of marking and feedback on student character. Using the same six questions and theoretical model as Stern and Backhouse, I also inserted a question into the process about core values:

> Look through your book/folder and copy out an example of feedback that helped you develop any of the school core values: honourable purpose, humility, compassion, integrity, accountability, courage, determination.

The case study school has a set of seven core values: honourable purpose, humility, compassion, courage, accountability, integrity and determination. These core values were introduced at the inception of the school

in 2005 and have driven its vision ever since. The students are explicitly taught about these values on entry to the school and they are both implicitly and explicitly returned to in all year groups. Therefore, they are both recognisable and widely understood. With this in mind it was thought best to use these values as the reference point for the question on character, helping to define what is otherwise a widely debated and far-reaching concept.

In 2014 the case study school adopted a **PARA** approach to marking. Using the evidence from *Inside the Black Box (*Black and Wiliam, 1998) the school wanted marking and feedback to identify what has been done well as well as what still needs to be improved; to give guidance on how to make that improvement and opportunities for pupils to immediately follow up on comments: in short, **PARA**:

Praise: tell the student what they have done well (next to a star);

Action: point out to the student how they can improve (next to an arrow);

Response: give the student time and space to respond to the improvement points (improvement work completed in green pen);

Acknowledgment: the teacher acknowledges the improved work.

The aim of the research was threefold:

- To test the effectiveness of the implicitly dialogic nature of this process, based on the results of the Stern and Backhouse research;
- To question whether the Black and Wiliam conclusions were being met through the process as a way of helping the school to improve the impact of its marking and feedback;
- To consider the impact of the process on student character.

Only the results of the last question are presented in this chapter.

The process focused on a student sample of classes from older age groups not so focused on examination revision and yet mature enough to engage with the abstract nature of some of the questions. Included in the sample were a range of abilities (sets) and all of the classes chosen were taught by teachers who had recognisably challenging marking and

high expectations of student outcomes (as evidenced through observations, work scrutiny and student outcomes).

The results

A question of character

The answers to the question on core values demonstrate that students do make a connection between marking and feedback and character. Analysis of their responses shows that they have a clear virtue hierarchy in this regard.

Figure 1:Hierarchy correlates to % of student responses connecting marking and feedback to particular character traits

Interestingly, no student made any link between marking and feedback and honourable purpose, compassion or integrity and yet the virtue of perseverance was used synonymously with determination. (Perhaps a consideration for the school—do all of the core values link to core business?).

Courage and determination

Overwhelmingly students noted that both courage and determination were fostered in them when it was specifically noted what they could do—praise [P]:

> Beautiful lexical choice and sensitive understanding of memory—gave me courage and determination.
>
> Your writing and structural development is improving—it helped develop determination and courage.

This was further validated through the answers to the question on motivation: 'Look through your book/ folder and find examples of feedback that made you feel good/motivated.'

All of the student participants gave an example of a praise [P] comment as that which they found motivating. The students often used the term 'confidence building' synonymously with motivating.

It was also acknowledged that the virtues of courage and determination were fostered when the praise [P] was followed by action [A]:

> MC identified how I did well in an explanation paragraph followed with 'To get an A* you must explain two factors with support from the source and accurate own knowledge'. I feel as though I have developed the courage to put my fullest effort into the response as the target shows that MC believes I can achieve an A*.

This was further validated by the question, 'Look through your book/ folder and find examples of feedback that made you feel bad/ de-motivated.' Across all of the students, de-motivating comments were not simply those that were negative; they were negative comments that came without action/guidance or that came with an unachievable or opaque action.

Humility and accountability

Only one class engaged with virtues other than courage and determination; they also matched the impact of marking and feedback to humility and accountability:

> 'John Snow not Simpson who invented the inhaler: showed my knowledge was wrong and I had to be humble.'
>
> 'Second inference and support. I think this helped me show determination to get a better mark and humility to admit I should improve it.'

'… good focus, good organisation: accountability for my own learning.'

Further analysis of the answers from this class revealed that they also differed from the other classes in their thirst for challenge. In the question, 'Write a list for teachers of ways that they can make their marking and feedback more helpful to you as a person', almost the whole class noted that they continued to want highly challenging targets. Their answers also demonstrated that they were less affected by perceptibly negative comments, and more focused on how these comments could be sharper.

Further observation of this class revealed that, despite being consistently given challenging targets and achieving highly, they continue to have irascible expectations. This contrasted significantly to the other classes who sought more praise and guidance above challenge. This was the case regardless of the ability of the group; ie., other groups in the sample were as high ability as the aforementioned. Therefore, it was hypothesised that they are more resilient than the other classes.

So, what was the reason for this resilience?

Resilience

Emmy Werner, a developmental psychologist followed a group of 698 children over a 32-year period to find out the factors attributed to resilience. The resilient children were set apart, regardless of social circumstances, by a strong bond with a caregiver, parent, teacher or other mentor-like figure. They were also set apart by psychological factors such as a positive social orientation, independence and a belief that they determine their own destiny. She also concluded that resilience is not fixed. It can increase or diminish depending on the balance of stressors in a person's life.

George Bonanno, a clinical psychologist at Columbia University in New York, has also studied resilience for almost three decades. His conclusions are that the people that use their stress-response system to breed resilience are those who conceptualise a potentially traumatic event as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Martin Seligman pioneered much of the work in positive psychology that found that you could train people to perceive events as

opportunities to grow. Changing their explanatory styles from internal to external ('Bad events aren't my fault'), from global to specific ('This is one narrow thing rather than a huge indication that something is wrong with my life') and from permanent to impermanent ('I can change the situation rather than assuming that it is fixed') made them more psychologically successful (resilient), in turn increasing performativity.

Linking this body of research to the current study found that the foundational difference between the resilient class and the other classes was that they had retained the same teacher for three years in a row. Linked to Werner's research they had formed a 'strong bond'. Observation of this class and the teacher-student relationships demonstrated high levels of trust. The students 'knew what she meant' when the feedback focused in on weakness. This was not perceived as 'negative', unlike some of the other groups, but rather as formative. It was also the case that the teacher set very high expectations. While this was not different to the other classes (all of which were chosen for their high expectations and challenging marking) taken together, the high expectations (from both teacher and students) and trust in the teacher who is going to help them to meet those high expectations, points to hope.

Returning to the Romans extract focuses our attention on the concept of hope.

The process both begins and ends with hope. Perhaps that is also the case with the educational process. The research above points to the fact that hope from the teacher enables students to rejoice in testing which in turn accelerates character development and the internalisation of hope for themselves, which accelerates academic progress (as evidenced through the progress of this particular class).

But, what is hope?

Hope

> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.
>
> (Corinthians 13:13)

Hope, as Paul identified in his letter to the Corinthians is one of three theological virtues. Hope, along with faith and love, has its focus on

and locus in God. Unlike Aquinas' cardinal or moral virtues of 'temperance, justice, prudence and fortitude,' the theological virtues are only truly realizable through divine means.

Broken down further, hope is twofold: firstly the future good that one envisions and secondly the help by which one expects to attain that vision. Therefore, God is both the object and the means of hope and the rationale for Paul's conclusion in the Roman letter that 'hope does not disappoint us'. (Romans 5:5a).

True hope depends on humility for those who profess to practice it. The vision cannot be attained by human measures; it requires divine help and necessarily a firm trust in that divine help.

Applying this theistic concept in the context of a school can be twofold. First, the literal application in the context of a Christian school (or any school through the 'broadly' Christian act of worship) that presents divine hope to students and then seeks to model that divine hope through the high expectations and teachers and leaders that are trusted to realise those expectations. Second, in the context of a non-theistic school, hope becomes simply the high expectations coupled with teachers and leaders that are trusted to help students meet those expectations. (While this is plainly an atrophied view of hope it is preferable than no consideration at all.)

In the case of this research, high expectations and teacher trust (hope) have created resilience in the students (the ability to rejoice in testing). This was demonstrated in their thirst for challenge and robust response to challenging marking, which they acknowledged as holding them to 'account' and helping them develop 'humility' (character). This starkly contrasted to other classes who were highly reliant on positive praise to sustain their motivation, often interpreting challenging marking as demotivating. Based on the resilience research it seems that these classes are less able to see challenge and testing as an opportunity to grow. Rather they have an underlying fragility and negativity that suggests that they are not imbued with hope, which is slowing down their academic progress.

David Halpin is one of the few educationalists that have written on hope. In his book *Hope and Education,* he identifies four enemies of hope in an educational setting: cynicism, fatalism, relativism and fundamentalism. Cynicism (as opposed to scepticism) he defines as

'being cryptically critical of most things' (p.18); as Gabriel Marcel states, it has 'death at its heart' (1962, p. 43). Fatalism is the enemy of hope as it is based on determinism and therefore a paralysis of the will to change conditions. It cripples the vivifying nature of hope and in an educational setting allows both teachers and students to be cynical in a way that avoids responsibility: 'We can't change things'. Relativism is the enemy of hope as it is blind. There is no reasonable vision to look forward to, therefore there is only confusion about what to hope for. Finally, fundamentalism adheres rigidly to the past, which 'places limits on what can be looked forward to' (p.23). While in setting out hope for the future this often 'entails a form of nostalgia or future-oriented remembering' (p.23), if it leads to an 'irrational commitment to just one course or collection of courses of action', this closes down hope and leans towards fatalism:

> Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! (Isaiah 43:18-19a)

In contrast, hope, as with humility, is open handed. Recognising the gift of yesterday and today it comes openhanded for tomorrow.

In an educational setting, these four enemies of hope can be virulent among both students and staff. At a classroom level, this research highlights the close link between cynicism, fatalism and fundamentalism. (Relativism was not relevant here as at a classroom level the teachers all had high expectations and the students clearly knew the course requirements—however, it is very relevant at a whole school level).

Further observation of one of the 'fragile' classes revealed a great deal of fatalistic thinking: 'I didn't do well before and I won't do well again'. This was often linked to a defence mechanism that suggested that teachers were biased towards brighter students: 'No matter what I do I can't get the grades of x', developing a cynical attitude and approach to the class. This cynical attitude meant that classes were all approached with the same negativity (fundamentalism) and lack of expectation for change. Interestingly, in the class observed, this was much more pronounced in the students who were classed as 'pupil premium' students; i.e., the most socially and economically disadvantaged. They had a much less 'hopeful' attitude than others, regardless of ability.

This clearly suggests that the worse the disadvantage the more hope is required for these 'dry bones' to 'come to life' (Isaiah 37:4–5).

Conclusions

Consideration of how the theological virtue of hope can vivify a school and its students is the work of another day. However, what is proposed here is that the educational process starts with hope. Hope for a child, for a school, a community. By bringing that gift of hope to the child, they are able to rejoice in their 'testing', secure in the trust of the help they will receive. In turn, that creates character that eventually creates the virtue of hope in them and so the process renews itself: a biblical helix.

For us as educators the question is, do we have hope? In an educational climate where the enemies of hope are virulent—cynicism, fatalism, relativism and fundamentalism—are we counter-cultural? If not, can we call ourselves educators at all?

Charles Peguy in his captivating poem, 'The Portal of the Mystery of Hope', presents 'little girl hope' (a personification of the second virtue) amongst her two older sisters, 'faith' and 'charity', drawing them forward.

Perhaps in an educational setting true hope is the catalyst behind all else.

Reading list

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37 Personality and character

Stephen Fyson

> Each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briers. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.
>
> Jesus

Dr Beth Green has reminded us, in Chapter 38, of the complexity of the classroom and how we sometimes forget this complexity with reference to assessment practices. Her warning is most apt. She also gives us ideas about what she terms 'humble tools', which I would propose are also noble tools. She suggests we 'knock the dust off' the strategies of using observation, interview, and the teacher. In this chapter, we will consider why this is important in our current Western climate. We will ask whether theories of personality have overcome considerations of character.

I will also suggest that if we do not use these kinds of more humane strategies to know what is happening for our students, our schools will become shallower. In particular, our Christian schools will be more at risk of losing their Christian heart in such an educational climate.

Has personality theory displaced character?

If you were to pick up any standard educational psychology textbook, would you see the following titles or questions in it?

- What helps develop good character for the teacher and the student?
- How can we love our students well?
- Why do we need discernment in teaching our students?

I suggest not. However, I do suggest that you are likely to see something like the following:

- The personality of the student
- Teaching to multiple intelligences
- The role of nature and nurture for the students in our classrooms

Some may think, 'So ... does this really matter, even if the language has changed?' That is a fair question, and we will briefly consider it. We could start our consideration by entering into a significant philosophical excursion into the meaning of human conceptualisation and the communication of that conceptualisation.

However, I think a simpler and as profound a starting point is with a quote from Jesus of Nazareth. The context is that Jesus was teaching a crowd about the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven. Some people of his time believed that it was only the external routines of life that demonstrated your true self. They criticised the followers of Jesus because they did not seem to follow those traditions—those external indicators of what they considered goodness. At those times, as in this teaching instance, Jesus was insistent that our character is a reflection of who we are deep down in the central core of who we are as thinking, decision-making people (in our 'hearts'): 'Each tree is recognised by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briers. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.'[1]

In the light of this philosophy of life, we can say that our language is a reflection of our deepest core convictions. This applies to our personal and professional lives. That is why watching our professional language can be an informative exercise. I would suggest that the three shifts indicated above have not been accidental or insignificant:

- The shift from character to personality theory reflects a shift

from viewing ourselves as beings responsible for our moral decisions, to advanced animals who respond to stimuli;

- Therefore, we view our teaching relationships in terms of brain based patterns rather than through the lens of what can be learnt within good heart to heart commitments; and
- We therefore plan our teaching according to the genetics and social upbringing of our students (which of course has some sense to it), and ignore that when we are in our classrooms, we are involved in a spiritual discourse as much as anything else.

James Davison Hunter did an historical overview of the shift away from character from a sociological perspective. He noted that in the 1800s and earlier 1900s:

> ... character was always related to an explicitly moral standard of conduct. While the word 'character' did not disappear, an alternative vision of the self emerged. This vision was captured by the word 'personality' ... The concept of personality reflected a self no longer defined by austerity but by emancipation for the purposes of expression, fulfilment, and gratification.[2]

This shift in orientation of the basis of virtue in Western society, from the mid-1900s on, resulted in an important cultural shift in how we determine what is good for us to do (which is the out-working of character). What is interesting for us who work in schools and with young people, is that Hunter also traced what happened to how young people were taught about virtue and vices in the invitation to grow in their character.

Table 1 summarises his historical overview[3] (which is extensive, and based on the American experience).

Hunter's conclusion about our current situation in terms of how we think and teach about character is that all the major paradigms now are 'at root, self-referencing and oriented toward the end of personal well-being'.

What does this look like in the everyday language of our times? Hunter describes it as the 'triumph of the therapeutic', whereby ethics have been taken over by psychological subjectivism. Indeed, he believed

Table 1:From Moral Realism to the Death of Character—as per Hunter (2000)

Aspect of character development	From	To
Content of moral instruction	From the 'objective' moral truths of divine scriptures and the laws of Nature	To the conventions of a democratic society, to the subjective values of the individual person
Sources of moral authority	From a transcendent God	To the institutions of the natural order and the scientific paradigms that sustain them, to the choices of subjects
Sanctions	From the institutions and codes of the community	To the sovereign choices of the autonomous individual
Primary institutional location	From the family and local religious congregation and the youth organisations	To the public school and popular culture
Arbiters of moral judgement	From the clergyman	To the psychologist and counsellor
Character of moral pedagogy	From the cultivation of a sense of good and evil through memorisation of sacred texts	To a largely emotive deliberation over competing values
Premise of moral education	From the sense that people are, for all their other endearments, sinful and rebellious	To a sense that they are good by nature and only need encouragement
Purpose of moral education	From mastery over the soul in service of God and neighbour	To the training of character to serve the needs of civic life, to the cultivation of personality toward the end of well-being

these shifts caused the change in the language of character to the language of personality.

A more recent review of this shift of the basis of moral character—individually and socially—is by Theodore Dalrymple.[4] Dalrymple's basic thesis is that every manifestation of psychology from Freud on has overstated their efficacy and also, critically, helped develop a reduced awareness and enactment of personal responsibility for our moral decisions and actions. Thus Dalrymple concludes:

> … the overall effect of psychological thought on human culture and society, I contend, has been overwhelmingly negative because it gives the false impression of greatly increased human self-understanding where it has not been achieved, it encourages the evasion of responsibility by turning subjects into objects where it supposedly takes account of or interests itself in subjective experiences, and it makes shallow the human character because it discourages genuine self-examination and self-knowledge. It is ultimately sentimental and promotes the grossest self-pity, for it makes everyone (apart from scapegoats) victims of their own behaviour…[5]

To reach this conclusion, Dalrymple, as a retired psychiatrist who used to work (in part) in the prisons of England, surveyed the core therapeutic approaches of Freud, behaviourism, cognitive behaviour therapy, medicalisation and rehabilitation as therapy, the self-esteem / self-love therapeutic approaches, genetic and brain scan psychological approaches, the addictions as disease movement and neo-Darwinism.[6]

This shift towards a non-spiritual soul as the basis of personality has become manifest in our schools through the 'myth of neutrality'. Brian Hill called for an abandonment of this myth of neutrality which has been based on the misappropriation of the naturalist scientific method as applied to understanding people, and thus to teaching and learning. His comments are indicative of the recognised need to explore the role of defining absolutes around which schools can gather as community. He noted that how we handle the myth of neutrality even affects how we do assessment:

> The school is in the business of values education, unavoidably…
> The myth of neutrality has clouded the issues for too long…

> schools must become more than knowledge factories, and assessment more than apple-sorting, for students are more than disincarnate minds, and so are teachers.[7]

This corresponded to the comments made in the *American Psychologist* by Paul Vitz, who noted that: 'Some educators and parents propose that morality should be kept out of the public schools altogether and taught at home instead. This position is unsatisfactory because it is not possible to remove values from education. For example, every story used to teach reading brings with it a world view and associated values.'[8]

These authors believe that we have moved from a period when we had a better balance between the needs of society and the individual, to a time when individuals can sentimentally call for more and more concessions to counteract responsibility for their conduct. An emeritus professor from Yale University (Seymour Sarason) believed this happened when we jettisoned the concept of sin:

> Therefore, one must ask what price has been paid in the substitution of the concepts of morals and values for that of sin as a transgression of divine law?... I would suggest, as have many others, that the price we paid was in the weakening of the sense of interconnectedness among the individual, the collectivity and ultimate purpose and meaning of human existence.[9]

Bringing character back to the classroom and assessment process

If we consider afresh that we are more than mechanistic brain driven machines receiving cognitive information into a neutral data bank, then we will remember that teaching and learning involves:

- Being invited to learn new information and skills; plus
- Considering *what we will do* with this information and skills.

The second point is in recognition that we are decision-making beings that can choose to live by instinct, or not. Thus, for each topic or subject that we teach, we can consider *what is the purpose for which we are teaching this?* If this is how we approach our teaching, then we can also consider the question *what will our students do with what they learn—for what purpose are they learning?* Both of these questions assume

that we can transcend our genetics and social upbringing (nature and nurture) and think ethically about anything we are learning; i.e., there is no such thing as being neutral in our teaching.[10]

This is consistent with a biblical understanding of 'to teach' and 'to know'. To *know God* is more than to *know about* God. This 'knowing about' was called the 'scholarly opinion of the Rabbis... which was taught without reference to relational norms',[11] and indicated that this was head knowledge only, without any reference to or consideration of what someone *did* with what one knew. In the context of 'knowing God', the focus biblically is for those who are wanting to draw closer to God. To know God in these biblical contexts means to reflect on the state of our ongoing relationship with God, not just with being able to recite information about God, his teaching and his acts in history.

The Old Testament word for 'teach' (*lamad*) is about acting in a way to draw people closer to God. As one commentator expressed it: '[*lamad*]... does not primarily denote the communication of knowledge and skills (as opposed to that of the profane [pagan] Greek), but means chiefly instruction in how to live, the subject being the will of God.'[12]

The same principle applies to the New Testament. Selter expressed it this way in considering what the training and nurture of the Lord means in Ephesians 6:4:'...the right (Christian) way to bring up children is not determined by the use or non-use of educational helps or method, but the purpose for which it is used... by whether it is directed towards the Lord.'[13]

So what implications might this have for our classrooms? Let us return to Beth Green's three 'humble strategies', and suggest some context for our Australian Christian schools in the light of what we have described in terms of the importance of considering the *purpose* of our teaching and the reported *loss of character*.

Back to the teacher as observer and interviewer

We can summarise the discussion about character this way: knowing the heart state of our students applies to the teaching of any aspect of any subject. That is why anything we teach to our students can reinforce the life direction of our students' hearts, one way or the other. No subject is neutral if we understand this. Therefore, understanding

Table 2: Godly character questions for our classroom—based on Hunter (2000)

Aspect of character development	Goal	Some heart level assessment reflections: do we observe and talk to our students about the following?
Content of moral instruction	Teaching the moral truths of divine scriptures and the laws of nature	Do we engage their hearts and minds in the way we teach scriptural truths in any subject we teach?
Sources of moral authority	God is the source of all good	Do we ask and learn about competing sources that claim to be true and good in the lives of our students?
Sanctions	The institutions and codes of the community	How do we learn about competing fears and drivers of our students' hearts?
Primary institutional location	The family and local religious congregation and the youth organisations	We know that peers become important—do we know what the peers are saying?
Arbiters of moral judgement	Those mature in the church	Who are the informal counsellors of our students, and are they biblically astute?
Character of moral pedagogy	The cultivation of a sense of good and evil through knowing sacred texts	Do we understand the confusion of the emotions of our students, given all the things they hear that is different, compared to Scripture?
Premise of moral education	Understanding that people are, for all their other endearments, sinful and rebellious	Do we learn to describe sin, in love?
Purpose of moral education	Developing the soul in loving service of God and neighbour	Do we know the developing goals (or lack of goals) of our students over time?

the response of our students to what they have learned is more than seeing they can repeat the knowledge, and its application. This is one reason that Beth Green had this encouragement in her conclusion: '... you [as teachers] ought to be a primary source of reliable data about the learning of the people in your care'.

Robert Starratt expressed it this way in reflecting on the most important development strategy for teacher practice: '... teachers would be held accountable to know their children well, and to have devised appropriate responses to whatever diagnosis they have made'.[14]

If we want to know the heart, and thus character of our students in the way Hunter described, perhaps we can keep the heart-level questions in Table 2 in mind as we get to know our students well:

If the list in the third column seems daunting, remember that our God is a longsuffering and merciful God.[15] He knows our worried hearts better than we do.[16] He invites us to treasure his ways of life, and to not worry about the rest.[17] He has sent his Holy Spirit to guide us to Truth, if we call out to him.[18] If you think this will take you to deep places of doubt and vulnerability, remember that deep peace comes in walking even through the deep shadows and finding that God is there.[19]

For any of us who have lived in the classroom long enough, we know that risk and vulnerability is part of our teaching and assessment journey. Alternatively, we can ignore this depth, and our students may do well in the tests that they undertake. But like those disciples who said, 'Do not bring those little ones here',[20] we will be keeping young people from being blessed by the Creator?

A starting point may be to use the questions with our graduating students. 'Exit interviews' are an increasingly common tool in business settings. The aim of these interviews is twofold: (a) to create an atmosphere of goodwill, even as people leave; and (b) to learn from their experiences to improve the community.

The same could be helpful with our graduating students, many of whom may have been with us for long periods of time. The questions above, which are focussed on understanding the sources of character development of our students, could be recast as:

- Are there any deep biblical principles that you learned while at school that you believe will help you in life? In which subject(s)

did you learn these?

- How would you describe the purpose of your time at school?
- When you face moral dilemmas in your after-school life, how will you judge what is right and wrong for you?
- What do you believe are the most important characteristics for you to develop (or keep developing) as a person after school?
- What do you believe can most help the problems that are in our world?
- What do you think has helped you most at school (as a student and as a person), and what could have been done better?[21]

This at least would be a respectful activity. It may also be a wonderful source of us assessing how we are going in our Christian schools.

Purpose—in some ways, even though there have been probably thousands of books written on teaching as a Christian, and on assessing as a Christian, it all starts with our reflection on the purpose of what we do every time we walk into the classroom.[22] The heart level 'assessment reflections' in Table 2 are offered as a starting encouragement. It is ultimately between each one of us and our Creator how we will approach the opportunities he gives to us.

Conclusion

The ultimate purpose question that we can ask through observation, interviews and understanding ourselves as teachers was put some 1700 years ago by Aurelius Augustine. He simply commented: 'So anyone who thinks that he has understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by his understanding build up this double love of God and neighbour, has not yet succeeded in understanding them.'[23] Let us remember who we are as people, committed to teaching as Christians, and then urge each other to keep reflecting on this two-fold love.

Endnotes

1 Luke 6:44–45.

2 James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character*, Basic Books, 2000, p. 7.

3 Summarised in Hunter (2000) pp. 146–147.

4 Dalrymple, T (Dr Anthony Daniels), *Admirable Evasions: how psychology undermines morality*, Encounter Books, 2015.

5 Ibid, p. 112.

6 To be fair to Dalrymple, he notes the areas where these therapies can make a constructive contribution therapeutically (it is normally much more narrow than the popular proponents suggest). His critique is consistent with my own conclusions based on my psychological work over decades. That part of Dalrymple's work is not the focus of this essay however.

7 Hill, BV (1991) *Values Education in Australian Schools*. Melbourne: ACER. (p.168). Also see Hill's later works—Hill, BV (2004) *Exploring Religion in School—a national priority*. Openbook Publishers; Hill BV (2008) 'Values in Free Fall? Religious education and values in public schools', *Journal of Christian Education* 51 / 3 43–55.

8 Vitz, PC (1990) 'The Use of Stories in Moral Development', in *American Psychologist* June, 709–720. (p.709)

9 Sarason, SB (1986) 'Commentary: The emergence of a conceptual center', in *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 405–407.

10 For more on this, see Trevor Cooling's *Doing God in Education,* Theos Centre, 2010.

11 Jefford, CN (1988) 'Teach' in Bromiley GW (ed.), in *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, p. 744.

12 Brown C (1971) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Vol. 3, p. 760.

13 In Brown, C (1971) *Theological Dictionary of the New Dictionary* Exeter: Paternoster Press. Vol. 1 p. 50.

14 Starratt, RJ (1993) *Transforming Life in Schools: Conversations about leadership and School Renewal.* ACEA p. 93.

15 Exodus 34:6, Psalm 86:15, Romans 9:21–23, 2 Peter 3:9.

16 I John 3:20.

17 Matthew 6:25–34.

18 John 16:13.

19 Psalm 23.

20 Mark 10:13–16.

21 There could be many, many different variations to these questions, of course.

22 For more about this, go to http://www.whatiflearning.com/.

23 Augustine, A, *On Christian Teaching,* Oxford Classics, 2008, p. 27.

38 Measuring complexity in the classroom

Beth Green

> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.
>
> James 1:22–25

Why good measurement matters

When we look into a mirror, we are searching for the things that matter most to us. We are essentially measuring ourselves, allowing the mirror to reflect back what we value. In his New Testament letter, James warns us of the utter folly of looking in a mirror and then immediately walking away and forgetting what we look like. James is writing about what a life lived out in the kingdom of Jesus looks like. Measurement is like a mirror that shows us whether there is growth and change.

But growth and change are not ends in themselves. It matters what we grow *toward* and *how* we change. Remaining with the mirror

analogy for a moment, imagine the house of mirrors at a fairground. Reflection can give an accurate picture, but it can also deliberately distort and disorientate. Measurement can do this too and it would be unwise to gaze intently upon a grotesque representation of reality. Good practices of measurement chart progress towards proper ends. Ask anyone on a diet or saving for a holiday: when you get out the tape measure or check in on your bank balance, you are only looking for results in one direction. In order to get the most out of measurement in the classroom, you need a vision of the good.

Agreeing what the proper ends of education are is inherently controversial because it involves competing visions of what life is about. Our overwhelming tendency in Western education systems is to focus on the individual. This reflects back a limited vision of what it means to be a person (Smith & Carvill, 2009). My Fitbit counts how many steps I took today and then encourages me to compete with myself to beat the target tomorrow. Yet for measurement to really work, it has to involve the community in a process of reflection and accountability. If I pin up the printout from my Fitbit app on my fridge, my housemate can ask pertinent questions about how many steps I did today and whether eating that ice cream will help me toward my goal. This is one of the points James is making in his letter about how to flourish: after we have looked into the mirror, we should act. James argues that those actions should be of a particular character: to protect those in distress and keep away from all that is evil in the world. Good measurement is a practice of flourishing toward the vision of the good life that Jesus brings.

Using the tools of measurement appropriately

If I am selective about the data I put into my Fitbit, or the outputs I choose to share, then it is possible to create a totally misleading impression of the progress I am making towards my fitness goals. Measurement in education is rapidly becoming a policy obsession. If only certain people get to determine what education is for, if the wrong things are measured, and if only a narrow range of tools are used to do it, then not only is that grossly irresponsible; it is ultimately unjust.

A quick overview of the data collected about education reflects back to us what we value. It is not surprising that most of the data publicly available about our education systems focus on academic outcomes and spending. Most of us would, at a quick glance, find those measures uncontroversial. After all, we want our young people to achieve a good standard. We want education to be accessible and for money to be well stewarded, whether it comes from the public purse or independent school fees. However, it's essential to think more deeply about the tools used, the nature of the data collected, and the story it tells back to us about what education is for.

To illustrate, take these examples from the United Kingdom and the province of Ontario in Canada.

In the United Kingdom, data on academic outcomes is regularly collected and published in league tables that incorporate all phases of education from nursery or kindergarten right through to higher education. League tables inform institutional inspection, recruitment, and central government funding. When they were first published, the rankings were based on a simple average. Schools that recruited students with higher social capital inevitably topped the tables, and this was an unsophisticated way of measuring school effect (Foley & Goldstein, 2012).

In the mid-1990s, the UK government introduced a contextual value added (CVA) measure to take account of prior attainment and the socio-economic background of students. The measure has since been scrapped because of arguments that schools were manipulating the data to increase the number of students counted as having lower economic and social status in order to inflate the CVA score.

Approximately a third of students in the UK are enrolled in schools funded by the state but run by Christian churches. Historically, church schools have performed well in the school league tables. This leads to a strong temptation for churches to justify their existence on this basis rather than on the basis of what they contribute to the common good or offer in terms of a distinctive Christian education (Green & Cooling, 2009).

Canada's educational systems aren't national, so each province and territory is unique. In Ontario, you will find the reverse of the situation in the United Kingdom in that it is difficult to find published data

on school enrolment, spending, and academic outcomes. The public perception is that the province has a very good standard of education (Allison, 2014). Ontario's scores in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings have been historically impressive, but in the most recent rounds of testing they only held up in English and Science; scores are declining in Maths (Brochu et al, 2013). PISA is a controversial tool of measurement, but the significant point here is that public education in Ontario is hermetically sealed off from a vibrant conversation about progress and purpose.

In Ontario, the resistance to engaging in robust public policy debate about education, informed by good measurement, effectively denies parents, local communities, churches and other faith groups from holding any stake in the public education system. Only Catholic and French-speaking schools are funded under the separate system; all other types of school in Ontario are independent. This doesn't just reinforce the assumption that public education should be a secular space; it has also meant that in practice the independent school sector, including Christian schools, have no incentive to see themselves as having any public responsibility since they are forced to operate within the bounds of education as a private—not a public—good.

How to model the classroom

A mirror is a basic model, but it captures an image of reality and reflects it back. It does not constitute the reality itself, but it shapes the way that we see ourselves. In response, we may or may not choose to act on the information it provides. So far we have seen that measuring education is an important part of being critically reflective; it can facilitate a helpful conversation about what education is for and involve and support a community in working toward those ends. We have also seen that when measurement is done poorly, lacks quality or becomes the goal, it can damage or close down the conversation—to the detriment of the whole community. Modelling the classroom well in order to measure accurately and in meaningful ways is very important.

'Classroom' here is shorthand for a number of different things we might want to measure about education. It could include teaching and learning, systems like pastoral care or administration, or the progress

of learners and professionals. Furthermore, we might be evaluating progress, measuring efficiency and cost, or looking for evidence of the influence or impact of particular interventions. Keep in mind that the classroom is a complex setting where many of the different features of institutional and social life collide with people and where new forms of knowledge and learning emerge. We need a more complex model to help us carry out measurement in the classroom, though it's worth keeping in mind that even the best research practices only allow us to peer 'through a glass darkly'.

Taking our cue from the principles of good research design, it is important to be precise about what questions we are asking, model the setting or context appropriately, and choose the right tools. But we also need to be measured about the claims we make. To offer an example, imagine we have asked questions about the impact of a particular curriculum intervention on student learning in year 9. We measured scores before the intervention and again afterwards, and the great news is that grades improved.

Now let's assume that we really did measure the impact of the intervention and that the improved scores couldn't be attributed to a whole host of other factors. It would still be a huge and unjustifiable leap to argue that the academic performance of all students in the school was improving, because that was not what we asked or what we measured. Before we shake our heads in horror at such a simple error, remember how many school recruitment publications report one-off measures like this, despite such measurement being but a partial reflection of the whole. This data is only meaningful if we know more about the learning goals that the teacher had in mind, the nature of the intervention, and the spiritual, social, emotional, and learning needs of the students and perhaps their families too. Building up layers of data of this kind creates a more complex model. If other teachers are thinking about and measuring these things in their classrooms, too, a fuller image of pupil learning in the school begins to be reflected back.

One of the problems with models typically applied to the classroom is that they draw on simple input/output systems. These were common in systems theory in the 1990s and they have imported into education a simplistic understanding of how learning happens. In effect, input/output models conceptualize education as a simple transaction

in which one can manipulate inputs to predict and control outputs. The problem is that within this model, the classroom is conceptualized as an irrelevant black box (Black and William, 2004). In actual fact, this lags behind some critical developments in systems thinking, which embraces more of the research into complexity found in the natural and social sciences. Complexity theory puts the black box at the heart of its models of measurement because it seeks to explain the relationships and interactions from which new organisms (in the natural sciences), new social behaviours and practices (social sciences), and new learning (education) emerge.

Modelling the complexity of the classroom does not make the features we typically associate with measurement in education—such as curriculum content and delivery, assessment data, or mastery of key skills—redundant; rather, it changes how we conceptualize them in relationship to the purpose of education. Complex systems theory always talks in terms of purpose; the intended result or outcome (Blockley and Godfrey 2000). This is helpful because it reminds us that the creation of any model is only meaningful in relationship to a proper end. In a more complex model, we may still measure familiar things like attainment and attendance, but we will also measure all sorts of other things. For example, we might measure how teachers and students self-report beliefs and values, or the practices of teaching and learning that can be observed in a classroom. In a complex model, these variables that we have measured are not understood as inputs to be manipulated in order to bring about change. Instead, it is the interactions between what you have measured and how they relate to the purpose of education that are important. These interactions have to be understood in context and we need to be mindful that a change might very well happen that was not predictable. In a classroom, this kind of unpredictable change would lead to new forms of learning, bringing about what is defined in complexity theory as 'emergence'. Note that this takes into account the fact that not all the learning that takes place in the classroom may support the intended purpose of education.

A practical example of a measurement tool which uses a more complex model is the Private School Assessment Survey (PSAS). This measurement tool was built by the Cardus Religious Schools Initiative (CRSI) at the University of Notre Dame. The PSAS is designed to

provide Christian schools with a comprehensive evaluation of their school climate and its impact upon students. The measure can evaluate how well core values are being communicated. It can map the assumptions of students, parents, and teachers about the school. It can compare the religious practice and behaviours of students, parents, teachers, and alumni. The PSAS example demonstrates that it is possible to collect robust and meaningful data on the impact of Christian schools and to offer analysis of institutional impact within the context of a fuller vision of education as a public good. This measure happens to be quantitative, but qualitative and mixed-methods approaches can all model complexity and, depending upon what question you are asking, might be more appropriate ways of measuring the classroom.

In this section, we have seen that three key principles underpin good measurement in education. These are: first, a clear definition of the purpose of education; second, precise research questions with measured claims, and third, designing a model that can adequately handle the complexity of the classroom.

An apprenticeship into the tools of measurement

In 2015, a British newspaper ran an article about Alastair Simms of Wetherby, West Yorkshire, who is the last remaining master cooper in England. Coopers make wooden casks for beer using traditional tools and a cooper is apprenticed into the trade, which typically takes four years. Alastair was advertising for an apprentice: '... the successful candidate must be able to lift heavy loads and demonstrate an affinity for using traditional tools' (Singh, 2015). One of Alastair's concerns was that potential applicants are no longer familiar with the traditional tools of cooperage.

Our preoccupation with big data in education means that some tools in the box are getting dusty. In particular, we are becoming increasingly skeptical of the significance of eyewitness testimony. The fact that people might be capable of giving a meaningful account of their own motives or experiences or that a professional might be able to make an informed judgement about teaching and learning based on observation and interview is increasingly unlikely to hold up in court.

This has happened because our Western worldview remains largely enslaved to the enlightenment fallacy that reality can only be explained by reducing it to its smallest parts: cells, atoms, quarks or strings. This is known as reductionism. Stuart Kauffman is a theoretical biologist studying complexity in the origins of life. Whether or not you agree with his case, it is important to recognise that he has made a compelling case against reductionism. He is arguing that the toolkit of the natural sciences is too limited because it denies the reality that people have agency: that they are capable of making choices that are impacted by actions and influenced by values. This toolkit has become so influential that whenever and whatever we measure, we instinctively reach for it.

Within the social sciences, sociology has routinely ignored what it means to be a human being. In opposition to reductionism, Christian Smith advances a theory of human personhood that takes into account how we, as human persons, interact with the cultures, institutions and structures that sociologists seek to explain. Both Kauffman (2008) and Smith (2010) proffer theoretical models that attempt to grapple with reality as complex. They consider the condition of being a person, the existence of the transcendent, the domain of beliefs, values and virtue, and the presence of evil.

This might seem far removed from the world of the classroom, but it shouldn't be. I am arguing that good measurement, which takes account of classroom complexity, is a practice of human flourishing. This requires educators to think about who a human being is and it requires our apprenticeship into the use of the whole toolkit when we measure the complexity of the classroom.

The full range of tools

Dealing with the complexity of the classroom means that we must pick tools that are fit for the task. These tools should support our definitions of what education is for and we should not decide which of them to use until we have some precisely defined questions.

I want to highlight three of the more humble tools that I think we should dust off and use alongside of specialist survey instruments. These are: observation, interview and the teacher.

I am assuming that most people reading this chapter are educators of some kind, if not classroom teachers. Imagining yourself to be a research tool may feel counterintuitive, but it is important to include yourself in the toolkit for two reasons. First, it counters reductionism which is the temptation to see measurement as a neutral process. Second, it rehabilitates the notion of professional judgment. As a well apprenticed educator, you ought to be a primary source of reliable data about the learning of the people in your care. Of course, this does not remove legitimate questions about reliability and bias, or how we know that the data is credible. But that is precisely why you need to be able to draw on the whole range of tools in the kit to help you identify patterns, confirm your judgments, and communicate them well to others. So dust off your notebook or turn on your tablet, and learn to regularly write critical and reflective field notes tied to big and small questions that you want to investigate in the classroom. For a little instruction on writing field notes, consult Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (2011) *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Field notes are often dismissed as the tools of aged anthropologists or grizzled journalists, but that's a cop-out from people who don't understand how rigorous and exacting this kind of record keeping can be. In law and medicine, meticulous briefing notes and symptom charts underpin complex defence or prosecution strategies and complex diagnoses. And it works because they are not used on their own.

As tools of measurement, observation and interview can minimise or fully take account of the presence of a researcher. For example, you can use a schedule to standardise what you ask or look for, or you can participate in an observation or interview as you would in a conversation. *Real World Research* (Robson 2002) offers a great introduction to both of these tools and how to apply them in the real world. A structured observation is not necessarily more reliable or more 'scientific' than an unstructured conversation. What matters is that you used the right tool for the job and that you can justify your choice. These kinds of tools assume that there is something real that professionals and learners are able to articulate, even if it is mediated through all the assumptions they brought in with them through the classroom door. Just like a jury in a court case, policy makers, parents, school boards and students need to be able to follow the evidence trail that you are setting out for them as

you evaluate the learning that happens in a complex classroom. Again, we need to draw from the whole toolkit in order to measure well.

Measurement as a practice of human flourishing

Thoughtful, excellent measurement in education facilitates wise judgement and action capable of contributing to the common good. It does this when it is ordered toward a clear vision of what education is for, and when it takes fully into account the complexity of the classroom and our personhood. It is important that measurement is seen as the tool it is, and not mistaken for the end goal. Educators should be apprenticed to use the whole range of measuring tools appropriately.

The person and kingdom of Jesus embodies or incarnates for Christians the fullest vision of the good life. In Jesus we see reflected the perfect likeness of God; it is in his image that we are all made. Christian educators need a way to discern if education is supporting learners to grow toward or away from this vision. Good measurement can help them to do this, and as such it is a practice of human flourishing.

Reflection questions

These were devised by fellow contributor to this book, Andrew Tredinnick, after reading Beth Green's article, and included in this chapter with Beth's support.

Consider appropriate measurement

- How does the type of data that you (or your school) gather about your students demonstrate what you value?
- How do 'league tables' or similar work in your area? How do they influence your school's decisions?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of considering education as a private rather than a public good?
- How do you act on what you measure? What is your measurement for?

Consider classroom complexity

- What examples of flawed measurement have you experienced?

- What are the consequences of simplification or oversimplification of measurement in your experience?
- How can we embrace complexity without being overwhelmed?
- Consider the concept of 'emergence': what if something happens that you didn't plan?
- How can school climate be measured or evaluated?

Consider tools

- Consider apprenticeship as a model of learning: how might that influence chosen tools or approaches to learning? What could be the role of eyewitness testimony in learning?
- How has reductionist thinking affected our understanding of and nurturing of human agency?
- How might you become a more reflective practitioner?
- How might you use field notes, participant observation and interviews as tools for understanding your students and your own work as a teacher?
- How do the tools of measurement you are using help to support the spiritual growth and flourishing of learners?

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39 Measuring school graduates' outcomes: the Cardus model

Beth Green & Ken Goodlet

If something is worth doing, it's worth measuring.
Beth Green on Cardus' working principle

In October 2016 Cardus released a Canada-wide survey 'on the contribution of graduates from religious and independent schools'. Cardus is a think tank dedicated to the renewal of North American social architecture and the education research program publishes reliable and credible data for the impact of non-government schools on graduate outcomes. Sub-headed 'Educating to love your neighbour: the full picture of Canadian graduates', the Cardus 2016 survey involved graduates from 968 public schools and 359 independent schools. It covered such areas as work & measuring education, social relationships & personal goals, religious orientation, generosity, involvement in public life and in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) disciplines and evaluation of school experience.

Classifications of types of schooling are marginally different in Canada than here. Bearing that in mind, a general finding was that 'public and separate Catholic school graduates are less likely than independent, and non-religious independent school graduates to feel responsible for

helping those in need', says Dr Green. 'The data indicate that public school graduates are also less willing than evangelical Protestant and nonreligious independent school graduates to give blood, volunteer, and to donate to charity.' Dr Green adds that the latest survey shows educational diversity and encouraging a role for independent schools within the public education system would benefit Canadian society as a whole.

Dr Green says, 'We have refrained from editorialising and weighing in on the data with interpretations and evaluation throughout.'

Some findings on each educational sector, quoted from the Cardus 2016 survey, are as follows:

- Public school graduates 'have the same trust in civic institutions as their peers, but are less likely to be engaged with such institutions than their peers that graduated from independent schools'.
- Separate Catholic graduates 'are largely indistinguishable from public school graduates, but sector does affect an increased likelihood in observing traditional classic religious practices'.
- Catholic independent graduates 'have a higher likelihood of being married and are less likely to cohabit; they also have significantly larger families. These graduates have a more diverse set of social ties although fewer close ties than public school graduates.'
- Nonreligious independent graduates 'are less likely to participate in the political process than public graduates, and more likely to get news from non-mainline news sources (blogs and the Internet)'.
- Evangelical Protestant graduates 'are more likely to attend church, observe religious disciplines, and strengthen their relationship with God than public school graduates. These graduates are also just as politically and civically engaged as their peers from public schools.'
- Religious homeschool graduates 'are less trusting and confident in a whole range of public institutions than public school graduates; they are also increasingly more likely see

> the society as hostile to their values. However, they are just as engaged with political life as their peers from public schools. Their school also forms graduates who attend church, observe religious disciplines, and strengthen their relationship with God more so than public schools.'

The survey backs up these findings with a large volume of detailed research.

Cardus works on the principle that 'if something is worth doing, it's worth measuring'. And by measuring, we can target the areas of celebration and concern which we can then work on.

A challenge for us in Australia is to decide whether there is a place for such research here and, if so, how we should fund it.

Reflections

Some Heads of schools' approaches to Christian education

Ken Goodlet

Most Christian schools in Australia, states John Collier, maintain an open enrolment policy. He goes on to say that 'many parents enrol their children not in the hope that they will be evangelised and/or nurtured in the Christian faith, but rather because such schools appear to be safe havens, with good values, good academic results, and where students will be well cared for. Indeed, some enrolling parents are suspicious of religious enthusiasms. In some older Christian schools, particularly those established by mainstream churches in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries, variable staff appointment policies have led to a situation where only a proportion, in some cases even a small minority of staff, proclaim the lordship of Christ. There exists then a real incongruence between the gospel aims of senior executive staff and school councils on the one hand, and a sizeable population of staff and parents on the other. How can this difficult terrain be navigated?'

Several schools sharing this situation have commenced meeting together periodically to share perspectives on helpful ways forward. Below are the journeys followed by Heads of five of these schools in this navigation process.

Paul Burgis, Principal,
Presbyterian Ladies' College (PLC) Croydon Sydney NSW

Paul Burgis joined PLC Sydney in 2011, after experience in schools in Sydney, Harare Zimbabwe and southern Queensland, and running a Master of Arts in Education program at St Martins College, University of Lancaster. Over the years he has been on and continues on a journey to understand the nature of Christian education. He here addresses two education questions of importance to him:

> The first of my questions is: *What is education?* Education is the growth of the whole person—mind, body and spirit—in s*apienter* (wisdom/understanding) and *scientia* (knowledge). It is the development of knowledge about ourselves and the universe. Key to my Christian framework is that our knowledge of ourselves and the universe is limited. Even in mathematics and the sciences there is knowledge that is limited and tentative. In regard to the area of consciousness—the mind that thinks and knows—we continue to have a very limited understanding. This opens the potential for faith to be admitted as a means of understanding aspects of life. The process of gaining understanding can be based on a step of faith rather than a process of reason. Reason can 'follow' faith. We come to the position of seeking to know or understand things from a point of weakness and thus have no reason to be conceited in our knowledge or the status it gives. The faith position that we (our consciousnesses, our minds, our bodies, our very selves) have an innate and inalienable dignity is a faith position. It is the basis of our assumption that education is a valid process, that we are worthy of being educated.
>
> Our realisation that we are troubled in our knowing has both practical and moral outcomes: we don't necessarily use our knowledge for the good of ourselves or of others. This strengthens the position that we need grace to function. Even though our acts of knowing are flawed and their flawed nature has consequences for ourselves and others, we still can live and pursue both knowledge and the hope of learning how to act with respect and goodness towards others. For example, the doctors of the Middle Ages (and I am sure there are medical experts in this category today) employed some flawed reasoning. Yet they acted in order to try to relieve pain or encumbrance. They, like us, needed a sense of grace in order to continue to function

positively and effectively. The apostle Paul's and Augustine's vision is that we 'see through a glass darkly', that we can't pretend to know it all, and an awareness of this subsequently can produce a deep humility which opens the way to seek to improve both ourselves and our practices. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams sees Christianity as 'a coherent narration of human growth into divine communion in which issues about time, responsibility, reciprocity, self-deceit, self-aversion, and public and personal integrity can be illuminated'. Education is about developing a coherent narrative of human growth towards divine communion in which all of those issues can be illuminated.

A second question is: *How are church and school different*? The church has the responsibility to teach, enact and create a community of the gospel. It learns to listen and to serve, to interact in peace and to define and enact the good, to love God and neighbour. The school must teach surveys of knowledge and epistemologies of knowledge, wisdom and moral choice, as well as skills. Thus the school must teach areas that are not necessarily in tune with faith. The church is a gathering of like-minded believers. The school is often a disparate community built around a range of ideas about what education is. The job of the Christian leader is therefore to seek to articulate how knowledge and wisdom fit together—what the curriculum is and how its themes emerge. The Christian leader has the huge task of trying to help her/his community to think with their faith whilst they encounter a range of types of knowledge and understanding.

John Collier, Head of School, St Andrews Cathedral School Sydney NSW

John Collier joined St Andrew's in 2010 with credentials that would appeal to the school community in general. He had put into practice his belief that 'education is about, for and of students' in Thomas Reddall High School where he was Principal from 1991 to 1997, and at St Paul's Grammar School Penrith where he was Principal from 1997 until 2009. John had felt called by God into Christian education, with a commitment to helping facilitate a bridge between biblical theology and education in schools. He has had a strong emphasis on intellectual stimulation through such vehicles as the International Baccalaureate

and attracting, developing, inspiring and retaining quality teaching staff. He is a strong supporter of co-curricular programming. And he has profound respect and regard for the learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

In addition, as a committed, active Christian, John Collier has been keen to promote Christian ideals, in order to embed faith comprehensively through the school. He has presented faith as a public good, as a rational and credible contribution to education and culture. Supporting this approach were such speakers to staff as Simon Smart from the Centre for Public Christianity on a world view; Dr Justine Toh, Lecturer in Cultural Studies at Macquarie University on a Christian critique of culture; Rev Dr Bruce Winter, Principal of the Queensland Bible College on Christian service; and Dr Richard Edlin on secular humanism. And similarly, there were presentations for students, staff and parents, covering apologetics and Christian ethics, by Professor John Lennox (Oxford University), Professor Pastor Dale Kuehne (specialist on gender politics and homosexuality), Dr John Dickson (from the Centre for Public Christianity) and Professor Simon Conway Morris (Cambridge University) on evolutionary biology.

John Collier has met regularly with chaplaincy and Christian Development staff and also conducted workshops on Christian education as an option amongst staff. Furthermore, in order to train staff to think theologically (and to establish a firmer biblical base) the school has commenced a program teaching theology to staff prepared to attend on some afternoons. The school has encouraged Christian staff members to consider how to use their subject areas authentically as a platform for having students examine a Christian world view, and critique the secular humanism and materialism which is otherwise the unchallenged default position of state syllabuses and text books. Trevor Cooling, Professor of Christian Education at Canterbury Christ Church University in England; Ruby Holland, Anglican Education Commission consultant; and Alison Wheldon, Anglican Education Commission Primary Consultant have worked with staff to provide 'at the elbow' assistance. Dr Beth Green from Cardus Institute in Canada has unpacked her research on factors which may lead avowedly Christian schools to be ineffective in their Christian testimony. Dr Richard Edlin, former Head of the National Institute of Christian Education, has challenged the

notion that secular humanism is a neutral position, challenging staff to contend with it rather than adopting it as a default position which is antithetical to Christian faith.

The school is further exploring the notion that the Christian Development curriculum should be the hub of the total curriculum, where the chaplaincy staff become resident theologians and public intellectuals of the school, able to talk into subject areas and answer staff enquiries as they bring theology to bear upon the issues arising in their subjects. The ultimate goal is to train Christian staff so that they can also speak from their subject areas into the Christian Development curriculum. Clearly, there are real costs in bringing such quality speakers, local and international, into the fray. St Andrew's Cathedral School has managed the financial aspects of this provision by entering into cost sharing coalitions with a number of other schools, and with other Christian organisations such as the Centre for Public Christianity and the Anglican Education Commission (EdComm) of the Sydney Diocese, where each school or organisation receives a prorata share of each speaker's time, and therefore expenses.

CRU (Crusaders) lunch time groups, often led by our senior Christian students or ex-student Alex Abbotsmith Scholarship holders (Cathedral interns) is a very important means of evangelism and Christian nurture of students. CRU is coordinated by one of the school's chaplains.

The school is also concerned with the articulation of soon-to-graduate students into sustaining Christian groups. The school seeks a formal link with university chaplains who will visit the school in an effort to encourage students to have a connection that will help them maintain and develop their faith once they leave school.

Tony George, sometime Principal, St Stephen's School Perth, Western Australia and newly appointed Head, The King's School North Parramatta, Sydney, NSW

Tony George began his teaching career in 1986 at Trinity Grammar School Sydney. In the three enjoyable years he spent there, he became convinced, in discussion with others, that there was a need for training in Christian leadership, so he then completed a Masters of Business Administration, leading to work in management consultancy for a number

of years, and did a Bachelor of Theology degree at Moore Theological College Sydney. In 2001 he was offered the position of Head of Senior School at Pacific Hills Christian School Dural NSW. An overtly Christian school, it was part of the Christian Schools Movement. There was no chaplaincy, all members of staff being expected to take on a Christian pastoral role; and there was a clear Christian curriculum, where there was a seeking to understand the relationship between Christianity and Board of Studies courses. There was a rigorous Biblical Studies course that lead to the Moore Theological College Preliminary Theological Certificate. There was a significant uptake of this optional course in Years 11 & 12. The nine years there were fulfilling and enjoyable.

In 2011 Tony was asked to become Principal of St Stephen's School Perth, a large, multi-campus Uniting Church school. The School Council was looking for an educational leader who was organisationally competent and who was an evangelical Christian. Tony was delighted they thought that was him! The school was well established, but wanted to set down a path that would define its trajectory as a global school by re-kindling its Christian distinctive. The key issue the Council wanted to address was: How can a school be inclusive (addressing the needs of all students irrespective of their personal faith) and exclusive (representative of the one Christ)? This was a challenge that was one of the attractions of the job for Tony.

He was not prepared to accept that Biblical Studies should be 'just a stocking-filler', he said. He was able to develop a school-wide (K-12) Biblical Studies program for all students irrespective of background that aimed to be relevant to each student's particular stage of development but that did not pressure students for a personal commitment. Of course, within the school's ebb and flow, there would be opportunities to commend Christ.

The success of this program owed much to taking what appeared at first sight a disadvantage and making it an advantage. Perth is often touted as the most isolated large city in the world, where many parents came to make money from the resources boom; there was not a strong personal link with the surrounding world or with the church. But Tony saw it as strategically placed as a centre for two-thirds of the world's population on the multi-religious Indian Ocean rim. As the oldest holy book in the Western tradition, the Bible could, if taught sensitively,

provide a basis on which to engage with these societies. This approach struck a chord with parents: taking holidays to places like Bali from Perth, they were interacting with strongly religious societies. In addition, the school introduced and developed service-learning programs in such places as the Kimberleys, Malaysia, Cambodia, Mauritius and South Africa, students becoming outward-looking, serving others. 'The biblical program inspired the mind, the service program informed the heart', Tony said. It was a fulfilling five years for Tony.

Last year, Tony was contacted by the recruitment team from The King's School. They wanted a Head who would take a large, established, successful school and would honour its traditions and, within that, strengthen the Christian character of the school. It was, to Tony, a fairly logical transition from the inclusive/exclusive work he had done in Perth and, humbled to be asked, he decided to accept this as God's call. He takes up the appointment in 2017.

Stephen Kinsella, Headmaster, The Illawarra Grammar School Wollongong NSW

Stephen Kinsella can't remember a time when the Christian faith was not a significant part of his life. This commitment was reinforced by his involvement in his church and by his links with Christian groups at university. He commenced his teaching career in 1978 in state schools and, when appointed to Blaxland High School at the end of his first year, he ran the Christian group in the school, which regularly attracted over 100 students.

In 1987 he accepted an offer to be Head of Social Sciences at St Paul's Grammar School Penrith, a promotion he would not have gained for many years in the state system. His move from the state system to a Christian school was with an understanding that God called him to be faithful wherever he taught. While at St Paul's, he became Deputy Principal and completed a Master of Education Studies degree. During that time he developed his understanding of the relevance of the gospel to all of life, including all subject areas taught in schools and was introduced to the curriculum of the International Baccalaureate (IB).

He was appointed in 2001 as Principal of the Anglican/Uniting Church school, Kormilda College located in Darwin, a school of 800

secondary aged students. The curriculum was broad and ranged from the IB Diploma Programme through to Intensive English for many of the 300 boarders from remote indigenous communities. 'I had five wonderful years there,' he said. Under his leadership the school explored the relevance of the gospel to the whole school curriculum using the approach to learning developed by Dr Peter Vardy.

Stephen became Headmaster of The Illawarra Grammar School (TIGS), an Anglican school, in 2006. He sees himself as building on the work of his predecessors at TIGS. He led the school community through a process that more clearly defined the school's three core values—Academic, Christian and Caring. The school's Statement of Mission was developed, summarised as follows on the school website. TIGS is, the site states, 'a school where:

- academic success is matched by success in the development of physical, spiritual, aesthetic, cultural, social and emotional attributes;
- each child is known and loved for who they are and encouraged and nurtured to be all that they can be;
- the development of a personal faith is valued and shaped by the beliefs and behaviours of the Christian faith.

The TIGS community welcomes students and families that share these values and we look forward to the achievements of our next 50 years—maintaining the traditions of the past while applying the school's values to the opportunities and challenges of the future.'

Stephen Kinsella then addressed these five questions to bring out the educational thinking which lay behind this mission statement:

1. *What is Christian education?* It is equipping a student to be a whole person, involving their relationship with God, other people and their environment.
2. *How does Christianity relate to education?* The gospel message as outlined in Colossians 1:15–18 is the approach where Jesus is seen as 'the image of the invisible God', through whom 'all things have been created through him and for him' and 'in him all things hold together'. This means that the whole of life and the whole of education is the business of Christianity. There is

no place for a sacred/secular divide.

3. *What is a Christian school?* There are as many definitions as there are schools. Stephen Kinsella said, 'The three Christian schools I have worked in were inclusive in their approach to recruitment—all members of the community were welcome if they were attracted by the school's values and curriculum. St Paul's Grammar School was a new school with strong links to the Christian vision of its founders; Kormilda College defined and re-established its commitment to Christian education with a special focus on the needs of indigenous students; and TIGS continues its commitment to developing a curriculum that integrates a Christian world view within the mainstream curriculum.'
4. *How should a Christian school relate to society?* The first responsibility is to fulfil the educative function of a school; and the second responsibility is to ensure that the school is faithfully pointing toward Christ as it implements its programs.
5. *What is the future of Christian schooling?* Stephen Kinsella said, 'Christian schools generally are successful in delivering the overt Christian dimensions of their programs—Chapel, Biblical Studies, service programs and the like. The new ground in Christian schooling is identifying and presenting in an authentic way the relevance of the gospel to the whole curriculum, particularly in the classroom.' Teaching from a biblical perspective necessarily challenges teachers about their own understanding of their faith and their subject areas. A challenge for Christian schools is to appropriately support teachers in this process.

As Stephen Kinsella looks back on his career he can see how his own faith has been informed and strengthened and how this has been of benefit to the schools in which he has served.

Nicola Taylor, Principal, Presbyterian Ladies' College (PLC) Armidale NSW

Nicola Taylor says, 'From the age of four I decided to be a teacher.' Raised by a mother who became a state school Principal, Nicola trained as a Primary school teacher, specialising in non-government

schooling. This opened the way to her becoming involved in Christian Parent-Controlled and Christian Community schools, leading to her appointment to Sutherland Shire Christian School. Her 'keen interest in student learning', she says, led to her gaining further academic qualifications from the universities of Southern Queensland and Sydney.

Nicola then, during a period when she was raising her five children, undertook a range of contracts with the state and federal governments that gave her a wide-ranging understanding of diverse curriculum and educational administrative issues; she also had the opportunity to assist small and struggling Christian schools. She says, 'These experiences collectively confirmed the right and responsibility of parents for the education of their children and the diversity of schools that exist within the Independent Sector reflecting parental conviction and choice.'

Nicola says, 'Throughout my career I have valued various opportunities to pursue educational leadership', stepping into various administrative roles at Sutherland Shire Christian School including principalship, a school from which she learnt much from those she worked with. Appointed Principal of PLC Armidale in 2015, she says she is enjoying this school which she describes as 'a leading regional, all girls day and boarding school from Pre Kinder to Year 12 located in the picturesque New England Region of NSW'.

What is education? Nicola sees it as:

> … a process of transformation, an enabling process whereby the dignity and worth of each individual is valued as they are led on a journey of growth, development, improvement, maturity; it is a public event, a community enterprise. Parents are their children's first teacher but along the way they enlist the support and involvement of others to refine, improve or add value to their child through either formal or informal means. Early socialisation through playgroups, extended family gatherings or in the church are developed more specifically through formal structures such as school, sporting programs, music academies and so on. Education is a relational activity; we were created to live in relationship or community with others. The learning journey is relational through collaborative, co-operative connections, teacher to student, colleague to colleague, peer to peer, child to child.

How does Christianity relate to education? Nicola sees it as providing both context and content:

> The Christian faith is about relationships, about humanity's relationship with God the creator and sustainer of all things; and about the responsibility of parents, teachers and others to educate their children about God, his Word and his world. It models respect for others, for experience, for self, for authority, each of which is needed by the learner to be receptive to instruction and to grow from information to knowledge, from knowledge to insight and from insight to wisdom. The integrity of the preservation of the key teachings of the Christian faith through what for many years was an oral tradition demonstrates the high value placed on such education. Historically Christians and the Church took the responsibility of educating the next generation very seriously, even to the point of establishing centres for learning, such as schools. Many of the Ivy League universities have their genesis in the work of the Church or Christians committed to education.

What is a Christian school? Nicola says is a place which:

> ... with integrity and transparency is seeking to uphold, teach and actively promote the Christian faith according to the statement of faith foundational to the school. There are different models for Christian schools and each seeks to respond to the needs of its community. A Christian school should seek to be transformational—based on the authority of God's word for all of life and the whole of life.

How should a Christian school relate to society? Nicola says such a school should:

- be open, inclusive, firm yet fair;
- strive for excellence in all things;
- model Christlikeness, especially if for some this is the only experience they will have had with Christians and Christianity;
- be explicit in its instruction, especially in relation to the Bible and key doctrines of the Christian faith, but presented in an open and winsome way that encourages dialogue;

- respect difference but acknowledge the absolute nature of truth and the exclusive access to the truth through Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour;
- seek to transform through the renewing of minds (Romans 12:2).

And the future? Nicola says:

> I continue to enjoy the challenge of educational leadership, I am encouraged by the diversity of expression of Christian education. I remain convinced that Christian educators, Christian schools and Christian education will shape and influence the next generation which adds mission and purpose to my work.

About the book

Better Learning puts the learner centre stage. The 37 Australian and British contributors provide a variety of heads and hearts tools to assist educators to engage in a meaningful way with their charges. This leads all the way to student assessment in such challenging and significant areas as character formation. The backdrop to this trajectory is a strong cognitive structure and theological scaffold with engaging, relevant, informative and inspiring classroom adaptations. School Head, author and co-editor Tony George states the goal of such education as being 'to create and foster an educational community of Christian wisdom in which our students may engage with their teachers and each other in the study of the various disciplines of their curriculum in order to construct a biblically informed coherent Christian worldview for the purpose of engaging wisely and knowledgeably in God's world. Thus, we grow people; wise and knowledgeable people.'

About the editors

Ken Goodlet has taught in NSW state and Christian schools, was an educator and school administrator in NSW and Malaysian Christian schools and was editor for an Australian Christian book publisher. He has written five published community histories and another is at the printer.

John Collier is the Head of St Andrew's Cathedral School and of St Andrew's Cathedral Gawura (Indigenous) School, Sydney, before which he was Principal of St Paul's Grammar School Penrith NSW. He has been Chair of AHISA (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia), NSW/ACT, has been a member of the AHISA Board and is a member of the Anglican Education Commission of the Sydney Anglican Diocese.

Tony George is trained in business leadership and theology, and worked in management consultancy, interests that became hallmarks of his career. After nine years as Head of Senior School at Pacific Hills Christian School Dural NSW, he became Principal of St Stephen's School Perth WA, a large multi-campus Uniting Church school, a position he held for five years. He was appointed Head of The King's School North Parramatta NSW in 2016.

Many issues raised in this book will lead to important, worthwhile discussions. It truly is a valuable resource.

Gloria Goris Stronks
Professor of Education, emerita, Calvin College Michigan USA

It is a delight to commend *Better Learning*, the sequel to *Teaching Well*, as another fine resource for Christian educators. In this volume we are invited to dig deeper into the various disciplines of the school curricula, so that learning is understood not merely as cataloguing and memorising facts, but seeing all facts as God's facts, recognising their connectivity, appreciating the unity and diversity of God's creation, and like Solomon , growing in wisdom, insight and understanding in every field of endeavour (1 Kings 4:29).

Glenn N Davies
Anglican Archbishop of Sydney NSW

I commend this new book from the editors of *Teaching Well*. *Better Learning* brings together an array of influential Christians discussing learning from a number of perspectives including philosophical; pedagogical; and cultural. The diversity of authors will ensure rich discussion material for teachers and administrators and signals an exciting era in which Christian educators from different traditions are sharing insights together as they seek to honour God in education.

Ken Dickens, *former CEO, Christian Education National and Principal, National Institute for Christian Education, Mulgoa NSW*

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