



Dear Editor

I was delighted to read Andrew Palfreyman's article entitled *School mathematics and Christian faith – are they related?* (*ACT Now*, Summer 2005). At last! An article about a subject other than RE!

Don't get me wrong, religious education is an important part of the curriculum. But, as a Christian teacher of economics and geography I sometimes feel left out by the disproportionate coverage RE gets in *ACT Now*. No doubt there is a perfectly good reason for this. Perhaps RE is more contentious than French, art or PE. Maybe RE teachers are simply better (or more prolific) writers than those of us who teach other subjects. Who knows?

The question is this: how can we make sure this marvellous magazine is much more inclusive for non-RE-teachers like myself? The short answer is,



I guess, that non-RE-teachers like myself have to make the effort to submit items for publication. This being the case, I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the many hundreds of non-RE-teaching *ACT Now* readers out there to put pen to paper. Come on historians: sharpen your quills. ICT teachers: switch on your laptops. Music teachers: scribble a few notes to the editor.

Craig Samuels

Dear Editor

I was most encouraged to read the *Editor's notes* in the last issue of this magazine (*ACT Now*, Summer 2005). You kindly invited us all – regardless of our respective subject specialisms – to contribute to a *Christian Manifesto for Education*. What a splendid idea!

However, to save us all scribbling away at cross-purposes, I wonder whether it might be worth trying to come to some kind of consensus as to what the content of such an important document ought to look like. Should it, for instance, attempt to articulate the definitive 'Christian approach' to teaching each discreet curriculum subject in turn?

It seems to me that such an approach is fraught with difficulties. For example, we might begin by asking what a Christian history syllabus should look like. Would it include a study of Tudor England? If so, what would be taught, when would it be taught and why? Alternatively, should it be limited to Bible characters and Christian saints? If so, would lessons concentrate on 'good' Christians (ie those who campaigned for the abolition of the slave trade), or would they also acknowledge that many Christians (like those who fought tooth and nail to keep slavery) 'got it wrong'?

The essential problem of starting with curriculum content is that, far from imposing Bible-based

Christian values across the curriculum, we simply try to Christianise an existing curriculum. To make things worse, even when we think we are imposing distinctly Christian values, we almost inevitably end up imposing twenty-first century Western values and then reverse-engineering a Bible passage to back it up!

We need to start somewhere else. I would like to suggest that a *Christian Manifesto for Education* ought to start with the fundamentals of our faith. Here are just two examples:

- as humans we are created in the likeness of our Creator; we are creative beings capable of creating new ideas and new ways of seeing the world.
- as humans we are all sinners living in a fallen world; we struggle to do the right thing; only accepting Christ as our Lord and Saviour will set us free from sin and allow us to fulfil the purpose for which God has called each and every one of us.

This faith-first (rather than feet first!) approach allows us to begin by considering the inherent dignity and uniqueness of the individual learner rather than worrying unnecessarily about the dignity and uniqueness of discreet subject disciplines. Furthermore, this approach places a premium on getting to know individual learners. In fact, assessing each learner's gifts, talents, experiences, interests, character and spirit becomes an essential part of the teacher's job description. Why? Because, if teachers do not take time to understand the individual learner, they will be poorly placed to help her/him to learn.

Laura Smith

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