

# Journal of Education & Christian Belief

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# **Journal of Education & Christian Belief**

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## **Book Reviews**

**Mike Higton**

*Vulnerable Learning - Thinking Theologically about Higher Education*

Reviewer: John Sullivan (p.73)

**Brenda Watson & Penny Thompson**

*The Effective Teaching of Religious Education*

Reviewer: Peter Shepherd (p.74)

**Michael Hand**

*Is Religious Education Possible? A Philosophical Investigation*

Reviewer: Peter Shepherd (p.77)

**David Mills Daniel**

*'Briefly' Series*

Reviewer: Peter Shepherd (p.79)

**James W. Sire**

*The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue (4th ed.)*

Reviewer: Andrew Sloane (p.81)

**Chris Anderson**

*Teaching as Believing: Faith in the University*

Reviewer: David I. Smith (p.85)

**Douglas V. Henry & Michael D. Beaty (eds.)**

*Christianity and the Soul of the University*

Reviewer: Ken Badley (p.87)

**Richard J. Edlin & Jill Ireland (eds.)**

*Engaging the Culture: Christians at work in education*

Reviewer: Rupert Kaye (p.88)

**Brian V. Hill**

*Exploring Religion in School: A National Priority*

Reviewer: Emlyn Williams (p.90)

**Walter Feinberg**

*For Goodness Sake: Religious Schools and Education for Democratic Citizenry*

Reviewer: Clarence W. Joldersma (p.92)

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## Editorial

IN THE FIRST article in this issue, Michael Goheen paints with broad strokes to give us a big picture of western Christians living at a crossroads where the cultural and biblical stories meet. This is, or should be, a place of tension because the stories are different and incompatible. In some parts of the world, the tension is experienced very strongly but, for western Christians, it is often absent. This is because the biblical story is fragmented, comfortable cohabitation within a seemingly neutral culture is adopted, the privatization of faith is accepted and an emphasis on the goodness of creation and cultural involvement has eclipsed the reality of the spiritual battle for the direction of cultural development. Goheen calls for a recovery of a focus on “education for witness” since that restores the tension of the clash between fundamental assumptions that western Christians have tended to lose.

While Michael Goheen talks of a too easy acceptance by Christians of the privatization of faith, Trevor Cooling’s article is focused on a situation in the UK where what he terms “passionate religious commitment” may be viewed as a problem by some because, they claim, religious believers are attempting to impose their views on others as public truth. Cooling argues that this passionate commitment may characterize not only Christians and adherents to other major religions but also atheistic humanists (whose commitment he also regards as religious). Cooling’s response is that the problem is overcome if all sides recognise the distinction between public truth that is “secured” and that which is “controversial.” This would mean that some viewpoints threatened with relegation to the domain of the private could be treated with respect in the classroom as being both public and controversial. To accept that one’s public truth is controversial necessitates what Cooling terms a “missiological shift” from a Christendom model to one where Christians come to see themselves in a “missionary encounter” with other cultures.

Michael Goheen writes of education for witness. Trevor Cooling writes of missionary encounter. In the third article in this issue, Telford Work’s subject is “education as mission.” He portrays education as “an opportunity for cross-cultural mission on behalf of the eschatological Kingdom of God.” He takes the cross-cultural exchange that happened between Jews and Gentiles at Antioch to be “a moment of true education that makes the town a fitting metaphor for educational excellence” because there “the old creation meets the new in unpredictable encounters that leave all parties forever changed.” Work argues that to see education in this way avoids the bifurcation between theoretical and practical fields that is so common in curricula and faculties. He goes on to focus not on education in general or curriculum in general but on the course itself as being a forum where situated Christian mission takes place, mission that invites “the manifestation of the eschatological Reign of God.” This can deeply influence our pedagogy because, if all is subjected to the rule of Christ, neither the imperialism that insists on a particular approach of any group nor the relativism that affirms what we are all like already can have their place. Work’s article here resonates with things that Cooling says in his. His emphasis on the meeting of old and new creations also resonates with the theme of Goheen’s article.

Another form that cultural imperialism can take in educational contexts is to the fore in Margaret Sampson Edgell’s report of her research into the spiritual development of African students in an American college. She found that the core elements of the strong Christian faith of all of these students were rooted in “an explicit Afrocentric worldview.” She argues that these findings point to the need for the inclusion of multicultural dimensions in research into students’ spiritual development. Without the inclusion of such dimensions, this research can take for granted that a western model of spiritual experience is universally applicable.

Harro Van Brummelen’s review essay brings together a recent book (by Chet Bowers) and a recent

article from this journal (by Jan Gormas et al.). He points out that, although written from very different perspectives, they share common themes (including the individualism, commercialization and materialism of western culture, schooling's role in this and the importance of care for the environment). Van Brummelen goes on to argue that each could be enriched by the addition of insights from the other. Bowers' emphasis on eco-justice "leaves gaps in both the foundations and practices of education" and Gormas et al.'s "more encompassing" emphasis on reconciliation cannot be the sole chief purpose of education.

It is our hope that you will find much of value in these articles and in the book reviews that follow them.

*John Shortt, David I. Smith & John Sullivan*