

Journal of Education & Christian Belief

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Book Reviews

Charles F. Melchert

Wise Teaching: Biblical Wisdom and Educational Ministry

Reviewer: Doug Blomberg (p.155)

George Carey, David Hope & John Hall

A Christian Voice in Education: Distinctiveness in Church Schools

Reviewer: Alison Farnell (p.156)

Peter Shepherd

Values for Church Schools

Reviewer: Alison Farnell (p.156)

John M. Hull

Utopian Whispers: Moral, Religious and Spiritual Values in Schools

Reviewer: J. A. Holden (p.157)

David W. Smith

Transforming the World? The Social Impact of British Evangelicalism

Reviewer: Richard Wilkins (p.159)

Lesslie Newbigin, Lamin Sanneh & Jenny Taylor

Faith and Power: Christianity and Islam in 'Secular' Britain

Reviewer: Jonathan Chaplin (p.160)

James D. Bratt

Abraham Kuyper: a centennial reader

Reviewer: William K. Kay (p.163)

Peter S. Heslam

Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's lectures on Calvinism

Reviewer: William K. Kay (p.163)

David Smith

Making Sense of Spiritual Development

Reviewer: Alex Rodger (p.164)

Henk Aay & Sander Griffioen

Geography and Worldview: A Christian Reconnaissance

Reviewer: Ron Elsdon (p.166)

David Porter

Children at Risk

Reviewer: Pamela MacKenzie (p.167)

Harro Van Brummelen

Walking with God in the Classroom

Reviewer: Ken Badley (p.168)

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Editorial

IN THIS ISSUE of the journal, Bert Roebben takes us into Cyberspace and offers an evaluative scheme and some concrete suggestions for the use of the Internet in the spiritual and moral education of young people. Along the way, he suggests that the new media can become a kind of 'anti-reality condom' for young people, a means of protection against a frightening world. Roebben advocates a positive alternative of a form of 'media literacy' that helps young people to discern the hidden agendas behind what they see and to develop their own philosophy of life. This should involve a 'culture of asceticism' towards the Internet.

Responsiveness to God and his world – presumably including the worldwide web! – is one of Doug Blomberg's themes as he calls us to a pedagogy in which problem-posing is of central importance. Teaching is not the application of theory to practice and learning is not the imbibing of pre-digested theory. Instead, Blomberg says, the Biblical wisdom perspective tells of both the continuity of our experience of God's world and our need to be always open to new experience of him in his active engagement with his world. The Christian teacher must have as a primary goal the unwrapping of student gifts.

Blomberg's ways of wisdom are 'paths of pleasantness and peace'. Intrinsic enjoyment of learning turns out - perhaps not surprisingly - to be a major motivation to study religion, according to the preliminary findings of the research reported on by Leslie Francis and his associates. Motivation to study religion also turns out to be related to the Christian commitment of students.

Commitment is seen by David Attfield as an important phase in religious education but, he suggests, it must come after the phases of learning and evaluation. He sets forth very clear requirements and criteria for these three phases. The commitment he seeks is a commitment to learn about, understand and evaluate faiths: it is not a substantive commitment to a particular faith because, Attfield argues, this is not an acceptable aim of religious education in a pluralist, secular society. (He does not say whether or not the context of a church school would make a difference in this regard.)

Commitment is a central theme in the book by Harriet Harris which I comment on in the review article that follows. I suspect that Harris, in her opposition to rationalist apologetics, would not be very enthusiastic about the ordered phases of religious education that David Attfield prescribes. They might nevertheless agree on a certain priority of openness to criticism over commitment. This priority I attempt to question and I go on to propose a more intuitionist view of Christian faith. I then make some suggestions for a range of ways in which the Bible may function authoritatively in thinking about education.

William Kay writes in to criticise a review that we published of one of the volumes of distance learning material that he and Leslie Francis edited on behalf of the Church College Co-ordinating Committee. As with everything that we publish in our journal, we look to our readers to judge for themselves the cases presented in articles and reviews. And when they do, we warmly welcome responses and comments in the form of letters or articles. These, in their turn, are open to further responses from others. It would be good to see more debate in the pages of the journal. Several of our recent articles have stimulated responses which we have been happy to publish. There is room for more!

The reviews section includes comments on publications which are either about aspects of education, schooling and nurture of children and young people or about subjects which have implications for education. The social impact of British evangelicalism, Christianity and Islam, and the life and work of Abraham Kuyper all fall into the latter category and books about them are reviewed in this issue.

Spiritual values in school and spiritual development in education are subjects of much contemporary interest and several of the books reviewed deal with them. Particular curriculum subjects are represented this time by a new book about geography and worldview. And revised editions of popular books by David Porter and Harro Van Brummelen are also reviewed this time.

So over to you as reader. We hope that you will find material of interest and value in the articles and reviews that follow. If you find your thinking stimulated in particular ways or areas of strong disagreement with the views expressed, do please write in to say so. If something in the journal motivates you to write a fuller response in the form of an article, even though it may be quite brief, please do submit it to us. If you have an item for possible inclusion in our Notes and News section, please get in touch.

John Shortt & David I. Smith