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Contents

Contributors	100
<i>John Short & David I. Smith</i> Editorial	101
Notes and News	102
<i>Clarence W. Joldersma</i> Educating for Social Justice: Revisiting Stronks & Blomberg's Idea of Responsive Discipleship	105
<i>David I. Smith</i> The Bible and Education: Ways of Construing the Relationship	119
<i>Samson B. K. Makhado and Dean Spalding</i> Community and Hospitality in Multicultural Classrooms	135
<i>Penny Thompson</i> The Interpretation of Religious Education Legislation: a case study	145
Book Reviews	159
Contents of Volumes 1 to 5	175

Journal of Education & Christian Belief

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Book Reviews

Signe Sandmark

Is World View Education Possible and Desirable? A Christian Response to Liberal Arguments

Reviewer: Clarence Joldersma (p.160)

John Van Dyk

The Craft of Christian Teaching

Reviewer: John Hallett (p.161)

Arthur F. Holmes

Building the Christian Academy

Reviewer: Harold Heie (p.162)

Clive Erricker & Jane Erricker (eds)

Meditation in Schools: A Practical Guide to Calmer Classrooms

Reviewer: Andrew Wright (p.163)

Ron Best (ed.)

Education for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Reviewer: L. Philip Barnes (p.165)

Julia K. Stronks & Gloria Gloris Stronks

Christian Teachers in Public Schools

Reviewer: Trevor Cooling (p.166)

Rosemary Cox

Using the Bible with Children

Reviewer: Vicki Shaver (p.167)

Stephen H. Webb

Taking Religion to School: Christian Theology and Secular Education

Reviewer: Gloria Goris Stronks (p.169)

David I. Smith & Barbara Carvill

The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality and Foreign Language Learning

Reviewer: Raymond Le Clair (p.170)

John Peck & Charles Strohmer

Uncommon Sense: God's Wisdom for our Complex and Changing World

Reviewer: John Shortt (p.172)

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Editorial

THE BOOK *A Vision with a Task: Christian Schooling for Responsive Discipleship* edited by Gloria Goris Stronks and Doug Blomberg has become widely read and much quoted, indeed a classic of its genre. In his debut article in this issue of *JECB*, Clarence Joldersma takes up the key themes from that book – unwrapping gifts, sharing joys and burdens, and seeking shalom – and seeks to advance the discussion from the point at which Stronks and Blomberg left it. His proposal is that, as Christians in education, we should look at such themes through the lens of social justice rather than in the more individualistic way we are often prone to adopt. Joldersma concludes that, if we do this, we will find the theme of seeking shalom to be the key one of the three and the framework within which to address the other two. We can thereby, he argues, be more true to our Christian calling to be world-transformative, having a new perspective on thinking about current issues in education, e.g., the school as a social structure and the relationship between school and society. (By the way, readers may be interested to know that the full text of *A Vision with a Task: Christian Schooling for Responsive Discipleship* can now be downloaded without charge from the website: [http://www.calvin.edu/academic/education/.](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/education/))

The Christian calling to be world-transformative is presumably derived from the Bible. If so, according to David I. Smith, it may come to us from the scriptures by a range of distinct but overlapping and inter-related routes. In his article, Smith summarises findings from a research project on ways of understanding the Bible's possible influence upon education. He looks in turn at the Bible as educational content, as a shaper of the teacher's character, as a source of beliefs from which inferences can be made, as a narrative for education and a source of metaphors for education, and at the educational significance of the shape and process of the Old Testament canon. His proposals indicate that the Bible is a much richer and more varied source for our thinking about educational issues than we often reckon it to be. Perhaps we can become more effective as agents of transformation in education if we read the Bible more for all that it is worth!

One of the ways of relating the Bible to education that David I. Smith proposes is through finding in it metaphors that we can teach by. Also making their *JECB* debut in the pages of this issue, Samson Makhado and Dean Spalding make use of the biblical metaphor of hospitality in their article about teaching in a multicultural classroom. They also explore the theme of community and bring to it particular insights from an African context. They go on to argue that an understanding of the interaction of the gospel and culture is important to the promotion of the re-orientation of the whole life that Christian education should seek. Again they bring forward helpful examples from an African context.

Makhado and Spalding ground their study in the context of African life and culture but in it we can find much that illuminates our thinking wherever in the world we may be seeking to engage in transformative educational practice. Penny Thompson's article may seem, at first sight, to focus on a unique aspect in a particular context, that of legislation for religious education in England and Wales, and to have little to say to those of us who work in very different contexts. However, she writes it as a case study - indeed a cautionary tale - to alert us all to the ways in which the original intentions of legislators may be frustrated through reinterpretation and even, she claims, misinterpretation of their legislation. Thompson focuses on religious education but the scenario she portrays could apply also to legislation for ethical education or citizenship education or education for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Indeed no aspect of education policy-making is religiously neutral and proposals for legislation for any aspect or any curriculum subject can be a battleground for competing ideologies. If we regard our calling as Christians in education to be world-transformative rather than world-averse, then we will pray and work for that which is truly better for our children.

John Shortt & David I. Smith