

David I. Smith & John Shortt

Editorial

BRIAN HILL SEEKS TO bring fresh clarity to discussions of values education, charging that beliefs and values are too often treated as if they were interchangeable. He suggests that if the terminology of values education could be made more operationalizable, there may be a greater chance of interaction with more empiricist educational discussions. Hill offers a taxonomy of types of response to the values implied by particular truth-claims, disentangling cognitive, emotional, and volitional responses and pointing out their significance for Christian educators. He goes on to list possible pedagogical stances that differ in how they seek to influence student responses, and a set of ethical obligations that teachers should meet in the context of values education. Hill's article offers a clear and succinct framework for examining how values education is embedded in the teaching of every subject, together with reminders to Christian educators in particular to be clear about their ethical obligations in pedagogical settings.

David Purpel's paper, presented as the keynote address at the 2007 conference "Reimagining Educational Excellence" at Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Michigan), continues the emphasis on the value-laden nature of education and adds a Jewish perspective to the conversation. He offers a meditation on educational excellence in the light of the call in Micah 6:8 to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God. Micah's vision implies the need for overt and hidden curricula to promote the seeking of justice, loving-kindness, reverence, and joy. The models of excellence that have tended to dominate the current Western practice of schooling too often instead reflect the wider culture's values of consumerism, hierarchy, competition, and winning, yielding a focus on individual economic or social gain. While Hill offers a framework for examining the role of values in the classroom, Purpel adds the claim that the values structuring learning are commonly the wrong values. He calls for a turn to a wisdom derived from the Prophets in the place of a striving for educational excellence conceived as social success.

Cathy Freytag echoes some of the themes of Purpel's analysis, charging in similar vein that the versions of educational excellence commonly espoused by schools frame achievement in terms of the individual attaining of competitive benchmarks that enable social success. Freytag applies this complaint to the specific issue of including students with disabilities in the classroom. She argues that the current emphasis on competition and benchmarks needs to give way to approaches more affirming of classroom community, varied inputs and outputs, and various ways of expressing learning if all students are to be properly included in the learning process.

Both Purpel and Freytag delineate some of the consequences for schools of social pride at the societal level; Laurie Matthias takes a more local look at how humility is manifested in the educational practice of seven professors at Wheaton College (Wheaton, Illinois). Using a portraiture methodology, Matthias offers a

qualitative look at how these professors—each regarded as an exemplar of the integration of faith and learning—go about connecting their faith with their teaching and scholarship. She finds a common theme of humility in their responses and argues that “their pursuit of excellence in their pedagogy and in their research is permeated by their humble spirituality.”

Neil Holm explores the spirituality of the classroom from another angle. Focusing on the communal practices of school classrooms, Holm takes as his starting point Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s classic treatise on the spiritual disciplines, *Life Together*. Bonhoeffer examines in turn the disciplines of dispersion and community, reading Scripture, prayer, solitude, discernment, service, and confession, applying each to the life of the Christian community. Holm argues that each can be fruitfully applied to the school classroom, and offers examples for each of the classroom practices that echo Bonhoeffer’s emphases. Holm’s paper probes an underexplored way of relating faith to pedagogy, working not primarily in terms of the implications of theological truth-claims, but more in terms of the significance of spiritual practices for personal and group formation.

Each of the authors in this volume presents the school classroom as a place where rival values are at work and spiritual formation is at stake. Singly and together, their essays provide not only rich food for thought but also a call to renewed practice. We trust that their work will find ears that hear.

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