

David I. Smith & John Shortt

Editorial

Continuing a debate most recently raised by Perry Glanzer's article in this journal (12:1), Ken Badley opens this issue with further probing of the strengths and weaknesses of talk of the "integration" of faith and learning. Where Glanzer suggested trying out alternative terminology, Badley suggests some ways of clarifying the nature of arguments about "integration." He proposes that Gallie's analysis of "essentially contested concepts," together with the distinction between concepts and the conceptions that are built around them, can illuminate what is going on in divergent accounts of faith-learning integration. Badley urges that it remains important to clarify the use of integration language in Christian education and that clarifications such as those he advances could help us to move forward amid legitimate differences in educational vision.

Theresa Latini is also concerned with the negotiation of differences. Noting that churches and seminaries are "too often marked by entrenched power struggles and vitriolic discourse," Latini describes how the teaching of Nonviolent Communication could help seminarians to be prepared to foster peaceful and just communication within the church. Nonviolent Communication puts forward specific skills and attitudes as an antidote to communication breakdown and, Latini argues, can serve as an important pedagogical tool for enabling teachers and learners to model compassionate discourse and communicate with others as those made in God's image.

Jack Du Mez continues an emphasis on the learning of communication skills, but in this case skills of written composition. Reviewing the history of "basic" writing programs in the United States, Du Mez considers how descriptions of basic writers have been colored by the language of moral evaluation, leading to forms of exclusion in which Christian institutions have been complicit. He argues that changes in metaphors and practices around basic writing programs could help Christian colleges to approach these programs in a manner more fully in keeping with their call to serve the needs of diverse students.

Charles Justins, like Jack Du Mez, is suspicious of the tendency in education to invest particular interpretations of educational "excellence" and high academic standards with moral force. Justins considers the pressures faced by Australian schools as they seek to respond to the drive in the wider educational culture for excellence defined competitively in terms of quantifiable, standardized test results and efficiency in the service of economic goals. Justins argues that this approach to educational excellence undermines a focus on relationship, wisdom, and justice. He provides examples of how educators working in the Christian Parent-Controlled Schools network in Australia view the tensions between the core values claimed by their schools and the interpretations of educational excellence that they perceive in the wider society.

Andrew Morris rounds out this issue with further study of a particular group

of Christian schools, this time Roman Catholic schools in England. Where Justin raises concerns about reliance on quantifiable testing, Morris draws upon national school performance data to suggest that state-maintained Catholic schools in England appear to be more academically effective than similar non-Catholic institutions. Morris suggests that an explanation of this discrepancy may lie in the direction of exploring school ethos and, more particularly, the kind of community that is generated and practiced in Catholic schools. He argues that sustaining the kind of community that appears to promote learning may require the shared values that emerge from shared commitment to a particular vision of the good life and that this offers an argument in favor of faith-informed schooling that cannot be fully inclusive.

Each essay in its own way and with regard to its own specific topic probes the implications of some core Christian concern—integrity, compassion, service, justice, community—for the ways in which we practice education and debate that practice with one another. May the work of each author help us toward a better living out of our calling to be genuinely Christian educators.