# Introduction

Education prompts certain fundamental questions about itself: who is (or should be) educated? By whom? By what means? About what should people be educated, and to what end? In the history of Christianity, these questions have been given a particular colour due to the fact that Christians trace their faith back to a teacher (rabbi), Jesus, and his disciples (*mathētai*).[1] Questions about who should be educated and how have become inextricable from the question of how the original teachings of Jesus were transmitted to later generations. This immediately brings to the fore problems regarding authority, interpretation and inclusivity (or exclusivity). As the articles in this volume show, Christians have responded to these issues in a wide variety of ways.

Besides internal disagreements about the scope, form and purpose of Christian teaching and about the authority of Christian teachers, questions about education have also been provoked by the complex relationship between Christianity and its various contexts. Some of these concern specific cultural influences: how have Christian approaches to education changed according to the use of different languages, different literary traditions and different modes of teaching? How have the churches responded to technical changes surrounding writing, book-making and communication? And to what extent has Christianity been interested in education towards ends which are not directly religious? Some of these questions reflect the complex relationship between Christianity, culture and political power. Most of our evidence of early Christianity, for example, relates to Christians in the Roman empire, where specifically Christian modes of education (catechetical, pastoral and ascetic) coexisted for a surprisingly long time alongside the traditional educational systems of Greek and Latin culture. Long after Constantine's reign, Christian parents continued to send their sons to schools which taught literacy and rhetoric through prolonged engagement with texts whose

[1] Of many examples one could cite, Jesus is addressed as 'Rabbi' (ῥαββί) by Peter (Mk 9: 5), Judas (Mk 14: 45), John's disciples (Jn 1: 38), Nathaniel (Jn 1: 49), Nicodemus (Jn 3: 2) and Mary Magdalene (Jn 20: 16). The designation 'disciples' (οἱ μαθηταὶ) is ubiquitous in the Gospels.

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religious outlook was decidedly not Christian or even monotheist. Later, Christian foundations became the primary location for all kinds of formal education in most of Europe, although the situation remained much more complex in those regions where Christianity had taken root beyond the boundaries of the Roman empire. In some regions, Jews, Christians and Muslims continued to influence each other closely for centuries, not least in the content and modes of their education. Still later, under the dual drivers of mission and empire, Christians frequently found themselves in contexts where they were a numerical minority in terms of religion, language and culture, but where they were associated – explicitly or implicitly – with invasive European imperial power. As several articles in this volume demonstrate, questions regarding education become especially sharp when the Christian Church, or a Christian church, has been particularly closely associated with an empire or nation state. How does education function, for example, when Christianity is implicated with the efforts of those in power to shape those under their authority? Conversely, how has education been used by Christians to resist certain forms of power, whether that of formal political authority or that of social privilege? What motivates parents to educate their children in ways which are forbidden or discouraged by the state?

Bound up with such issues are questions about the form and location of education: were churches in a particular context concerned only with the education of people to be Christian disciples or also with their education in numeracy, literary and more complex intellectual or practical skills? How formalized were these forms of education? These issues have, of course, particular pertinence for the education of women, which for many centuries took place almost exclusively in a domestic sphere or in ascetic communities; they also relate to the education of those for whom much formal education was inaccessible due, for example, to poverty or disability, or to speaking a different mother tongue. While Christianity has at times actively restricted the scope of education – especially to men – several articles in the volume examine how some Christians have argued that it is a prime role of the Church to extend education as far as possible.

These articles arise from two conferences organized by the Ecclesiastical History Society, in July 2017, at the University of Exeter, and January 2018, at the Institute for Historical Research in London. The society invited a broad range of responses to the kind of questions noted above, and received a wonderfully



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stimulating selection of papers which ranged broadly in chronological range (from Late Antiquity to the 1970s) and geographical spread (from studies of English, Scottish and Welsh communities to examinations of Christian education across the globe in, for example, China, India, New Zealand, Sierra Leone, South Africa and the West Indies). We are delighted that this has resulted in such a rich edited volume. The purpose of this introduction will not be to summarize the content of each contribution, but rather to point the reader towards some notable themes emerging from the articles.

One of the interesting tensions to emerge is the relationship between the further education of those who were already educated and the elementary education of the majority. Our reliance on written evidence for our understanding of Christian education in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, together with low literary rates in those periods, perhaps explains the tendency of historians to focus on the (further) education of an educated elite, whether this is the education of the clergy in pastoral care (Leontidou, Hamilton, Springer) or the transmission of technical knowledge about astronomy (Falk) through monasteries. The study of form, as well as content, however, opens up questions about how people were educated, not least suggesting the possibility that some forms were appropriate for the less well trained, especially for those who could not read but who were experienced listeners. Pick and Evans show how specific literary forms – historiography, hagiography and dialogue – were used for Christian educational purposes in specific contexts. Ludlow and Lunn-Rockliffe's article, meanwhile, suggests that pleasure, including the pleasure of listening, was an important and under-appreciated educational mode in Late Antiquity, the legacy of which can be seen in Fidlerová's study of preaching and rhetoric in the Habsburg empire.

Given the strongly pedagogic bent of many of the Reformers and of their Catholic contemporaries, it is perhaps not surprising that articles examining the early modern period focus more intently on the education of the laity, especially through sermons and in catechisms, as shown in the articles by Atherton and Martin. Lied shows how works of fiction could have a catechetical function. Printed books and increasing literacy rates meant that Christian educational materials could be both officially sanctioned and available in the domestic sphere. In this period there is also much more evidence regarding Christian education for children and the specific aims of their educators. Walsham's article draws attention to the way in which families



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and institutions played complementary roles in forming children in a particular Christian tradition – in this case, Quakerism. By contrast, Bowden shows that the desire for a good Christian education sometimes cut across Protestant-Catholic dividing lines in surprising ways, as when Protestant parents sent their daughters to Catholic schools.

A popular theme for the two conferences was church-sponsored education of poor children: Jacob, Dixon and Mair examine English schools in the eighteenth, early nineteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, respectively; the article by Billinge, Ham, Moss and Neville compares schools in three Devon communities; Yates studies the efforts of the circulating schools movement to make education accessible in remote parts of Wales. Thor explores the education of women in Scottish Magdalene Asylums. Examinations of these various institutions reveal intense debates about the effectiveness and the aims of the education provided: should philanthropic Christians aim to provide literacy and numeracy, or practical skills, or to further more spiritual (or even political) aims? A further set of articles analyses the relationship between churches, the state and education: Mallon considers the interactions between established and dissenting Presbyterian churches in debates about the state provision of education in mid-nineteenth-century Scotland; moving forward to the early twentieth century, Smith and Masom analyse debates in the Church of England about church-aided schools, and Doney studies recommendations from the British Council of Churches during the 1960s and 1970s regarding religious education in state schools.

Rapid cultural and technological changes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries not only presented challenges but also new opportunities for Christian lay education, as is shown, from very different perspectives, by Ottewill's study of adult lay education in English Congregationalism and Pruneri's examination of Catholic responses to secularism in early twentieth-century Italy. Other articles study specific developments in church involvement in education, for example, changing perceptions of the role of Sunday School education (McCartney) and Methodist engagement with higher education in Oxford following the removal of restrictions placed on Nonconformists (Wellings).

Empires were, of course, important contexts for Christian educational enterprises; in this respect there are some continuities of theme between this volume and its predecessors, *Translating Christianity* and *The Church and Empire*. Several articles in the former volume showed



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how the introduction of Christianity from one context into another was preceded by, or led to, educational projects, some specifically linguistic (like the translation of the Bible or other religious texts), others more broadly cultural (like efforts to form a liturgical tradition in a new context or to use indigenous cultural forms such as theatre in Christian education). The broad theme of Church and empire is taken up in this volume by articles such as those by Dornan and Moon, which examine complex questions around the aims and means of education by Christians in various nineteenth-century colonial contexts: New Zealand, the British West Indies, Africa and India. Chapman argues that, for some influential Anglican missionaries, a movement from evangelizing to educating was underpinned both by a theological conviction that truth could be found beyond Christianity and by the much more problematic idea that the cultures of the East were, in the language of the day, 'higher civilizations' in comparison to those encountered in other mission fields. Morrison focuses on education, not of the recipients of mission, but of those children in Britain and elsewhere who were being educated by Sunday Schools, youth mission societies and magazines to support missionary effort: this did not just raise money, but was also aimed at forming children in various ways as young Christian world citizens. Finally, two fine prize-winning articles by Bond and Wang engage with Christianity, education and colonialism in the Chinese context. Each gives an especially subtle analysis of the interaction between local and Western agency in Chinese educational establishments during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bond studying the Chinese educationalist Zeng Baosun and the Yifang School for Girls which she founded in Changsha in 1918, and Wang examining how the tensions which were perceived to exist between being Christian and being Chinese played out in the history of the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College during the early twentieth century.

I would like to thank all participants in the two conferences, and especially those whose articles appear here, for their stimulating and scholarly contributions, which have greatly enhanced my own understanding of this topic. I am most grateful to my co-editors, Charlotte Methuen and Andrew Spicer, and the assistant editor, Tim Grass, for the care and professionalism which they have dedicated to this volume.

Morwenna Ludlow



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