About the Cover

The cover image is an icon called “Christ the Teacher”, a common variation of the more famous icon “Pantokrator”. In Orthodox Christianity, icons are not considered paintings; rather, they hold the same level of sacredness as the Word of God. In fact, iconographers say that they “write” icons instead of “painting” them. Not just anyone can become an iconographer; it is a vocation. Much in the same sense, being an apostle, prophet, or a teacher are also sacred vocations mentioned in Scripture. An icon is supposed to be a theological image of the Divine. Every part of the icon has theological significance. For example, in this icon, Christ is dressed in blue over red which symbolizes that his humanity clothes his divinity (Mary would be dressed in the opposite colours). In his left hand, Christ has the Scriptures opened so that anyone who gazes upon the icon will understand the mysteries within. His right hand is raised in blessing, two fingers raised to indicated the dual nature of the Incarnation, and three fingers joined to symbolize the Trinity – the core foundational teachings established in the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon. Those who take the vocation of iconography upon themselves improperly not only do not work in communion with the Holy Spirit, but have a distorted understanding of the Truth they are supposed to represent. In the same way, those who do not know how to read icons end up misinterpreting the Truth it conveys. Analogously, teaching (especially in religious education) needs to be discerned and grounded in Truth. In a sense, a teacher is supposed to be an icon of Christ the Teacher. When this does not happen, distortions of the Truth will occur. This issue of Saeculum will explore precisely this theme.

From the Editor’s Desk

The theme for this issue of Saeculum is “Christianity and Education and Miseducation”. Part of the Church’s mission is to spread the good news, and Christianity has a long history in the intellectual tradition and in evangelisation. Theologies have arisen to solidify, rectify, and justify religious education as well as educators. Some religious orders have made it their mission to teach and evangelise, each with their own goals and philosophies of education. Institutions were created with the mission of Christian education in mind. Programs and multiple courses have also sprouted to capture the richness of teaching and learning different aspects of Christianity. Most importantly, when Christian education does not just delivers doctrine, but encompasses individual development, formation, and growth, it can transform the lives of many. Saeculum presents five essays that explore precisely these themes.

Our first essay, “Catholic Schools: Schools with Catholic Teachers” by Stefania Lista, provides a standard for what Catholic education ought to be, and the importance for having spiritually well-formed Catholic teachers. Even though this argument arises from the current state of public Catholic education in Ontario, the philosophy behind Catholic education can also be applied broadly.
In response to Lista’s paper, our second essay “Education as Transforming Agent of Society” by Andrea Carandang presents a case where Christian education did not live up to the standard articulated in our first paper. The residential school system, one of Canada’s darker chapters in history (and whose effects are still rampant today in First Nations communities), had been carried out under the jurisdiction of the Church wherein European assimilation had been synonymous with Christianization. Carandang analyses the original purpose and subsequent implementation of the residential school system to demonstrate the culture-wide damage Christian miseducation can cause.

Our third essay provides a different example of the development of a Christian education institution: that of Trinity College in the University of Toronto in 1911. “The Anatomy of Trinity” by Cameron Jones tracks the evolution of Trinity’s Anglican identity since its founding to its state in the early twentieth century. Unlike the brutal assimilation practices of the residential schools, Jones suggests that Trinity flourished because it not only focused on tradition, but acknowledged that it was always in a continual state of growth along with the culture and society in which it was founded.

A prime example of balancing both tradition and modern society is exemplified in our fourth insert which unique to this issue. It is a course syllabus developed by several students from the University of Toronto in Mississauga on “Christianity and Modern Literature”. The course aims to analyse the role and influence of various Christian denominations within the lives of several literary authors, and extract major Christian themes from their works. Here we get a glimpse of the complexity of Christianity and how it “educates” not just one group of people at one point in history, but several literary figures, cultures and readerships.

Our final essay is “Development within the Individual” by Alice Pan. This paper nicely closes our discussion on Christian cultural education by circling back to the idea of individual formation as a necessary part of Christian education. Pan examines her experience with the L’Arche community through the lens of Dorothy Day and Martha Nussbaum on individual development and human dignity. This paper offers another philosophy of Christian education that enriches the standard put forth by the first essay.

I would like to thank our authors for their rich, critical research and insight into this theme, our editorial staff for their hard, diligent work, and the faculty of St. Michael’s College for their continued support of Saeculum. This issue is perhaps the longest one we’ve ever published!

Katie Zou
Editor-in-Chief