Launch of "Teaching Well"[1]

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It is common for studio actors to become film producers but less so for authors to become publishers. I have wondered why that is for some time. I don't think any of the publishers I have worked with over the past two decades as an author have written any books themselves. Could be mistaken but that is my recollection.

Since moving from authoring to publishing, I have experienced highs and lows and no shortage of surprises. Most of the rewards are hidden and personal … and that is how it should be. The publisher is midwife not parent. The widwife must remember the child isn't theirs. But I have come to appreciate the progeny of others and, as a former author, appreciate appeal and attractiveness with the eyes of an insider.

So as a one-time scribe and a survivor of several edited multi-author volumes, I warmly congratulate Ken and John on their achievement. It is considerable. Bringing together such a diverse group of contributors is difficult and demanding. They all want their own distinctive voice to be heard despite the spilt infinities; they all engage in special pleading and call it necessary emphasis; they all think their way of referencing the work of others is better or the best. I do not want to underestimate the complexity of producing a work of this kind and I do not want to understate the success Ken and John in delivering a book with a message that is clear, consistent and coherent.

Where does this book sit alongside comparable works? Don't be alarmed when I say it doesn't. It doesn't sit alongside comparable works because there are no comparable works. There are books on the principles of Christian education; there are volumes focusing on theories of Christian schooling. But we believe this is the first collection which examines the practice of teaching … an examination that seeks to observe the practice of teaching from the vantage point of several academic disciplines with the aid of perspectives arising from incredibly varied experiences. Let me digress with a little autobiography to make my point.

When I completed a Diploma of Education at Melbourne University in 1985, something that the Navy thought would make me a better recruit instructor (it didn't), I went away feeling disappointed that the course was unbalanced with too much emphasis on principles and theories (sociology, philosophy and psychology) and not enough on procedures and practicalities. It was not that the former were unimportant. It was, to my mind, a case of not enough investment in the latter. What do I bring as I stand before students; how does teaching lead to learning?

Two years ago Barton Books published a set of essays entitled "Ministry in Anglican Schools: Principles and Practicalities".

The focus on ministry was intended to inform and encourage everyone involved in ministry within a Christian educational setting – and it was received by those in the sector as a welcome addition to collected wisdom. We believe this book is another vital contribution to our understanding of what happens in the Christian educational setting – this time to the classroom and who teachers are.

There is very much a sense in the pages of "Teaching Well" that teaching is a divine calling – not just a profession and not merely an occupation – but a calling to which those called will answer in terms of how they applied their abilities and aptitudes.

This is a big book – a very big book – and I cannot canvas all it conveys in any meaningful way – other than to say that I believe it is a gift from God and I believe it will be a source of rich blessing. And for that, I thank God, Ken and John for the privilege of being the publisher and to having my own attitude and approach to teaching enriched and extended by the expertise and experience that I have encountered in these pages.

May God prosper the work of the hands who have contributed to this book.

The Lord be with you and those you teach. TEACH

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[1]Teaching Well: Insights for educators in Christian Schools, edited by Ken Goodlet and John Collier, is a compilation of essays addressing current issues for Christian educators, and published by Barton Books, Canberra,. The book launch on Friday 21st February, 2014 at St Andrews Cathedral School included these comments by the Chair of Manuscript Selection.