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ROUNDTABLE

Rejoinder to William H. Jeynes' "Response to the *Journal of School Choice*'s Special Section on 'Private Religious Protestant and Catholic Education in North America: Contributions and Concerns'"

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This article offers a rejoinder to William H. Jeynes' response to the six related articles and studies of private religious Protestant and Catholic schooling in North America featured in the March 2012 issue of the Journal of School Choice. *While the authors express appreciation for the credit he grants these studies and especially for the further research and scholarship that he proposes in philosophy of and policy for Christian education, they caution against drawing strong conclusions based on some of the findings and analysis of the initial studies.*

KEYWORDS private schools, Catholic schools, Christian schools, homeschooling, religious schools, school effects

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In his response to the six articles in the special section of the March 2012 *Journal of School Choice* 6(1), William Jeynes (2012) offers a rather complimentary analysis of the research. While he lauds the studies (see Van Pelt, Sikkink, Pennings, & Seel, 2012; Sikkink, 2012; Van Brummelen & Koole, 2012; LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012; Beckman, Drexler, & Eames, 2012; and Candal & Glenn, 2012) for their contribution to a widely understudied field, he nevertheless encourages future contributors in research on private Protestant and Catholic schools to consider the larger philosophical, theological, anthropological and metaphysical questions surrounding the motivation for such schools. Additionally, he advises that such a program of research must also contribute to the practical policy and school design implications of the findings of study within and beyond the sector.

Before he arrives at those two major suggestions for future research and contribution, he identifies a number of specific areas for further study that emerge from the research program initiated by Cardus. He recognizes the lack of attention to home education in school sector studies, especially in mainstream journals, despite the burgeoning homeschooling sector. Jeynes also encourages further examination of differences within the religious school sector and especially promotes continued examination of the understudied Protestant sector.

Jeynes is particularly helpful in drawing the larger implications of the findings, though we would urge caution on a few issues. We do not find conclusive evidence that public school students are better prepared to function in a diverse world than are private Christian school graduates. Existing research is not clear on this score and provides some evidence that religious schools are doing no worse than public school graduates (Campbell, 2001; Campbell, 2005; Dill, 2009; Godwin, Ausbrooks, & Martinez 2001; Greene & Mellow 2000). Second, the research literature is not completely consistent on the relationship between college attendance and adult religiosity, though the more recent evidence shows no particularly negative effect of college attendance, except perhaps for Catholics (Hill, 2009; Uecker, 2009). It is also too early to conclude that the religiosity of students has a stronger effect on their behavior than attendance at a religious school. This claim would require more careful specification of school type, religiosity dimension, and the behavior. We also would be less sanguine in evaluating the Boston evangelical and Catholic school response to issues of racial and socioeconomic disadvantage, though the efforts of each school are certainly laudable. It is unlikely that simply ignoring skin color offers an adequate response to problems of structural disadvantage (Emerson & Smith, 2000).

Other conclusions and interpretations raise further issues and require further research. Certainly religious school administrator accounts of their work are more likely to incorporate the language of calling. But whether this is a result of the institutional context, or the religious backgrounds and

experiences of administrators, is difficult to determine. If the latter, we might expect similar levels of "calling" language among religious public school administrators. And we may also find accounts in public schools that are less explicitly religious but essentially similar. If so, the remaining research question is whether the language of "calling" impacts administrator success and school quality independently and in interaction with school sector. Similarly, in terms of differences in the effectiveness of secular and religious visions for schools, we would encourage further research on whether a religious vision matters independent of or in interaction with school sector.

Some of the historical claims in Jeynes' review may require further consideration. Critics may question whether the claim that early American education was singly dedicated to the pursuit of truth adequately captures the actual practices of schools. We would want a more careful assessment of changes in goals across time periods and of the effects of these historical differences. We also expect that Jeynes is aware that he is entering well-trod and contentious territory when he claims that changes in schooling in the United States can be chalked up to the fact that early America was more "God-fearing" or governed by Judeo–Christian values. Many scholars would see the history of the relationship between religion and public life in the United States as much more complex (Hatch, 1989; Marsden, 2001; Noll & Harlow, 2007; Noll, Hatch, & Marsden, 1983). Again, however, we expect that Jeynes' provocative analysis and interpretation may provide a useful framework for creative new research.

From a policy perspective, Jeynes strongly encourages that proponents of school choice pay closer attention to processes within and outcomes of the private religious sector. Since parental expectations and school climate may account for school sector outcomes, Jeynes notes that one of the most important findings may well be the overall comparatively high satisfaction Protestant school graduates report of their high school experience.

In addition, Jeynes claims that aspects of the study dismantle prevailing and inaccurate stereotypes about schooling in this sector. He notes that the research found active societal and cultural involvement of religious school graduates, which addresses the social isolation/cultural withdrawal myth surrounding students and graduates of private religious schools, especially evangelical Protestant schools.

Jeynes notes the gains both evangelical (Protestant) and Catholic schools make in bridging racial divides despite the different approaches to doing so: The former emphasize community while the latter emphasize individual success. Both, he notes, contribute to breaking cycles of poverty and racial integration. Again, this finding is worthy of attention by educational policy architects. But we caution that a qualitative study of racial dynamics in two schools is not sufficient to determine the relationship between schooling strategies related to race and social mobility of individual minority students, much less to determine whether these schooling strategies would

make a dent in the broader racial disadvantages embedded in residential, economic, judicial, and political structures and processes.

Taken together, Jeynes claims that all of these studies beg the question of what Christian education ought to emphasize. While we agree, we wonder if it is Christian education or generally any education, public or private, that Jeynes is concerned about here. Of course, Jeynes is aware that he is extrapolating well beyond the Cardus studies, but the connections are interesting. He first reviews a variety of educational goals including academic, character, spiritual, and moral, and offers an historical overview of the development of educational goals ranging from the centrality of virtues to pursuit of God's truth, from character education to intellectual formation. He then concludes by posing the question of whether people of faith are now demanding spirituality and academic excellence from their schools. We agree that social and religious trends may push this direction and that future research, including more in-depth analysis of the Cardus data, should do more to address the issue of what parents and school leaders desire from Christian educational institutions. We would not characterize the Cardus studies as pitting religious or spiritual formation and academic learning against each other, nor would we make claims from those studies about putative changes in the balance of these goals over time. Further, if there has been a decline in emphasis on religious and spiritual formation at Christian schools, we would not simply account for this by the decline of these goals in public schools. Even if we grant a "decline" in all sectors, other societal trends may explain a general shift in the understanding of what it means to "do school" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). And it is not immediately evident how the Cardus research would support the claim that many parents are looking for a melding of academic and spiritual goals within schools. The upwardly-mobile evangelical and Catholic populations are likely putting pressure on Christian schools to pay more attention to academic goals than they have in the past (Baker & Riordan, 1998). But we would need further research to determine whether the tendency of evangelical Protestant school parents to focus on relationships, a safe environment, and a strong moral ethos is now considered insufficient without academic excellence.

We also second Jeynes' call for further research on the public good that Christian schools may serve. Although the Cardus studies provide evidence that religious schools have several characteristics that are likely to contribute to the public good, including an emphasis on volunteering and community service and the importance of racial equality within the school community, there is much more that needs to be done to understand the role of Christian schools in society. Besides the Cardus research (Pennings, Sikkink, Wiens, Seel, & Van Pelt, 2011) and other literature (Dill, 2009), we need further research that addresses the public impact of Christian schooling. Do such schools and their graduates contribute to the social and civic flourishing of communities and countries? If so, can these "best practices" be translated to

other sectors, including the public sector? Posed another way, if religious schools contribute to the public good, then how can educational policy architects create the potential for more such outcomes in schools and school systems?

We share with Jeynes' the concern that examination of the Christian school sector requires more careful attention to within sector differences than the current Cardus studies were able to provide. Some research suggests that evangelical Protestant schools are substantially similar (Wagner, 1990; Wagner, 1997). But we agree that it is worth investigating differences by region and even across schools associated with various religious movements (e.g., Pentecostalism and fundamentalism). Finding within sector differences may provide models, for example, that effectively meld spiritual and intellectual goals. Jeynes calls for locating and explicating the processes and products of exemplary models of Protestant and Catholic schools. We agree that further qualitative studies such as these would greatly enhance the literature on religious schooling and perhaps offer models that can be effectively implemented by schools that are struggling to create an environment in which academic, spiritual, and cultural/civic engagement goals are synthesized.

As Cardus moves to encourage further research on religious schools and as scholars engage themselves with aspects of the questions raised, we embrace the suggestions offered by Jeynes. We agree that more study is required in the area of the educational philosophy and the public contribution of the various types of Protestant and Catholic schools. Further explication of the theoretical grounding of the purpose of education in this sector may be enhanced by the development of a taxonomy or typology of schools in this sector. Such a typology might account for ranges in pedagogy, constituency, theology, institutional structure, purpose, and demographics of attendees. As well, further explication of the public benefit, including financial and economic, of schools in this sector must be undertaken accompanied or followed by clearly articulated policy implication proposals. And finally, more must be studied about the state of this sector. How vibrant or stagnant is the sector? Are numbers of schools and numbers of participating students on the rise or decline? Are these schools increasingly pervasive or increasingly marginalized? What is known about how teachers and principals are prepared to work in these schools? Is more or something different required in their preparation?

In conclusion, those who study education within the pluralistic context that characterizes contemporary North America ought to allow for conceptions of educational purpose that include holistic education, particularly one that incorporates the spiritual dimension. The conceptual overlap and distinctiveness between contemporary paradigms of whole-person education and those informing the practice of faith-based education may serve to develop frameworks that account for the relationship of these conceptions

to each other. Pursuing this endeavor is not simply serving the relatively small subset of the population which currently utilizes faith-based models of education but also will contribute to understanding of the two-way cultural impact that faith-based schools have with the schools in their neighborhood. Although part of the motivation for some faith-based schools is a defensive rejection of the publicly accessible alternatives which otherwise would be available, some of the motivations emerge from other philosophies of education which, in the competitive marketplace of ideas, also impact nonfaith-based schools. In short, research into faith-based education, its purpose, and its place in the contemporary North American context ought to be understood as contributing to a more nuanced reflection of the full diversity of schooling that comprises education today.

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