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Ken Badley and Amy Dee

A Biblical Ethics for Talented and Gifted Education

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:4)

In many jurisdictions, schools operate under legal mandates to provide nondiscriminatory services that will encourage maximum individual growth in students regardless of race, gender, ability, ethnicity, primary language, or religion. Educators, including Christian educators, take seriously the moral charge to provide for those with less cultural capital or with fewer academic resources. Both public and independent school teachers attend to cultural differences and give time and energy to develop inclusive environments. Their efforts to leave no student behind, while admirable, often leave one group of exceptional students without adequate support: the talented and gifted.

Gifted students certainly present a unique set of challenges to the classroom teacher, but they generally do not require extra or different interventions in order to pass high stakes assessments. With the current focus on students with learning, emotional, or behavioral disabilities that hinder academic achievement, classroom teachers may spend less time developing differentiated instruction for gifted students than they spend for students with disabilities. In such circumstances, gifted students often find themselves grouped with the middle in classrooms, and there they wait for their peers to catch up, for their teachers to provide challenging content, and for their schools to address their unique needs.

For decades, educators, parents and policy makers have dealt—with varying degrees of success—with the question of how to provide education for talented and gifted (henceforth “TAG,” for brevity) students. Necessarily, they have attended to the ethical dimensions of addressing or not addressing the special needs of this school population. To our knowledge, no one has yet outlined a Christian ethical framework for talented and gifted education. In what follows, we offer the beginning of such an outline. We conclude by calling for instruction differentiated to challenge the abilities and needs of gifted students so that all might realize fully the talents and gifts God has bestowed on them. We recognize that, despite obvious similarities, post-secondary honors programs are not the same thing as K–12 provision for the talented and gifted. We focus the work that follows on the latter, believing that it largely applies to the former.

Critical Questions and Past Discussions

Ordinarily, those who would answer a question such as “How should we provide education for the gifted?” expect to locate their own research or arguments in a preexistent conversation. To our surprise, almost no such conversation exists

related to our particular question. Not to disparage any of the leading journals, but we failed to find a single article that attempts to articulate a detailed Christian perspective on talented and gifted education in any of the *Australian Journal of Christian Education*, the *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, and the *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* (although various authors mention the question). As one might expect, the electronic indexes to scholarly journals produced by organizations making no claim to faith reveal the same dearth. Seventh-Day Adventist educators have written most of the few words available from Christian perspectives (for example, Clizbe, 1993; Simpson, 1985). One Adventist author includes a brief citation from the founder of Adventism, Ellen White, whose language we would certainly not use today: “Each individual should learn to rightly appreciate the capabilities that God has given. . . . God would have us to arouse from our indifference, and no longer allow the intellectual powers to run to waste, and degenerate into imbecility” (cited in Parker, 1982, p. 20). With a few brief exceptions (such as Keeley, 1990; Sullivan, 1957), our research unearthed little explicitly Christian ethical treatment of education for talented and gifted students.

Meanwhile, several other conversations inform how any Christian will answer the question we have asked. Extensive literature exists, from outside the community of faith, on the ethical aspects of providing education for the talented and gifted (Ambrose, 2000; Ambrose & Cross, 2009; Fetterman & Stanley, 1988; Schindler, 1984; Silliman & Alexander, 1976). Husén (1974), for example, offers a critical review of the long, deeply divisive and intensely ethical debate about the origins of intelligence, especially the relative contributions of genetics and environment. Without difficulty, one finds works from various sides of the intelligence debate, ranging from ideas we now consider shocking (Terman, 1954) to ideas that have shaped the multivariant way most educators now view intelligence (Gardner, 1983, 1999; Sternberg, 1996).

The ethical question of education for the gifted lies adjacent to the quite healthy discussion of ethics for children with learning disabilities (for example, Boyle & Danforth, 2001; Pudlas, 2004). Recognizably, that discussion may be—and may have to be—imported and adapted to inform the ethics of TAG education. We did not find one major bibliography that included a category for ethical considerations (for example, Anthony & Anthony, 1981), although most include legal perspectives. Obviously, law is not ethics per se, but, as Howe and Miramontes (1992) point out, the two are intimately connected. Few bibliographies include a category such as “philosophical issues” or “theoretical perspectives” in which a few references to the ethics of TAG education appear. Many textbooks on exceptionality dedicate a few pages, usually in the first or last chapter, to a brief discussion of the ethics of special education, and a few specifically address the ethics of talented and gifted education (for example, Gollnick, 2008; Hardman, Drew, & Egan, 1999; Harmon & Jones, 2005). Most titles seem to assume rather than address the ethical dimension, as if what should be done has already been established to the satisfaction of all, and only how to go about it remains problematic.

Talented and Gifted Education: A Complex Question

Several factors contribute to the complexity of this issue. First, a century of shifting language renders this issue more complex than it might otherwise be. Parents, educators, and taxpayers understand such key terms as *need*, *gifted*, and *special education* differently. Several observers have noted how educators themselves have shifted in their usage, with such words as *eminence* and *genius*, popular in the early 20th century, giving way to *giftedness*, *creativity*, and *talent* (Albett, 1969; Friedman-Ninz, O'Brien, & Frey, 2005; Schindler, 1984). The language in this discussion is sufficiently loaded emotionally that anyone arguing that schools should attend to the gifted may be misheard as ignoring the needs of those with learning disabilities. The conceptual relations between special education (which usually refers to those less capable of academic work) and exceptionality (which includes talented and gifted learners) generate additional confusion (Howe & Miramontes, 1992, p. 45). Most people consider the "disproportionate allocation of resources" ethical for the purpose of "getting all children up to [a] threshold" (Howe & Miramontes, 1992, p. 44) but consider that a different matter from giving more advantages to those already advantaged. Montbriand (1995) points out the importance of language in this ethics discussion, and that the language of individual differences is less incendiary than the language of superiority (p. 17).

Second, researchers on education for the talented and gifted have many practical disagreements. Does attending to the gifted in a school or classroom actually produce "a consequential rise in standards" for all students, as some claim (Hunt, 2007, p. 3)? Intellectually able children face a perception that with all the resources they bring to school they will suffer no harm from school programming that ignores their gifts to the same degree that children who struggle to learn would suffer harm if schools were to ignore their needs. This perception has the appearance of an empirical claim but has deeply ethical implications because it influences how educational providers respond to pressure from parents and researchers. As long ago as 1928, a public school official wrote that

the greatest actual retardation in the public schools is to be found not, as previously supposed, in the case of the dull child but in the case of the bright child . . . [who is] a conspicuous victim of retardation. . . . [P]rogressive retardation was shown as the intelligence level increased from the lowest to highest. (Worlton, 1928, p. 336)

Worlton's language would differ were he to write today, but debate about such claims continues eight decades after the publication of his article. Educators disagree over whether gifted students in mainstream settings feel isolated (Smith, 1991) and whether demoralization leads to behavior problems. Some argue that both isolation and demoralization may result from efforts at inclusion. When responsibility for the education of children with exceptionalities falls to the classroom teacher who lacks adequate training with special populations, the individualized instruction often goes to the students most in need of extra help, leaving TAG learners and their need for challenging content facing only an easily constructed worksheet or extra problems from a course text.

Third, pragmatic arguments regularly surface about various nations' needs for the brightest to serve national scientific and economic interests. That these arguments cloak themselves as ethical arguments complicates the question of talented and gifted education. Note this typical expression from six decades ago:

The minds of our brightest youth are the most precious resource a society possesses. . . . [T]hey . . . deserve the best education we can give them. But, in this . . . moment in human history, the fate of ourselves and indeed of all mankind may well depend upon the quality of our leadership. And the kind of imaginative, intelligent, and positive leadership that our nation and world requires today must be provided and supported by the most gifted of our youth. (Edwards, 1954, p. 328)

Edwards's view may, in fact, fit with St. Paul's understanding that God gives gifts so that individuals may contribute to the life of the community. We therefore use caution when we categorize such arguments as pragmatic; Edwards is right to point to the need for gifted leadership, in 1954 or at any other time.

Fourth, some Christians respond to biblical warnings about pride by becoming afraid of affirming talents or gifts lest gifted persons become proud. Interestingly, we do not ordinarily think that someone with few intellectual resources might be waylaid by the same pride upon reaching some lower threshold of academic accomplishment, and so we feel free to affirm the one who struggles academically, sometimes effusively so. This contrast in treatment for students with different exceptionalities complicates the process of answering our question.

A fifth complicating factor has to do with identifying the talented and gifted. Criteria used for identification are ethical at their core because the criteria, by definition, result in benefits to some and not to others (Callahan, 2004; Feldman & Bratton, 1972; Gallagher, 2008; Thorkildsen, 1994). We will not deal with this matter at length, because it surfaces in almost every book on TAG education, but the plethora of words on identification in the TAG literature points to its importance.

Sixth, answering the question of education for the talented and gifted focuses tensions between two competing social ideals: equality and excellence (noted, for example, by Gottfredson, 2006; Smith, 1991). Contemporary society seems undecided which it desires; perhaps society comforts itself by talking about equality, while those who control society actually wish to realize excellence (Fetterman & Stanley, 1988). A commonplace view of schools is that they act as stand-alone institutions whose mandate is to pass along knowledge and thereby to equalize opportunities for all to enjoy society's goods. Some critics argue that schools do the exact opposite, that they legitimate and reproduce societal inequalities and stratification (Arnot & Whitty, 1982; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Young, 1958). Gifted education periodically becomes a flash point in this disagreement. Research and plentiful openly ideological arguments are available to support either view. The sparse critical discussion specifically on TAG education—all of it overtly normative—derives from sociological traditions (Howley, Howley, & Pendarvis, 1986), from phenomenology (Cross, 2003), from social dominance

theory (Cross & Cross, 2005) and from the diversity discussion (Ford, 2003), but, to our knowledge, no critical or ethical discussion has yet appeared from within an explicitly Christian theological framework.

We and our readers could easily add to this catalogue of complexities. We outline these at this length to make clear the need for Christian educators to articulate a biblical ethics for this area, and to underline that those doing so will face a challenge.

Biblical Arguments for Attending to Exceptionality

In what follows, we offer a skeleton of a biblical ethics for talented and gifted education. To begin, we explore briefly the Genesis accounts of the creation and a variety of scriptural references to children. Then we consider at greater length the biblical theme of justice and biblical understandings of gifts.

The Creation Narratives

Humans are made in God's image (Gen. 1:26–27), the starting point of many treatments of the worth and dignity of children. As many writers about education remind us, children are image-bearers of very God, not “mere mortals” (Lewis, 1949, p. 15). We do not want to glide over this ground too easily, however, because the *imago dei* is less straightforward than many might wish. Scholars have discussed this concept for centuries without agreeing to its meaning (Middleton, 2005), leaving us needing to ask our readers (with many readers of Scripture) to accept that in some general way children have worth because they are in God's image, not because of their potential economic contribution to family or society. Despite our caution regarding this detail, we recognize that philosophies, histories, and sociologies of childhood all implicitly or explicitly affirm the claim that children have worth, some noting that societies sometimes claim a higher view than they demonstrate (Bronfenbrenner & Condry, 1970; Postman, 1982; Sommerville, 1982).

The creation narratives suggest other possible lines of support for a high view of children, for example, God's command to produce children (Gen. 1:28) and God's pleasure that the whole creation was good (Gen. 1:31). The Genesis accounts also portray diversity—meant as complementarity—among God's creatures, both human and nonhuman (Gen. 1:20–27, 2:18–20). That God created diversity and intended that humans should complement each other may give us direction as we seek appropriate responses to the presence in school classrooms of children with various interests, learning styles, and levels of intellectual ability.

Without suggesting that others have loaded more argumentative freight onto the opening chapters of Genesis than those chapters can carry, we do not find in the creation narratives alone the compelling foundation for TAG ethics that we or others might wish. Clearly, further study of these biblical passages is warranted to provide context for all who work in education. Still, Genesis contributes to our overall development of a scriptural framework for ethical consideration of gifted education. Interestingly, the Genesis accounts suggest a conclusion about children quite in line with a widely held perspective in the field. Margalit (2000) con-

cludes her meta-analysis of special education research (including TAG) by noting that researchers in all countries share the concern to promote human dignity. Her conclusion may indicate that our first line of exploration sets a biblical ethics for gifted education on a course significantly similar to that taken by contemporary research as a whole. To argue that children have value simply because they exist as God's creations, however, sets our ethics against any culture that would judge human worth based on wealth, accomplishment, beauty, ability, or potential contribution.

Biblical References to Children

We will offer here only a partial, brief review of biblical references to and teachings about children, assuming our readers' familiarity with Scripture and recognizing that others have given much effort in this direction already. Several extended theologies of childhood are available (e.g., Astley, Francis, & Crowder, 1996; Bunge, 2001; Lee, 1985; Miller-McLemore, 2003) as well as many books offering Christian conceptions of education that contain portions or indications of a theology of childhood but do not attempt the whole project (such as Braley, Layman, & White, 2003; Stronks & Blomberg, 1993). Neither Scripture nor the books to which we have referred here lay out a specifically theological ethics for TAG education. But both offer some fixed marks to guide our explorations.

Scriptural writers demonstrate their belief in the significance of children by noting children's responsibilities such as loving and listening to their parents (Gen. 28:7; Prov. 13:1). Some children were dedicated to God at or shortly after their birth, for example Samuel (1 Sam. 1:24–28). In its mandate to teach children of God's works, Deuteronomy 6:1–9 implicitly points to children's worth. Deuteronomy 21:15–17 condemns showing partiality in the distribution of family wealth among children, calling on parents to be fair. The context of that passage and its intended audience may reduce its relevance to the contemporary question of TAG, but we must still take seriously the principle it teaches, especially when we are tempted to seek what is best for our own children while ignoring the needs of other children, with calls that sound like "just us" instead of "justice" (a phenomenon noted by Miller-McLemore, 2003).

New Testament authors write in concert with their forebears. The gospel writers record Jesus's rebuke to those who would keep children from gathering around to hear his teaching (Matt. 19:14). Miller-McLemore (2003), in fact, uses Jesus's words for the title of her theology of childhood: *Let the Children Come: Reimagining Childhood from a Christian Perspective*. In her reading, "the Gospel narrative challenges the usual norms of social status and demands stunning respect for children" (p. 84). That reading is consistent with our own and offers rich direction for anyone wanting to answer the question of education for any kind of exceptional children, including the talented and gifted. Luke records Peter's statement that God's promises extend to children (Acts 2:39), echoing the "and to your offspring" theme one finds in Genesis (12:7; 13:15; etc). Paul's instruction that parents should not provoke their children so that they do not lose heart (Col. 3:21) may contain a rebuke to practices of education in which any children, including TAG children, do not thrive.

We have explored briefly only a few passages of Scripture in the foregoing, and this is only to remind our readers that Scripture assumes, teaches, and calls for a high view of the worth and dignity of children. As we did at the end of our discussion of the creation narratives, we note here that much biblical study remains for anyone wanting to articulate a comprehensive, biblical understanding of children, a task partly completed already by the authors we have named and others.

The Biblical Theme of Justice

The biblical theme of justice supports educators' giving attention to the needs of the talented and gifted. We take as given that the Scriptures call for justice, and we point only to a few passages each from the Old and New Testaments to review rather than make our case. We begin in the Old Testament with the prophet Isaiah, who notes—in contrast to Judah's failings—that God wishes people to seek justice (1:17). In a similar tone, Amos calls for justice to “roll down like waters” (5:24, NRSV) and then links justice to righteousness. In the gospel accounts, Jesus regularly speaks of justice (e.g., Luke 18:8) and rebukes those who, in his view, attend obsessively to the details of law while ignoring justice (Matt. 23:23). Christians generally view justice as a dominant message of Jesus, and use the concept to justify church involvement in mission, outreach, education, and, in some cases, politics.

Having accepted the scriptural call for God's followers to do justice, we ask what this biblical theme might indicate for TAG education. We believe justice demands full educational provision for those with the fewest resources, a normative claim that lies largely outside the scope of this essay and one that many others have dealt with at length (e.g., Sider, 1997, who writes about the economic dimension). To some degree, the scriptural theme of justice still shapes the culture in which we live and educate; educators do focus on meeting the needs of those with the fewest resources. Jesus clearly states that actions toward the least among us are actions toward him (Matt. 25:40), a passage that offers a warrant for directing substantial support to learners with the greatest needs. That category includes learners with disabilities, those who speak a language other than the language of their classroom, or those without economic or family support for maximum learning (categories that, incidentally, might include gifted students). In large part, educators agree that to help these students develop their God-given academic talents more fully, schools need to offer them additional support and resources.

With educators in most jurisdictions having agreed what justice implies for those with the fewest resources, what does it imply for the exceptionalities of the talented and gifted? Some might question whether justice requires directing more school resources toward students who already enjoy superior intellectual gifts, but we contend that all students with needs that cannot be met by general instruction deserve appropriate treatment and resources, even those who do not qualify as “the least of these” (Matt. 25:45). We must offer instruction to all students that assists them in developing more fully. To argue that justice demands resources for the gifted, we must distinguish between justice and sameness. Justice denotes fairness and egalitarianism, which we understand as meaning that all students deserve

equal opportunities to develop their potential. Most educators would agree that sameness in education does not indicate justice (e.g., Portland, 2006). Few, if any, of our readers would condone eliminating services for children with learning disabilities to achieve some kind of misconceived equality of service. Equality and justice in education imply that all students receive an education that promotes optimal academic, social, emotional, and physical growth. Same or identical educational services for different students inherently end up fostering inequality. Justice demands that gifted students, because they have a need, receive differentiated education so that they can reach optimal potential.

As we argued above, concern for justice demands differentiated education for those with learning disabilities. But when we apply the principle of justice to the gifted, concerns about elitism, meritocracy, or social dominance often emerge (Cross and Cross, 2005), leaving the gifted to struggle in classrooms that fail to challenge them. Differentiation requires individualized attention for any student who demonstrates either aptitude or difficulty within a curricular domain regardless of identified giftedness or special education needs. Faced with a daily regimen of relatively inflexible curriculum directed toward students of middle ability, the most able students in any given subject may become bored. In fact, students of middle ability may be ill-served in such classrooms as well, indicating a need for greater differentiation of instruction at all ability levels. A biblical understanding of justice demands that schools make program and structural adjustments for these able learners, just as we make accommodations for those who struggle to learn. Without fostering boastfulness or elitism, teachers must attend to all students in the classroom, even those for whom learning comes without challenge.

Gifts and Spiritual Gifts

While not wanting to be overly literal about the subject matter at hand, we believe that anyone attempting to outline a biblical ethics for talented and gifted education must attend to a variety of biblical teachings and narratives involving various gifts and talents. Biblical scholars disagree as to what the Scriptures teach about gifts and talents, let alone how whatever those Scriptures teach might apply to our question of TAG education. We will leave the resolution of those differences to others and will proceed here with a simple distinction between general and special gifts. Under “general gifts” we include the necessities of life such as water, food, shelter, security, and those gifts that God gives to the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45), which, James informs us, all come from above (Jas. 1:17), a theme echoed throughout Scripture (e.g., Ps. 85:12; John 3:27; 1 Cor. 4:7). Second, we include in the category of general gifts the range of skills and talents that all of us develop and use each day to accomplish our tasks at work and home (a definition that accords with the approach to education caught by the somewhat popular claim that “all students are gifted”). God gives the capacity for us to develop skills, and Jesus specifically teaches that we are to make good of our resources (Matt. 25:14–30), a teaching that might also apply to institutions that either deny the exercise of gifts (e.g., of women’s ministry gifts) or ignore the possession of gifts (e.g., of intellectually able students).

Under “special gifts” we include those clearly given by God for special occasions, such as to Moses, who performed miracles at the beginning of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt (Exod. 4: 7–11), or to St. Peter, who healed a crippled beggar with the words, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk” (Acts 3:6–8, NRSV). We also include under special gifts those spiritual gifts listed by Paul in three different letters (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12: 14; Eph. 4) and mentioned by Peter (1 Pet. 4). Although we will not pursue the question whether gifts such as speaking in other languages (1 Cor. 12:10) are for today, we will insist that they are so extraordinary that they belong without question in our category of special gifts. Paul includes such gifts as wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8), teaching (Eph. 4:11), or cheerfulness (Ro. 12:8) that may fully qualify as special or might be considered more general. The point for our question is that—special or general—these gifts come from God. As Paul took pains to remind his readers, they are for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7), for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). On Peter’s account, those who would exercise their gifts must do so for the glory of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

What applications can a reader of Scripture’s treatment of gifts make to the question of TAG education? First, in the spirit of many biblical writers and specifically with the psalmist, we believe that God “give[s] what is good” (Ps. 85:12, NRSV). If the abilities of the talented and gifted come as good gifts from God, schools charged with TAG children’s education should treat their gifts accordingly.

Second, the talented and gifted should use their gifts in service to others, a condition Paul specifies in two of his three lists. Advocates of education for talented and gifted children frequently point to the contribution those children will inevitably make to the welfare of society at large, what we earlier categorized as a pragmatic argument. One leading advocate of special programs for gifted students worded it this way: “The more they can accomplish, in school and beyond, the more benefits will accrue to *all of us*. That is why investment in appropriate programs for highly able students is enlightened self-interest” (Gallagher, 1991, p. 178, italics original). Views such as Gallagher’s have supporters (Hunt, 2007), but the near-collapse of the global economy in 2008, which was brought about by bright but deeply flawed people, demonstrated that the benefits of talents and gifts do not always accrue to all of us, that their contribution to our welfare is not inevitable. We recognize this as a caution, but one that cannot serve as a logical argument to withdraw service to the gifted (any more than criminality from any member of society would indicate reducing educational investment to a group). Other critics detect in arguments such as Gallagher’s an implicit quid pro quo (where society gives to the gifted anticipating a return on investment) and will therefore view them as self-serving rather than principial. Nevertheless, what seems like self-interest from one point of view might seem like community-mindedness from another point of view; that is, there are multiple perspectives on this dimension of the use of gifts, and they are worthy of further exploration.

Third, we take from both Jesus’ and Paul’s teaching as well as from various narratives such as that of Moses, Bezalel (Exod. 31), and Peter’s raising of the crippled beggar, that we should encourage the full development and use of whatever

gifts people possess. Neither individuals nor the institutions in which they learn and work should bury talent, either by benign neglect or by intention. Educators should encourage the development of all children's gifts and talents—including the talented and gifted—so that society can benefit from their full development and expression and so that God, the author and giver of every good thing, can be glorified.

Students of Scripture have already given a great deal of effort to understanding biblical perspectives on gifts. We end our exploration of gifts by noting the need for those interested in education, and especially TAG education, to continue working to understand Scripture on this important question.

Conclusion

We have surveyed the ethical discussion that (largely indirectly) informs both the talented and gifted discussion in K–12 education and honors programs in post-secondary education (inasmuch as honors programs offer institutional differentiation for students with academic talents). We have also offered lines of argument from Scripture that we believe ought to inform our answers to this question. In light of what we have attempted to bring together in the foregoing, we conclude that to offer education at a level that fails to challenge the talented and gifted is unbiblical as offering education beyond the reach of those with learning disabilities. Given the complexities of this question outlined earlier, what ways forward remain open to Christian educators?

We conclude that the biblically ethical way to meet the needs of the talented and gifted resides in the same strategy suggested for students who struggle academically or for those who demonstrate potential in specific content areas: differentiation. Educators will find a plethora of material on how to differentiate for the talented and gifted. Several researchers have suggested models that might suit what we desire to see. Renzulli and Reis (2008) describe a "Schoolwide Enrichment Model" by which all students are assessed and receive differentiated curriculum and instruction to suit and challenge them. Tomlinson and her colleagues envision a "Parallel Curriculum" where "high-quality curriculum for all learners [addresses] the specific needs of students who exemplify varying degrees of advanced potential or performance" (Tomlinson et al., 2002, p. 4). Most educators agree that the days of exclusionary practices have come to an end and that all students can learn alongside peers in general education classrooms as long as they are challenged to learn. Differentiation, as a practice, promises educators a means to meet the needs of all students. In doing so, it fosters inclusion and thereby likely helps schools realize a biblical ideal that we did not treat in our four biblical inquiries above: community (Pudlas, 2004).

As we write, many jurisdictions (in North America at least) are moving toward differentiation models anyway, so our suggesting that differentiation meets the biblical standards for an ethical model of education for the talented and gifted is, while we hope biblical, obviously not educationally ground shaking in today's context. But it has two important practical dimensions to which we direct our readers' attention. First, classroom teachers will need additional support and in-

service development in the practice of differentiation. Differentiation requires expert planning and the use of formative assessments, and teachers need time and assistance to strengthen their skills in these areas. Second, we must equip pre-service and in-service teachers so they can offer appropriate curriculum using suitable learning strategies for the talented and gifted (VanTassel-Baska & Johnsen, 2007). Teachers must have command of the myriad of methods to challenge and enrich those with academic gifts, not at all a new question (Wilson, 1955). Every child deserves an excellent education, and perhaps differentiation offers the hope that they will receive the content they need through appropriate strategies so that they can more fully achieve their educational potential (Renzulli & Reis, 2008).

In selecting these four topics to point toward a Christian ethics for talented and gifted education, we have attempted to open a new conversation, not to give the last word. As we noted in our brief review of the extant literature, this specific question has received sparse attention so far, and many more educators need to bring their gifts and talents to this topic so that a robust ethical discussion develops. We hope in this article both to call and to help educators to move in the right direction for all children, including the talented and gifted. And, in the hope that this article becomes only the initial installment in an ongoing conversation, we invite others to extend the discourse, to refine our arguments, and to offer alternate perspectives.

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