

THE CLASSICAL QUARTERLY

+ A JOURNAL OF THE CCLE +

VOL. I - ISSUE I - MARCH 2007

THE CLASSICAL QUARTERLY - A NEW KIND OF EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL

Welcome to the first edition of THE CLASSICAL QUARTERLY, a journal dedicated to providing a variety of helpful resources for Lutheran educators and parents who are labouring in the noble enterprise of nurturing and educating God's younger children. Christian Education has always been a priority for Lutherans. THE CLASSICAL QUARTERLY is dedicated to providing superior educational resources that inform and equip for the task of Lutheran education from the perspective of a classical pedagogy, as distinct from the educational goals and methods of progressive education.

By *classical education*, what is meant is simply *the old stuff* - the older philosophy and approach to education that dominated the western world for hundreds of years before the advent of a more pragmatic, progressive model. Progressive education arose during the latter part of the 19th century to provide an efficient and effective labour force for an expanding industrial economy. By contrast, the older classical approach was designed to raise up a virtuous educated learner who is well equipped to address what David Hicks has called "the world's fight and the soul's salvation." This is a learner who, possessing the basic learning skills, is capable of carrying out his own inquiries into what is significantly true, good, and beautiful; one who is equipped not simply to make a living, but to make a life. This is a learner, whose education has been shaped by the Word of God and the wisdom of the ages, prepared to address and navigate the fundamental questions of human existence: what is life, what is death, and how can we secure the future.

Through a selection of the QUARTERLY'S departments, a talented editorial staff will bring to the reader four issues throughout the year containing articles on three or more of its departments. It will also include reviews of important books and timely announcements of what is going on to enlighten and equip for excellence in classical. Lutheran education. Enjoy! sah

... IN THIS ISSUE

**A NEW KIND OF
EDUCATION JOURNAL** PAGE 1

**WHY CLASSICAL EDUCATION?
A CASE FOR RESURRECTING THE
OLD EDUCATION**
BY DR. STEVEN HEIN PAGE 1

SCIENCE AND SCIENTISM
BY DR. ROSS BETTS PAGE 6

**CASSIODORUS AND LUTHER:
HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR
LUTHERAN EDUCATION**
BY PR. JOHN HILL PAGE 8

ANNOUNCEMENTS PAGE 16

WHY CLASSICAL EDUCATION? A CASE FOR RESURRECTING THE OLD EDUCATION BY DR. STEVEN HEIN

When we ponder the kind of education that the next generation in the Church will need for a responsible walk of faith in the Church and in the world, it could be said - for parents and for Christian educators - We are really up against it. How are we to get the job done with so many elements in our environment working against us? Much of contemporary culture and the trends of progressive education seem to offer less and less in the way of needed resources. Indeed, they have become a major part of the problem. Let's face it. Neither the presuppositions of Christianity nor even those of the once popular rationalistic naturalism have much impact on the tenor and ethos of contemporary culture. Indeed, it might well be said as we have

begun a new millennium, we also seem poised to preside over the collapse of Western civilization as it has existed for 1500 years. The problem for the Church and its citizens is not simply that Christian truth and its power to shape our culture has evaporated; the real challenge is that much of Western culture has ended its belief in, and commitment to, any rational understanding and ordering of what could be considered true, or good, or beautiful. Pessimism about absolutes reigns supreme in our contemporary Post-modern culture.

But this is not even the half of it. Today our young people are being bombarded with two powerful forces that are shaping their lives and identities - yes even those baptized in the Lord. The first of these powerful forces, ironically, is something that used to be an ally to education and enlightenment - information. Today information has become an enormous threat. With the advent of the computer and the information highway of the Internet, a numbing explosion of information is taking place in all sectors of our lives. Information, which once was a friend, has now turned against us. Information is now a commodity to be purchased and used as one chooses. It can be used as a form of entertainment or as a style of dress for status. And it is! Moreover, the connection between information and action has been severed.

Pessimism about absolutes reigns supreme in our contemporary Post-modern culture.

Yet the biggest problem today is that we haven't a clue how to determine what information is true or important. Neil Postman has made the point in his definitive essay, "Informing Ourselves to Death," that "in a world without spiritual or intellectual order, nothing is unbelievable, nothing predictable and therefore nothing comes as a particular surprise." We are free to believe or disbelieve most anything today because we no longer have a comprehensive or consistent picture of the world which would make any claim or alleged fact appear as an unacceptable contradiction. "We believe," asserts Postman:

because there is no reason not to believe. No social, political, historical, metaphysical, logical or spiritual reason. We live in a world that, for the most part, makes no sense to us.

The more we cloak ourselves in technological glory, yes even the development of the computer and the explosion of information, the more the human dilemma is as it has always been: How can we conduct successful inquiries into what is true, good and beautiful so that we might acquire the things that we need for the world's fight and the soul's salvation? Here is where we are up against it. For although equipping learners to carry out such inquiries has been the primary task of education when shaped by the Christian world-view, contemporary culture which has despaired of the existence of such absolutes has turned the task of education and its resources into programs of self-esteem, cultural assimilation, and pleasant experiences that train for secure lucrative jobs.

The second powerful force that is affecting all levels of education both in the secular world and in the Church is our contemporary cultural ethos which is absorbed with personal consumption and entertainment. Mark Edmundson of the University of Virginia has typified the general state of affairs of the American higher education as "Lite Entertainment for Bored College Students." He writes that the "university culture, like American culture writ large, is, to put it crudely, ever more devoted to consumption and entertainment, to the using and using up of goods and images." Education must be made fun and entertaining. The central goal of education for so many students today is to acquire a good job and make lots of money.

Schools are not marketing rigorous academics these days; rather they are appealing to students on the basis of how many facilities they have for leisure activities and entertainment - refurbished student unions, sports complexes, and the like. Edmundson put it this way: "before they arrive, we ply the students with luscious ads, guaranteeing them a cross between summer camp and lotusland. When they get here, flattery and nonstop entertainment are available, if that's what they want." And what should be said of the academics? There has been a progressive dumbing-down in grading and an ever-increasing number of choices of which courses students would take for their individual programs and fewer standard required courses. Don't like a course or would you like to blow it off? No problem. You can take the class pass/fail or drop it even up to two weeks from the end of the term with nothing but a "W" showing on your transcript.

It is into this culture and this state of progressive education today that the voice of an alternative has been increasingly raised among disgruntled educators and parents both in and outside of the Church. When the call for a classical approach to education is sounded, this is not simply another educational program being advocated in the name of educational reform. Classical education is not a program nor is it a reforming movement within contemporary educational circles. The call for the classical approach in education is a call for an educational renaissance. It is a call to return to well-established educational goals, methods, and strategies that flourished in western civilization for over 2000 years, and in this country up until about 75 to 100 years ago.

The goal of classical education is to raise up a virtuous educated person who knows in a normative way, himself, his world, and his God.

Classical education's methods and strategies are different in significant ways from those of the progressive model because its character and goals are different. The goal of classical education is to raise up a virtuous educated person who knows in a normative way, himself, his world, and his God. This virtue is grounded in the righteousness of faith and Christian maturity. It is anchored in the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love, but also includes the worldly virtues; wisdom, courage, temperance, prudence, and chastity. Classical education at its core is normative education. It seeks answers to questions about the meaning, purpose, and value of things. Whereas contemporary progressive education has limited learning largely to analysis, quantitative distinctions, and causal relations within a naturalistic framework (having no interest in first or final causes), a classical education seeks to explore the meaning, purposes, and value of knowledge. It believes that learning is shallow and ultimately boring when it is not able to ask questions and receive truthful answers especially about the ultimate issues of human existence: What is life? What is death? And, how can we secure the future?

Today's post-modern education drowns the learner in a cultural relativism, insisting that language simply connects with meaning and usage, not the truth of how things actually are. Quantitative analysis

governs all scientific questions as if this kind of inquiry yields all the information that can be known, or simply all the information that is worth knowing. Such inquiries acquaint the learner with sterile dissected pieces/parts and quantities connected by intermediate causal relationships. For instance, contemporary science deals only with questions of the intermediate causalities of *how* water moves from a liquid to a crystalline solid state that is less dense – ice floats. The more interesting questions of meaning and teleology are ignored as unscientific. Unlike most all other molecular compounds, why does water move to a less dense state when it becomes a solid? Why does ice float and water freeze from the top down? Answer: to preserve marine life.

In this sense it is the task of education, according to the classical model, to liberate the learner from formal education and instruction.

Classical education engages an extended conversation among students, instructors, and the great thinkers and writers of the past and present. It nurtures students to become efficient, effective, life-long learners. In this sense, the task of education according to the classical model, is to liberate the learner from formal education and instruction. It is to equip the learner with the fundamental skills and arts to enable independent, significant inquiries into knowledge – especially to ask questions and find answers about the meaning, purpose, and value of things.

A classical education nurtures the basic language skills necessary to determine what is true, what is good, and what is beautiful on more profound and comprehensive levels. This equipping begins at the earliest levels of education. The ancients believed that there were seven skills or arts that an educated person needed to be an effective, efficient learner. In the middle ages, these skills were divided into three primary skills of learning (*The Trivium*) and four secondary (*The Quadrivium*). The three primary language skills are of central concern on the primary and secondary levels of education. They involve a three-part process of training the mind's facility and use of grammar, logic (or dialectics), and rhetoric. These language skills exist in a logical, building-block relationship with one another. Teaching these skills works best when instructional strategies are employed

at stages of intellectual maturity when children have the greatest interest and ability to learn them. The early years of school are spent in absorbing facts; systematically laying the foundations for advanced study. In the middle grades, students learn to think through arguments. In the high school years, they learn to express themselves. This classical pattern is called the *Trivium*. The word *trivium* and its close associate *trivia*; do not mean what is often implied by them today. Something that is *trivial* is foundational, not insignificant. *Tri* (three) and *via* (way) reference the foundational three ways of learning with the use of language. Grammar, logic, and rhetoric - the basic language learning skills - are what Dorothy Sayers has called in her most influential essay, *The Lost Tools of Learning*.

Knowledge and skill with language are the building blocks for all other learning, just as grammar is the foundation for language.

The first years of schooling are best concentrating on what is called the *Grammar Stage* of learning. Here the focus is on language. Language is the operating system of the mind and the means of communication written and oral. One's ability to think and speak cannot rise in depth or complexity above one's facility with language. Knowledge and skill with language are the building blocks for all other learning, just as grammar is the foundation for language.

Ideally, in the elementary school years - what we commonly think of as grades one through four - the mind is best ready to absorb information. Children at this age actually find memorization easy and fun. So during this period, education involves not self-expression and self-discovery, as is common in progressive education strategies, but rather the learning of facts. Rules of phonics and spelling, rules of grammar, poems, the vocabulary of foreign languages, the stories of history and literature, descriptions of plants and animals and the human body, the facts of mathematics - the list goes on. This information makes up the "grammar" or the basic building blocks for all higher forms of knowledge and education. On the level of grammar, instruction is direct. The instructor carries out the role in education as a lecturer who provides the needed information and facts, terminology, history and structures of whatever is being learned. A student learns the grammar and

language of history, of anatomy, of geography, etc. But just hearing or reading the information is not enough. It must be committed to memory in order to be internalized. Here students must work to make the grammar their own and the teacher needs also then to function as a coach who supervises practice, devises drills, motivates performance, and works one-on-one for mastery. In three words the grammar stage is digested - memorize! Memorize! Memorize!

In the middle grades, a child's mind begins to think more analytically. Middle-school students are less interested in finding out facts than in asking "Why?" The second phase of education in the language skills, the *Logic Stage*, is a time when the child begins to pay attention to cause and effect, to the relationships between different fields of knowledge, to the way facts fit together into a meaningful framework. A student is ready for the Logic Stage when the capacity for abstract thought begins to mature. During these years, the student begins the study of critical reasoning and logic. She begins to apply critical thinking to all academic subjects. The logic of writing, for example, includes paragraph construction and learning to support a thesis. The logic of reading involves the criticism and analysis of texts, not simple absorption of information. The logic of history demands that the student find out why the War of 1812 was fought, rather than simply reading its story. The logic of science requires that the child learn inductive reasoning.

The final language skill in a classical education is rhetoric. *The Rhetoric Stage* builds on the skills of grammar and logic. At this point, the high school student learns to write and speak with force and originality. Here the student doesn't just memorize or analyse what others have contributed to the conversation in the inquiry into knowledge. Here the student joins the conversation offering his own insight. The student of rhetoric applies the rules of logic learned in middle school to the foundational information learned in the early grades and then expresses his conclusions, applications, and evaluations in clear, forceful language.

A classical education is more than simply a pattern of learning. Classical education is language-focused; learning is accomplished primarily through words, written and spoken, rather than an emphasis on images (pictures, videos, and television). Why is this important? Language-learning and image-learning require very different habits of thought. Language

requires the mind to work harder. In reading, for instance, the brain is forced to translate a symbol (words on the page) into a concept. Images, such as those on videos and television, allow the mind to be passive. In front of a video screen, the brain can "sit back" and relax, but faced with the written page, the mind is required to be intensely active.

In the classical model, all knowledge is understood as interrelated, for all truth, goodness, and beauty flow from the mind of the God who is Creator and Redeemer.

A classical education, then, has two important learning aspects. It is language-focused and follows a specific three-part pattern of learning: the mind is first supplied with facts and images, then given the logical tools for organization of facts, and finally equipped to express conclusions. Moreover, in the classical model, all knowledge is understood as interrelated. Astronomy (for example) isn't studied in isolation; it is learned along with the history of scientific discovery, which leads into the church's relationship to science and from there to the intricacies of medieval church history. The reading of the *Odyssey* leads the student into the consideration of Greek history, the nature of heroism, the development of the epic, and man's understanding of the divine.

A classical education integrates most ideally by using history as its organizing outline - beginning with the ancients and progressing forward to the moderns in history, science, literature, philosophy, religion, art, and music. The classical model is highly systematic - in direct contrast to the scattered, unorganized nature of so much secondary education. Systematic and rigorous study have two purposes. They develop virtue in the student - the ability to act in accordance to what one knows to be right. The virtuous man (or woman) can force himself to do what he knows to be right, even when it runs against his inclinations. Classical education continually asks a student to work against his baser inclinations (laziness, or the desire to watch another half hour of TV) in order to reach a goal -- mastery of a subject.

Systematic study also allows the student to join what Mortimer Adler calls *the Great Conversation* - the ongoing conversation of great minds down through the ages. Progressive education has become so eclectic that the student has little opportunity to make meaningful connections between past events

and the flood of current information. "The beauty of the classical curriculum," writes classical schoolmaster David Hicks,

is that it dwells on one problem, one author, or one epoch long enough to allow even the youngest student a chance to exercise his mind in a scholarly way: to make connections and to trace developments, lines of reasoning, patterns of action, recurring symbolisms, plots, and motifs.

With this educational model, the need to prepare students for cultural assimilation and a good job gives way to a curriculum, learning strategies, and goals that will provide an education for the making of a life. It is intent on raising up a competent life-long learner who is in touch with the God who saves, the world that He has created, and a virtuous walk of faith. Students of this kind of education become equipped to deal with the most pressing issues of human existence: the world's fight and the soul's salvation. The learner will have some knowledge and a growing appreciation and passion for truth, goodness, and beauty. This is an education that, in the words of Cardinal Newman, teaches the student "to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant. It prepares him to fit any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility."

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... ABOUT CCLE

THE PURPOSE OF **THE CONSORTIUM FOR CLASSICAL & LUTHERAN EDUCATION** IS TO PROMOTE, ESTABLISH, AND EQUIP INDIVIDUALS AND SCHOOLS COMMITTED TO CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN DOCTRINE AND A CLASSICAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION.

THE CONSORTIUM AND EVERY MEMBER ACCEPTS WITHOUT RESERVATION THE CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS AS THE INSPIRED AND INERRANT WORD OF GOD AND ALL THE SYMBOLICAL BOOKS OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AS A TRUE EXPOSITION OF GOD'S WORD.

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CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, SCIENCE, AND SCIENTISM

BY DR. E. ROSS BETTS

Classical Christian Education (CCE) is characterized by its hierarchical nature in both its form and its content. This hierarchy is not arbitrary but rather a reflection of the state of reality, both the reality of the world and the reality of human nature. Hence, in form, all studies proceed from grammar to dialectic to rhetoric because this reflects the aptitudes of developing human beings. Rhetoric is at the pinnacle of the program not only because grammar and dialectic are necessary for rhetoric but because the potential for rhetorical skill develops in children only at a certain level of maturity. To disrupt this order is to go against the nature of reality.

The content of CCE is arranged hierarchically as well. Whereas experimental science is the organizing feature of education in the progressive model, CCE asserts that science must operate within and under a framework of theology and philosophy. Because of the nature of science, its judgments are proximate and its scope is limited to what is knowable in repeatable circumstances. To ask science to inform

a broader range of human knowing, to be the central feature of a curriculum, is to ask it to do something beyond its competence. CCE offers the possibility of limiting science to its rightful place in a curriculum, remedying some of the deficiencies of modern education.

To expect science to guide a curriculum and to be the ultimate standard of truth is to invite a variety of problems. Science comes then to occupy a philosophical position rather than a properly scientific one. This tendency is the result of the success of the sciences themselves, as well as certain developments in modern philosophy which promote subjectivism in non-scientific realms. Progressive education, because of its grand commitment to science, leads to scientism and positivism.

Scientism is the view that science can explain all human conditions and expressions, mental and physical.

Scientism is the view that science can explain all human conditions and expressions, mental and physical. It is a philosophical commitment, not one of science properly speaking, but one asserted by scientists and others who are taken with their success in describing experience. The compelling nature of Cartesian mathematics or Newtonian physics can lead their disciples to posit more comprehensive claims for their systems than those systems actually warrant. This is what happens in scientism.

A close philosophical cousin to scientism is logical positivism. This philosophy asserts the primacy of observation in assessing the truth of statements of fact and holds that metaphysical arguments not based on observable data are meaningless. The relationship to scientism is clear from this definition. Metaphysical ideas, such as truth, beauty, and goodness, as they might inform a curriculum, are severely hampered by positivism.

There is no standard for determining objective value in art and literature in a program informed by scientism and positivism.

There are many problems for education that come out of scientism and positivism. This is most apparent in the aesthetic and moral realms. To the extent that a curriculum will address these broad

areas in any of the Humanities, the requirement of an experiential and observable basis impairs true objectivity. The aesthetic dimension requires some orientation to the good, the true, and the beautiful – and some real engagement with metaphysics. Without this orientation, moral and aesthetic education degenerates into collections of opinions or, worse still, programs imposed by whatever fad happens to be occupying the popular imagination. There is no standard for determining objective value in art and literature in a program informed by scientism and positivism.

A more fundamental casualty of scientism is the notion of meaning itself, especially meaning in time. Beyond exhorting our students to succeed economically, there is no particular goal in progressive education. This reflects our cultural insecurity of defining "a good life," one that we should be moving our students toward. Ultimate meanings which require religious and metaphysical reflection are not allowed. Scientism here is part of the problem. Consider what scientists themselves say regarding time and meaning when they try to write philosophically. Steven Weinberg writes in his book, *The First Three Minutes* (Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes: A Modern View of the Origin of the Universe*, London: Flamingo, 2nd Edition 1983, p148-49):

It is very hard to realize that this all is just a tiny part of an overwhelmingly hostile universe. It is even harder to realize that this present universe has evolved from an unspeakably unfamiliar early condition, and faces a future extinction of endless cold or intolerable heat. The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it seems pointless.

Is this the program we want for our children? Weinberg offers the rational life, by which all of his reflections are given the grace of tragedy, but need we have come here in the first place? Theologian Colin Guntin notes that "modernity has lost confidence that there is a logic of temporality." He suggests further that a proper Christian framework of meaningful time is a balm for where scientism has led us (Colin Guntin, *The One, The Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.98.).

The goal is to teach science as a positive contributor to human flourishing, while avoiding the pitfalls of scientism.

What is to be done in science education? How are we to implement science programs in our schools? We do not need to relive the Scopes trial or to get into the Religion vs. Science quagmires of the past 150 years. Rather, our science education must put science in perspective philosophically and historically. When science is engaged seriously in high school, the origins of modern science must be addressed. The goal is to teach science as a positive contributor to human flourishing, while avoiding the pitfalls of scientism.

First, we must teach how and why science developed within a Christian culture. The essayist Marilynne Robinson has pointed out (Marilynne Robinson, *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought*, Picador/ St Martins Press, 1998, p 39):

If an ancient people had consciously set out to articulate a world view congenial to science, it is hard to imagine how, in the terms available to them, they could have done much better. And in fact, Judeo-Christian culture is uniquely hospitable to science.

The Genesis narrative de-spiritualizes creation. This makes creation the proper object of science. An animistic cosmology, one where spiritual and material things ongoingly intermingle, would exclude science. The study of Christian culture and science might be broadened into a survey of how science developed within our culture, in a way that it did not in classical Greek culture.

Second, we must critique the elements involved in the rise of science which were from non-Christian sources or even anti-Christian sources. Francis Bacon, though by confession a Christian, had mixed motives in promoting science for the relief of man's estate. Bacon claimed that by using science man might gain the tree of life through the tree of knowledge. There was hubris and idolatry from the very start in his scheme. Bacon's fascination with magic and power over nature should be explored. As C.S. Lewis observed (C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, Harper-Collins Press, 1944, p.83.):

No doubt those who really founded modern science were usually those whose love of truth exceeded their love of power; in every mixed movement the efficacy comes from the good elements not from the bad. But the presence of the bad elements is not irrelevant to the direction the efficacy takes. It might be going too far to say that the modern scientific movement was tainted from its birth: but I

think it would be true to say that it was born in an unhealthy neighborhood and at an inauspicious hour.

Our goal is to have a science education that teaches science in a proper perspective. Our curricula should acknowledge the many benefits we have received through science and encourage our youth to pursue science as Christians. We seek a program that also avoids the pitfalls of scientism, with its tendency to squeeze out those disciplines and virtues that constitute and inform a well-lived life.

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CASSIODORUS AND LUTHER: HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CLASSICAL LUTHERAN EDUCATION BY PR. JOHN HILL

This article is based on a presentation given at the Sixth Annual conference of the Consortium for Classical and Lutheran Education, July, 2006.

The rebirth of the classical philosophy of education in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has not yet met with enthusiastic acclaim by its teachers, schools, and parents. Clearly this philosophy has become foreign to a confessional church where it was once at home. Those who have rediscovered this ancient understanding of education are faced with the daunting task of rebuilding on a foundation that is difficult to uncover. For Lutherans, the Christian school has historically been a matter of congregational necessity, as can be seen in Luther's *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors* (1528) and the original Constitution of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (1847); in both cases, an education based upon classical forms was the norm.

Much work is needed to counter the assumptions of a progressive philosophy that is currently in the firm grip of Freudian psychology, Darwinian theory, and postmodern social constructs.

Clearly a transition has taken place among confessional Lutherans. Educators may well explore the inroads of Rationalism, Romanticism, and Modernism into the academic education establishment and ask the extent to which the contemporary philosophies and scientific theories of man and his world accurately reflect the doctrine of Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. They may further examine the extent to which these philosophies and theories inform the suppositions and methodologies of those who strive to be worthy of the title 'Lutheran Teacher.' For those who recognize the failures and deceptions of modern progressive education, another transition is required. Much work is needed to counter the assumptions of a progressive philosophy that is currently in the firm grip of Freudian psychology, Darwinian theory, and postmodern social constructs. Much has been accepted uncritically from the 20th and 21st century education establishment.

Classical Lutheran schools also need to rediscover the historical basis upon which they are founded.

Classical Lutheran schools also need to rediscover the historical basis upon which they are founded. Where did Christian schools begin, and why? What was their purpose? What was the role of the Christian school in those critical moments in Church history, such as the Reformation? What theological considerations and pedagogical goals were most important in forming their curriculum? Classical Roman Catholics turn to Thomas Aquinas and Augustine for answers. Calvinists build on the writings of Calvin and also of Augustine. Lutherans certainly look to Luther, Melancthon and the Lutheran Confessions for the theological foundation for their schools.

This paper does not presume to answer all these questions, but rather attempts the more modest goal of comparing two figures in our ecclesiastical history who proposed an educational program for their day that parallels our own efforts. Our goal here is to begin exploring the historical underpinnings of a classical Christian education. This article looks at the reflections of churchmen who advocated beginning, or beginning anew, broadly Christian and classical schools.

Cassiodorus

Our examination begins with a scholar who might be described as belonging to the second generation of the transition into the classical enculturation of Christianity during the fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian era. St. Jerome and St. Augustine led the first generation. The contribution of Jerome to his academic world included especially his translation of Scripture into Latin and the compilation of a bibliography of Christian authors. Augustine is especially remembered in the history of Western culture for his *Confessions* and *City of God*, and for bringing secular and Scriptural teaching together in his fourth book of *On Christian Doctrine*.

Boethius, best known in his *Consolation of Philosophy*, belongs to the second generation of this transition, as does Cassiodorus, his younger contemporary. Although Cassiodorus clearly built on the work of these first three Church fathers, he was the first to propose a single program for divine and secular education. David Wagner asserts, "Cassiodorus's advocacy of the liberal arts as a necessary component of Christian education was decisive for the assimilation of the liberal arts within Christian culture" ("The Seven Liberal Arts and Classical Scholarship", *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, David L. Wagner, ed., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983, p. 20). This assimilation of the liberal arts into a newly forming Christian culture laid the foundation for classical Christian schools.

Born around 490 in Scyllaceum in southern Italy, along the coast of the Ionian Sea, Cassiodorus conducted a brilliant career as a statesman, serving in succession as councilor to his father, the governor of Sicily, as quaestor, consul, *magister officiorum* (succeeding the condemned Boethius), and finally as praetorian prefect for all of Italy, effectively the prime minister of the Ostrogothic civil government. Cassiodorus was a survivor of the scholar-bureaucrat in the early 6th Century barbarian court of Theodoric the Ostrogoth and his successors. After his retirement in 537/8 he traveled to Constantinople, there gaining knowledge of Byzantine theology and the Greek language and culture. He returned to Italy in 554, gathering to himself at his family estate a monastic community (named *Vivarium*) committed to the preservation and transmission of both sacred and secular books. He died about 585.

Cassiodorus lived in the brief window between the earlier hostile relations of secular culture and Christianity, on the one hand, and the descent of barbarian darkness, on the other.

Cassiodorus was born into the transition in which the knowledge and education of the ancient world was passing from the aristocratic and senatorial classes to the bishops and monasteries. With the breakdown of Roman culture under the barbarians, local communities were led primarily by their religious leaders, who became the new academic elite, though without the cultivated leisure of the ancient world. Cassiodorus lived in the brief window between the earlier hostile relations of secular culture and Christianity, on the one hand, and the descent of barbarian darkness, on the other. In this rapidly closing window, Cassiodorus was able to engage in the cultivated leisure that had marked ancient scholarship, but as a Christian, reading, copying, writing, and collecting his famous library at *Vivarium*. This is the context in which he proposed the formation of the first Christian school.

In his day, all education for lay Christians was given in two entirely separate venues. One was the Baptismal catechesis and liturgy of the Church. This catechesis is well documented under Augustine and others in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries. The other institution for education were the surviving ancient secular schools of grammar and rhetoric which still flourished in Rome for the well-to-do. The only alternative to catechesis for the study of Scripture was to enter a monastic community, like the monastery and library Cassiodorus founded in southern Italy in his very long retirement. The idea of a Christian "school" that teaches both divine and secular learning was unknown and had not previously been suggested or attempted.

Writing after his return to Italy in 1554, Cassiodorus began his school proposal with this introduction (Cassiodorus, *Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning*, trans. James W. Halporn, intro. Mark Vessey, Liverpool University Press: Liverpool, 2004, p. 105):

When I realized that there was such a zealous and eager pursuit of secular learning, by

which the majority of mankind hopes to obtain knowledge of this world, I was deeply grieved, I admit, that Holy Scripture should so lack public teachers, whereas secular authors certainly flourish in widespread teaching. Together with blessed Pope Agapetus of Rome, I made efforts to collect money so that it should rather be the Christian schools in the city of Rome that could employ learned teachers – the money having been collected – from whom the faithful might gain eternal salvation for their souls and the adornment of sober and pure eloquence for their speech.

The Christian school that Cassiodorus envisioned did not come into being. "I could not accomplish this task because of raging wars and violent struggles in the Kingdom of Italy – for a peaceful endeavor has no place in a time of unrest" (*Ibid.*). Rome was brought under the sway of Constantinople during the years 535-540 by Justinian's general, Belisarius, who entered Ravenna in 540. Agapetus, who was pope from 535-536, died in Constantinople while protesting Justinian's policy. Cassiodorus himself was probably taken to Constantinople and remained there from 540-554.

In the broader picture of their historical circumstances, Cassiodorus and Agapetus had recognized the need for Christian schools because, in those chaotic times, the knowledge and teaching of Holy Scripture was in danger of being lost to men unskilled in either the Greek or Latin languages in which it was found. Furthermore, they saw that an apologetic was needed to appeal to the educated aristocratic and senatorial class, from whom, in the years to come, the bishops of the church were chosen and who exerted leadership in the dark centuries that followed. Finally, the theological chaos of those years required that the church of the Chalcedonian Confession be given the tools and training to defend itself against the doctrinal pressures of Eutychianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism from the East, and from the Arianism of their Ostrogothic overlords in Italy.

In other words, the combination of the loss of Rome's political power to both the barbarians and the East, and the incursions of heretical doctrine from all sides, awoke the need for a specifically Christian education to keep Rome as the beacon of catholic Christianity. The Holy Scriptures themselves

demanded an educated Church that could rightly handle the text and doctrine of the Bible, and simultaneously provide leaders for government and civil service in a Christian land.

Augustine's "On Christian Doctrine" provided the bridge between this ancient classical tradition and Christianity, and was viewed throughout the Middle Ages as the beginning of a uniquely Christian culture.

Cassiodorus wrote the *Institutions* to fill this need. This is where classical Christian education's traditional appeal to St Augustine is somewhat inadequate. Augustine's treatise, "On Christian Doctrine," is directed to cultivating the wisdom and eloquence of the teachers of Christian doctrine in his day, that is, pastors. The fourth book of this treatise, written in 426, is a manual for Christian preaching. As a whole, the work assumes that schools *outside the church* would provide classically trained recruits for the clergy; these schools were not Christian, nor were they taught by Christians. Augustine did not change this paradigm and was reluctant to integrate fully the classical tradition into his seminary instruction, even avoiding the terms of the trivium, grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. Nevertheless, Cassiodorus appealed to Augustine as his most influential Latin Father, who, along with Jerome, had begun to recognize and speak of a distinction between divine and secular learning, or literature. Jerome and Augustine had prepared the way for the Christian commendation of the pagan classical tradition. Augustine's "On Christian Doctrine" provided the bridge between this ancient classical tradition and Christianity, and was viewed throughout the Middle Ages as the beginning of a uniquely Christian culture.

Cassiodorus was the first to make use of this bridge between pagan classicism and the Christian Scriptures when he proposed the curriculum for a Christian school.

Cassiodorus was the first to make use of this bridge between pagan classicism and the Christian Scriptures when he proposed the curriculum for a Christian school. He brought together the bibliographical work of Jerome and the surviving literature of the classical tradition. Writing more than a century after Augustine, Cassiodorus showed no hesitation in synthesizing the liberal arts tradition with the teaching of God's Word. The title of his treatise also summarized its content: "Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning." Peter Brown, in *Rise of Western Christendom* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 150), writes:

In Cassiodorus' view, all Latin literature was to be mobilized towards transmitting the Scriptures. All the aids previously used so as to read and copy classical texts were to be used to understand the Scriptures and to copy them intelligently. Like a newly formed planetary system, Latin culture as a whole was supposed to spin in orbit around the vast sun of the Word of God.

In order to make a better comparison between Cassiodorus and Luther, we turn briefly to the curriculum he proposed in the "Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning." His description of the curriculum is also the sketch of its underpinnings and assumptions. It is singularly unoriginal in being based on established canonical Scriptures, accepted Church Fathers, and the widely recognized literature of the seven liberal arts. It is unique and important for proposing the integration of these two areas of learning so simply and plainly in the changing world of the mid sixth century.

I was moved by divine love to devise for you, with God's help, these introductory books to take the place of a teacher. Through them I believe that both the textual sequence of Holy Scripture and also a compact account of secular letters may, with God's grace, be revealed. . . They are of great use as an introduction to the source both of the knowledge of this world and of the salvation of the soul. (*Institutions*, p.105)

Cassiodorus continued, "So in the first book you have teachers of a former age always available and prepared to teach you" (*Ibid.*, p. 107). The first book, on divine learning, summarized the Scriptures of

the Old and New Testaments, the Apocrypha (Hagiographa), and the four Ecumenical Councils. With each of these writings Cassiodorus recommended and summarized specific commentaries and sermons written by the earlier fathers, the likes of Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Basil, Prosper, Origen, and Athanasius, including also newly commissioned or newly translated works. Then he recommended the Christian histories and the geographies, and closed the first book with various advice to monastic congregations, such as his own, into whose charge he gave the copying of texts.

The second book of the *Institutions* is organized into seven sections for each of the liberal arts: the three arts of the trivium, grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic; and the four disciplines of mathematics, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. For each Cassiodorus gave a summary of its content and again suggested the works of recognized authors for instruction. "The obvious purpose," he writes of this order of the secular disciplines, "was to direct our mind, which has been dedicated to secular wisdom and cleansed by the exercise of the disciplines, from earthly things and to place it in a praiseworthy fashion in the divine structure" (p. 229). In the conclusion, Cassiodorus set secular and divine learning into their own fitting place, "because," he wrote, "from time to time we gain from secular letters commendable knowledge of some matters, but from divine law we gain eternal life" (p. 230). He finally commended the student to a contemplation of the Apocalypse of St John, to meditation of the Holy Trinity, and to anticipation of the beatific vision.

Luther

Dr. Martin Luther proposed the reformation of the Christian school in a context that was in many ways similar to that of Cassiodorus, though 1000 years later. Secular learning, preserved almost exclusively by bishop and monk through most of that time period, had begun to return to secular institutions in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. The knowledge and authority of Scriptures, however, had become obscured and supplanted by the theology and institutions of the Roman papacy. The Turkish threat, the Peasants revolt, the nascent struggles between Roman and Evangelical forces, all were reminiscent of the chaos and transition of Cassiodorus' day.

Cassiodorus' commentary on the Psalms is an argument for the use of the classical tradition, which Luther digested thoroughly at the beginning of his career as a lecturer. . .

But was there a connection between Cassiodorus and Luther? Luther was certainly familiar with Cassiodorus' "Explanation of the Psalms" and used this work favorably and extensively in his first lectures on the Psalms. Cassiodorus' commentary on the Psalms is an argument for the use of the classical tradition, which Luther digested thoroughly at the beginning of his career as a lecturer in 1513-1515, and the work is echoed in Luther's school treatises of the 1520s. For example, Cassiodorus wrote in the "Explanation" (*Expositio in Psalmos* preface 15, trans. P. G. Walsh, *Cassiodorus: Explanation of the Psalms*, New York: Paulist Press, 1990; 1.37-38),

Those experienced in the secular arts, clearly living long after the time when the first words of the divine books were penned, transferred these techniques to the collections of arguments which the Greeks called topics, and to the arts of dialectic and rhetoric. So it is crystal clear to all that the minds of the just were endowed to express the truth with the techniques which pagans subsequently decided should be exploited for human wisdom. In the sacred readings (*lectionibus sacris*) they shine like the brightest of stars, aptly clarifying the meanings of passages most usefully and profitably.

Again, in his exposition of Psalm 150, Cassiodorus showed even further how he made the Psalter a textbook in the liberal arts, "We have shown that the series of psalms is crammed with points of grammar, etymologies, figures, rhetoric, topics, dialectic, definitions, music, geometry [and] astronomy" (*Ibid.*, 150.6), in other words, all seven liberal arts.

While the present writer did not find direct evidence that Luther had read Cassiodorus' "Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning," his own program of schooling closely parallels that of Cassiodorus. See Luther's treatise of 1520, "To the Christian Nobility" (*Luther's Works, American Edition*

(*AE*), Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, vol. 44, pp. 205-7), where he wrote early in the Reformation:

Above all, the foremost reading for everybody, both in the universities and in the schools, should be Holy Scripture—and for the younger boys, the Gospels. And would to God that every town had a girls' school as well, where the girls would be taught the gospel for an hour every day either in German or in Latin. . . Is it not right that every Christian man know the entire holy gospel by the age of nine or ten? Does he not derive his name and his life from the gospel? . . . I would advise no one to send his child where the Holy Scriptures are not supreme. Every institution that does not unceasingly pursue the study of God's word becomes corrupt. . . I greatly fear that the universities, unless they teach the Holy Scriptures diligently and impress them on the young students, are wide gates to hell.

Luther's words articulate the same goal as Cassiodorus for creating Christian schools with Scripture as their center. There is, however, also a hint of Augustine's caution over secular learning. Luther was reluctant to allow human reason too great of an opportunity to supplant Holy Scriptures.

Four years later, when Luther addressed more directly the need for Christian schools, he did not show the same hesitation about secular learning. He embraced the liberal arts of the classical tradition and urged their use. He wrote in 1524, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that they Establish and Maintain Christian Schools" (*AE*, vol. 45, pp. 356-359):

A city's best and greatest welfare, safety, and strength consist rather in its having many able, learned, wise, honorable, and well-educated citizens. They can then readily gather, protect, and properly use treasure and all manner of property.

So it was done in ancient Rome. There boys were so taught that by the time they reached their fifteenth, eighteenth, or twentieth year they were well versed in Latin, Greek, and all the liberal arts (as they are called), and then immediately entered upon a political or military career. Their system produced

intelligent, wise, and competent men, so skilled in every art and rich in experience that if all the bishops, priests, and monks in the whole of Germany today were rolled into one, you would not have the equal of a single Roman soldier. As a result their country prospered; they had capable and trained men for every position. So at all times throughout the world simple necessity has forced men, even among the heathen, to maintain pedagogues and schoolmasters if their nation was to be brought to a high standard. Hence, the word "schoolmaster" is used by Paul in Galatians 4 as a word taken from the common usage and practice of mankind, where he says, "The law was our schoolmaster."

Luther revealed here not only his own reading of the ancient classics, but he recognized their continued usefulness for producing citizens that could fill every need. A Christian city or country needed more than Holy Scriptures, it also needed the best education the world could give. Luther was urging the joining of divine and secular learning in the schools of the Reformation.

But the heart of a good education, Luther proposed, was the written and spoken word. Both "kingdoms" are ruled and defended by means of language. So Luther continued:

"All right," you say again, "suppose we do have to have schools; what is the use of teaching Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and the other liberal arts? We could just as well use German for teaching the Bible and God's word, which is enough for our salvation." I reply: Alas! I am only too well aware that we Germans must always be and remain brutes and stupid beasts . . . Languages and the arts, which can do us no harm, but are actually a greater ornament, profit, glory, and benefit, both for the understanding of Holy Scripture and the conduct of temporal government—these we despise. . . .

Truly, if there were no other benefit connected with the languages, this should be enough to delight and inspire us, namely, that they are so fine and noble a gift of God, with which he is now so richly visiting and blessing us Germans above all other lands. We do not

see many instances where the devil has allowed them to flourish . . . For the devil smelled a rat, and perceived that if the languages were revived a hole would be knocked in his kingdom which he could not easily stop up again. . .

Although the gospel came and still comes to us through the Holy Spirit alone, we cannot deny that it came through the medium of languages, was spread abroad by that means, and must be preserved by the same means. . . In proportion then as we value the gospel, let us zealously hold to the languages.

Luther reflected here the same conviction that drove the Grammarians of the early Middle Ages to teach and emphasize Grammar. Latin had ceased to be the common language, Greek was almost unknown in the West, and the Word of God and all the written treasures of the Ancient Church and of the Ancient World were on the verge of being lost. The preservation and use of the Word of God was for Luther, as it had been for Cassiodorus, the first and central purpose for all schooling among Christians. Luther took this position because of the conviction that faith and Church are established and preserved, defended and spread abroad only through the Word of God. As far as Luther was concerned, all the future of the Church's doctrine was bound up in the schools. Just as Cassiodorus recognized the need for Christian schools in his conflicted times, so Luther saw the same need in the struggles of the Reformation.

As far as Luther was concerned, all the future of the Church's doctrine was bound up in the schools.

Luther's second, urgent purpose for Christian schools turned from the spiritual estate to the temporal estate or government. He continued in "To the Councilmen" (*Ibid.*, pp. 367-368),

It is not necessary to repeat here that the temporal government is a divinely ordained estate . . . The question is rather: How are we to get good and capable men into it? Here we are excelled and put to shame by the pagans of old, especially the Romans and Greeks. Although they had no idea of whether this estate were pleasing to God or

not, they were so earnest and diligent in educating and training their young boys and girls to fit them for the task, that when I call it to mind I am forced to blush for us Christians, and especially for us Germans. Yet we know, or at least we ought to know, how essential and beneficial it is—and pleasing to God—that a prince, lord, councilman, or other person in a position of authority be educated and qualified to perform the functions of his office as a Christian should.

Now if (as we have assumed) there were no souls, and there were no need at all of schools and languages for the sake of the Scriptures and of God, this one consideration alone would be sufficient to justify the establishment everywhere of the very best schools for both boys and girls, namely, that in order to maintain its temporal estate outwardly the world must have good and capable men and women, men able to rule well over land and people, women able to manage the household and train children and servants aright. Now such men must come from our boys, and such women from our girls. Therefore, it is a matter of properly educating and training our boys and girls to that end. . . .

You may observe that Luther's temporal estate also included fulfillment of the Christian's vocation. Luther's doctrine of vocation emerged from Scripture, in the recognition that the monasticism of his day was no true vocation because it had neither the command nor the promise of God in His Word. It had become something different from the scriptorium and repository of divine and secular literature of Cassiodorus' monastic community. But all true godly vocations have both the command and promise of God and require able and knowledgeable men and women. Therefore boys and girls need to receive Christian schooling for the maintenance of home, government, and workplace, as well as the church.

Thus Luther developed the two-fold schooling of Cassiodorus, the divine and the secular, into an expression also of the school's purpose. The Christian school serves both the eternal estate, in the preservation and teaching of God's Word, and the temporal estate, in the education of the Christian for a life of vocation in this world.

This education is what we call today a classical, Lutheran education.

This education is what we call today a classical, Lutheran education. In his 1524 treatise Luther integrated the ancient classical curriculum with the teaching of God's Word, just as Cassiodorus had done a thousand years earlier. We read (*Ibid.*, pp. 368-369),

But if children were instructed and trained in schools, or wherever learned and well-trained schoolmasters and schoolmistresses were available to teach the languages, the other arts, and history, they would then hear of the doings and sayings of the entire world, and how things went with various cities, kingdoms, princes, men, and women. Thus, they could in a short time set before themselves as in a mirror the character, life, counsels, and purposes—successful and unsuccessful—of the whole world from the beginning; on the basis of which they could then draw the proper inferences and in the fear of God take their own place in the stream of human events. In addition, they could gain from history the knowledge and understanding of what to seek and what to avoid in this outward life, and be able to advise and direct others accordingly. . . .

For my part, if I had children and could manage it, I would have them study not only languages and history, but also singing and music together with the whole of mathematics [i.e. the quadrivium: arithmetic, music, geometry, astronomy]. For what is all this but mere child's play? The ancient Greeks trained their children in these disciplines; yet they grew up to be people of wondrous ability, subsequently fit for everything. How I regret now that I did not read more poets and historians, and that no one taught me them!

Luther even adds a sort of curriculum book list, just as Cassiodorus had done, as a suggested source for the program of education he envisions (*Ibid.*, p. 376):

First of all, there would be the Holy Scriptures, in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and German, and any other language in which they might be found.

Next, the best commentaries, and, if I could find them, the most ancient, in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Then, books that would be helpful in learning the languages, such as the poets and orators, regardless of whether they were pagan or Christian, Greek or Latin, for it is from such books that one must learn grammar. After that would come books on the liberal arts, and all the other arts. Finally, there would be books of law and medicine; there too there should be careful choices among commentaries.

Among the foremost would be the chronicles and histories, in whatever languages they are to be had. For they are a wonderful help in understanding and guiding the course of events, and especially for observing the marvelous works of God. . . .

More citations can be adduced from Luther. Four years later, in his *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors* (1528, *LWAE*, vol 40) Luther gave direction to the ecclesiastical visitors concerning their oversight not only of churches, but also the churches' schools. "The preachers are to exhort the people to send their children to school so that persons are educated for competent service both in church and state" (p. 314). He gave instructions and laid out a curriculum for three groups, beginning with those who are learning to read and concluding with those who read the Latin of Virgil and speak it in the classroom. Although the focus at this parish level is on Grammar, the third group is directed to study dialectic and rhetoric also.

This education focuses upon the languages, employs the ancient trivium and quadrivium in its curriculum, and uses history and literature as the core resources of its secular curriculum.

Two years later, during the summer of the Diet at Augsburg in 1530, Luther wrote "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School" (*LWAE*, vol. 46). He divided his exhortation into two parts, the first in support of the church and the teaching of future pastors, and second in support of the temporal estate, supporting especially the government, but also other

vocations. "Where are the preachers, jurists, and physicians to come from, if grammar and other rhetorical arts are not taught. For such teaching is the spring from which they all must flow" (p. 252). Luther himself sent his son John to such a school in Torgau, as his letter to the headmaster of the Torgau Latin School, testifies (August 26, 1542; *LWAE*, vol. 50, pp. 230ff).

Conclusion

What we have learned from Cassiodorus and Luther? A Christian school employs both divine and secular learning. Each of these two areas of instruction serves both the spiritual and the temporal estate, ultimately so that God's Word may be kept and fulfilled in every area of our lives. By teaching God's Word and doctrine, languages, liturgy, church history, and the like, the school prepares some students for service in the Church, and instructs all students for the promotion and defense of the pure Gospel. The school provides training for vocation, and produces men and women who are both spiritually and bodily prepared for appropriate service in government, home, church, workplace, and school. This education focuses upon the languages, employs the ancient trivium and quadrivium in its curriculum, and uses history and literature as the core resources of its secular curriculum.

It is our task to urge and exhort the Church of our day to prepare young people not for the earning of money, but for the service of God in vocations in both the church and the temporal estate.

Reflections on Cassiodorus and Luther draw us to examine the challenges which faced these fathers in the Church. The problems of our day are certainly nothing new. Cassiodorus proposed a truly classical and Christian education precisely because this was the education that was most needed for Church and state, and which was unavailable to the 6th century Church. Luther's proposal for a Christian school is almost identical to that of Cassiodorus. The needs were the same, the educational philosophy and curriculum were the same, and the teaching materials were essentially the same. In our day we still have the same needs that must be met with the same schools.

Luther's 1530 sermon on keeping children in school rings true with the particular challenge which confessional Lutherans face in the 21st century. Lutheran parents, congregations, and pastors are still reluctant to expend their resources in giving their children the specifically Lutheran and classical education that the Church has needed and demanded for almost 1500 years. It is our task to urge and exhort the Church of our day to prepare young people not for the earning of money, but for the service of God in vocations in both the church and the temporal estate.

(REV. HILL SERVES AS PASTOR OF MOUNT HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH, HEADMASTER, MOUNT HOPE LUTHERAN SCHOOL, CASPER, WY, AND ALSO SERVES ON THE QUARTERLY'S EDITORIAL BOARD)

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