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The CLASSICAL LUTHERAN EDUCATION JOURNAL is dedicated to providing helpful resources for Lutheran educators and parents who labor in the noble endeavor of nurturing and educating God's children.

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In This Issue

In this issue of the *Classical Lutheran Education Journal*, we open with a contemplation of the Eternal context for biblical interpretation from a new contributor to the CLEJ, Rev. Jeffery Grams. This presentation, given at CCLE XIII in Ft. Wayne, proved both edifying and instructive as related to BenchMarks for the newly available CCLE Educator Certification at www.ccle.org.

Next we offer a substantive essay by noted speaker Dr. E. Christian Kopff. Entitled *Beauty and Truth in Science*, the article presents thoughts from his excellent presentation in Ft. Wayne.

CCLE's longtime contributor Dr. Ross Betts provides a glimpse into Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* through a compelling contrast of atheistic philosophy and classical Christian education in *Classical Education: Engaging the Imagination*.

In response to requests for articles on practical implementation, we also offer veteran classical Lutheran homeschooler Kelly Rottmann's tips on organizational strategies from a CCLE presentation entitled *Efficiency and the Classical Lutheran Homeschool*.

Finally, Dr. Gene Edward Veith provides an insightful book review on the new release *Simply Classical: A Beautiful Education for Any Child*.

The Editors

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The Eternal Context of Biblical Interpretation

By Rev. Jeffery Grams

Any student of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism will recognize the phrase, "What does this mean?" The question itself is not very complicated, and Dr. Luther did not hesitate to answer this question with confidence and vigor! Nevertheless, answering it with any kind of authority in our modern world can be challenging. Simply put, *how* you come to answer the question is the issue at the heart of Biblical Hermeneutics. This paper is offered as a starting place, so that we, like Luther, may confidently answer the question, "What does this mean?"

In order to begin answering the many questions about how to interpret the Bible, it may be useful to first take a "step back" and consider how we understand **any** text or interpret any form of communication. Such interpretation begins with *language* and these guiding principles regarding its use:

- *In order for communication to occur, the two parties involved must share a common "language".*
- *If the two parties in communication apply different meanings to the same words in a language, meaningful communication will be disrupted.*
- *As differences in language usage, personal experience, and perspective increase, it becomes more difficult to effectively communicate an intended meaning.*
- *In this respect, Holy Scripture is not essentially different than any other work of literature. It was written in a specific language, to a specific group of people who*

shared a common understanding and perspective.

The Difficulties with Biblical Interpretation

Indeed, the Bible is a very complicated *collection* of works of literature, because it was written over a period of approximately 1500 years by a variety of different writers who came from different cultures and experiences! Under normal circumstances, this would make any "definitive" interpretation of Holy Scripture *as a whole* by modern interpreters seem almost impossible. This simple reality can easily be seen as part of the reason for so many different interpretations and "religions" that claim to fall under the umbrella of Christianity and claim to follow the Bible. Each interpreter brings to the text his own language, his own definitions, his own cultural bias, and his own experiences!

The Solution for Biblical Interpretation

Do we give up and declare that, "every interpretation is equally valid" and simply go our own ways? No! We dare not give up our thirst and passion for the truth! Holy Scripture has a distinct advantage over other "collections" of literature in this regard. For it is not only a collection of writings from different writers, cultures and periods in time. The Bible is *ultimately* written by a single author, the Holy Spirit, and He is even writing to a specific group of hearers for the purpose of their salvation! The Word is written to the People of God, who in spite of differences in language, time, and culture, still share a common faith and Lord.

We firmly believe that the Holy Spirit of God inspired every single word of Holy

Scripture, and that these words were not only written for their original audience, but for *every Child of God in every culture and nation*. Truly we will go so far as to assert that the Living God continues to speak to His People today through this inspired Word, as He continues to redeem and instruct His people.

Nevertheless, we must establish a *common understanding* with those who wrote, and those who heard and believed, the Word of God in its original presentation. We must seek a common *perspective*, a common *language*, and even to whatever extent it is possible, a common *experience* with the writers and hearers of the Word of God throughout the ages...¹

Let us agree to call this common understanding and perspective that will allow for right interpretation the Eternal Context of Holy Scripture. “Eternal” because if we seek the Truth, then such truth must be not be bound subjectively to a specific time or place. And “Context”, because this framework will begin to establish what the interpreter must “bring with him” to the text in order to properly interpret its intended meaning. Such an Eternal Context defines the character and content of the *relationship* between the ultimate Author of the Word and the People with whom He is communicating.

In the Early Church, when differences of interpretation arose, the first step in seeking an authoritative resolution was to consider the *full context of Holy Scripture*. Clear and easily understood

¹A “Historical Grammatical” approach strives for essentially the same goal, yet due to the extensive meaning already attached to this term, it would be insufficient for our purposes.

passages were cited in defense of the correct interpretation of the passages in question. We Lutherans have sometimes called this principle “Scripture interprets Scripture.” What can we learn from this approach? This method indicates an implicit faith in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, its inerrant nature, and even its coherence as a work that will not contradict itself!

Whenever this simple but essential process failed to resolve the issue of authoritative interpretation, where did the Early Church turn for guidance? How did they determine which interpretation was True? They applied what is sometimes called the “Rule of Faith” or “Apostolic Tradition”. (For a detailed example of how this process unfolds, see St. Basil the Great's work “On The Holy Spirit”²) This approach brought to the discussion the commonly confessed and taught understanding of the truth of God, as it was received from the Apostolic Church. The Early Church Fathers understood that those common Truths imparted by the Apostles personally to the Church serve as the foundation for right interpretation.

Fundamental Elements of the Eternal Context

1. THE INCARNATE WORD (Christology)

Who is God? The Apostolic Church confessed a common answer to this question. He is the Holy Trinity: Father, Son & Holy Spirit. This faith is an

²Basilus, Saint, the Great, Abp. Of Caesarea, 330-379 A.D. On the Holy Spirit, Translation 1980, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY.

essential starting point of right interpretation. Those who received the Word from the Apostles commonly held this faith, as it was confessed in the Baptismal Creeds of the Early Church. They believed in the Triune God and in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God, the sole Savior from sin & death.

It is essential to the Eternal Context that the interpreter bring to the text a genuine faith in the Triune God and in Jesus Christ as the true Son of God who died for the sins of the world. God's Word is never properly understood by those who do not share faith in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God who died for their sins and rose again for their salvation. This brings us to the second essential component of an Eternal Context for right Biblical interpretation.

2. THE SAVING WORD (Soteriology)

Jesus Christ is never properly understood apart from his work of salvation. The Eternal Context must also therefore include what the Apostles had instructed the Church regarding salvation and ultimately the Means of Grace by which His people received that Salvation. The Apostolic Church understood that salvation and new life came by grace through faith in Jesus! (Eph 2) And they understood this Truth over against contemporary perversions of Judaism that taught salvation through works of the Law. They had received the Holy Spirit in the waters of Holy Baptism, and they commonly perceived this gift as the beginning of their new life as a Child of God.³ At the center of their new life as

³Note the chant "washed and saved, washed and saved" sung for the Martyrs in early Christendom – in Holy Baptism they were washed and saved, and in

part of the Body of Christ stood **"the Apostle's teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."** [Acts 2:42]

For the purpose of developing an understanding of what must be included in the Eternal Context, we must accurately include the heart of the Apostolic Doctrine. This is especially true in relation to the fundamental distinction between Law and Gospel, sin and grace, repentance and forgiveness of sins. Without such a doctrinal foundation, it is impossible to rightly interpret the Holy Scriptures.⁴

During the time of the Lutheran Reformation, the confessed goal of the reformers was not to "create something new" in the area of Biblical Interpretation, nor was it to "cast to the winds" the *catholicity* (timeless and universal nature) of the Church. Indeed, the goal was to return to the fundamental teachings that were proclaimed and received by the Apostolic Church. To this end, Luther's Small Catechism provided a proper **foundation** for use in continued Biblical Interpretation and instruction in the faith. This remains our intention as well.

3. THE INSPIRED WORD – God Speaks in His Word

It is essential to right interpretation that a person approaches a text with a basic

the blood of their martyrdom they would be washed again and saved for everlasting life...

⁴See C.F.W. Walther's [The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel](#), for a comprehensive look at this distinction and how essential it is for Christian Doctrine, pastoral practice and Biblical Interpretation. "Thesis IV: The true knowledge of the distinction between Law and Gospel is not only a glorious light, affording the correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, but without this knowledge Scripture is and remains a sealed book."

understanding of its nature. In the case of the Bible, to rightly interpret Holy Scripture requires genuine faith, believing that it is the Word of God Himself. For only if we understand that God is the ultimate author of Holy Scripture, will we interpret it as His Word, and not simply the word of a human writer.

The Eternal Context then requires that the interpreter approach Holy Scripture in complete submission to its absolute authority, as did the Apostolic Church. Any other approach toward The Word of God will bias the interpretation based upon the desired or expected outcome of the interpreter instead of the intention of the Author. Methods of interpretation based upon the supremacy of human reason, an existential definition of reality, the presumed chauvinism of the authors, the assumed bigotry of the apostles, or any other humanly oriented construct are doomed to failure!

Bridging the gap of 2000 years by seeking a common culture

What then remains? Are there some “truths” that were implicit in the perspective of early Christians, yet are no longer easily understood by the modern Christian mind? Was there anything in their common background that was so pervasive that it became unnecessary to include it in any confessed “Rule of Faith”; yet is so foreign today that it must be explicitly included in the Eternal Context for proper Biblical interpretation to take place? Yes, there was indeed a common thread that they shared which many of us do not, their common Christian life together.

Truth: Our common experiences in life help to define what we mean and what

we understand when we use language to communicate. This especially applies in defining the terms we use for Spiritual matters, because they are often more ‘abstract’ and therefore more difficult to define clearly.

4. THE LIVING WORD – Where the body of Christ encounters the living God

How did the first Christians experience and confess the faith? What did they already understand about “the encounter between the Living God and his chosen people”? For most of them, their relationship with the LORD grew out of the Worship life of the Temple, the synagogue, and the house churches of early Christianity.

Now they again gathered in His presence, covered by the blood of the lamb, born again in Holy Baptism and united to Christ’s death and resurrection, forgiven and redeemed and Holy in His sight. They gathered together in His Name, and they knew that He would be there. They entered His presence with reverent fear, knowing the Holiness of their God and the sinfulness of their nature. They entered with true faith in His actual presence *for them*, that He would forgive them their sins, that He would instruct them through His Word, feed them with His body and blood, and that He would bless them for the journey. And in the presence of the Lord Jesus, they praised Him with “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” [Ephesians 5:19] that gave all glory and honor to God the Father and Jesus His Son.

In this encounter with Jesus Christ was born the Liturgy of the Church – table fellowship with the Living God who came to serve His people. God’s Word, spoken in

psalm and text, reflected the rhythm and reality of the encounter between God and His people, beginning in His Name, into which His people were Baptized and born again. Responding to each Word of God with “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” that proclaim the Glory of His Salvation, His people were grounded in forgiveness, begging for mercy from their Lord and King. They were instructed in His Word, as the shepherds of His people proclaimed the Word of God according to His command. They were fed with His body and blood, the source and sacrifice for their forgiveness and life. This is where God encountered His people and gave them life! And He continues to do so still today.

The Eternal Context as it is Reflected in Confessional Lutheran Theology

Lutheran Theology is certainly not unique in its confession that Scripture Alone is the final authority in matters of doctrine and practice. Nor is it the only body that has confessed that people are saved “by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone” as a foundational principle.

Nevertheless, the Lutheran approach toward authoritative interpretation is an interesting one. This is because the Lutheran Reformation occurred during a time when contemporary culture was experiencing a “back to the sources” movement. This resulted in renewed vigor and scholarship regarding the doctrine and practice of the Early Church, as well as the original languages of the Bible. In addition, the Lutheran Reformation (unlike many of its contemporaries) was a *conservative* reformation, in the sense that it was unwilling to reject the context of history (catholicity) and begin with a completely

“new” understanding of Holy Scripture.⁵ Finally, the Lutheran Reformation assumed its continuity with the Apostolic Church by retaining the worship practices of the Early Church, albeit with a renewed focus upon “Jesus Christ and Him Crucified” at the heart of our encounter with the Living God. Indeed, the more radical reformers accused Luther of retaining “too much” of his Augustinian heritage.

Why is continuity a blessing? Because Luther and those who followed him, especially the beloved Dr. Martin Chemnitz, strove to *restore the Apostolic Faith and the centrality of Jesus Christ* to the Church. They were deliberately not “innovative” in their approach, because they shared our conviction that the Word of God is eternally true, and that there must be a right interpretation of that Word as well. So certain was Dr. Martin Luther that he stood upon the Eternal Truth of God, that when confronted by both Emperor and Pope, he made the declaration, “*My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.*” It is worthy to note the *basis* upon which he challenged his opponents to refute his claims! They must disprove him on the basis of the clear word of Holy Scripture, interpreted according to sound reason and as the Apostolic Church had properly understood it. It was this faith that Luther defended, this faith that they confessed and put into practice.

On this same basis, our Lutheran Fathers made public confession in 1530 of the

⁵“It is more important to remember what the Lutheran Reformation retained rather than what it overthrew.” Charles Porterfield Krauth

Eternal Truth in the city of Augsburg. Over the next 50 years they defended that Eternal Truth against all errors and heresy that arose to deny it. How did they defend it? They did so using the Word of God, which they interpreted with great authority. On what basis? By beginning with the Triune God, centered on Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, trusting in the absolute authority and inerrancy of the Word of God, reading that Word according to the confession of Apostolic Christianity⁶, and grounded in the genuine encounter with the Living God in the Divine Service of Word and Sacrament! Simply *read* the argumentation in the Book of Concord (1580), and *observe* the form of its authoritative teaching and interpretation. There you will see this fundamental truth. This truth united some 6000 pastors together in one confession in 1580. This truth faithfully confesses the faith of the Apostolic Church and the uncompromising Gospel of Jesus Christ, all while giving *all glory to God alone*. And this truth can still help us today by grounding us in the Eternal Context for the right interpretation of Holy Scripture.

The Lutheran Confessions were never intended to *supersede or replace* the Word of God, but instead were meant to inform the *Eternal Context* by which the One Holy catholic and Apostolic Church has always understood Holy Scripture in its proclamation of the pure Gospel. As the Lord Almighty creates living faith in the hearts of men, it is then the duty of the Church to instruct them in the faith, so that they might rejoice in the Truth of His Living Word.

To God Alone Be the Glory

⁶See Martin Chemnitz' *Examination of the Council of Trent* for the ultimate example of this.

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Beauty and Truth in Science

by Dr. E. Christian Kopff

Classical Christian education teaches students subjects that are grouped into the parallel areas of the arts of language (trivium) and the arts of mathematics (quadrivium). Although classical educators tried to teach these areas in a balanced way, they often ended up privileging the trivium over the quadrivium. The descendants of this scheme in contemporary education are the humanities and the sciences. In most schools the old emphasis has been reversed and science is privileged as more academically rigorous and, when pursued successfully, more likely to lead to truth. The subject matter of the humanities may be more beautiful and emotionally satisfying, but in education truth should trump beauty. The radical separation of beauty and truth, and so of the humanities and the sciences, is contradicted by the practice of great scientists in physics and biology.

I often hear students say, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Famous philosophers have endorsed this notion of subjectivity. René Descartes wrote to Mersenne (March 18, 1630), “In general ‘beautiful’ and ‘pleasant’ signify simply a relation between our judgment and an object; and because the judgments of men differ so much from each other, neither beauty nor pleasantness can be said to have any definite meaning.” Baruch Spinoza wrote to H. Boxel (September 1674), “Beauty, my dear Sir, is not so much a quality of the object beheld, as an effect in him who beholds it.” In 1859 Charles Darwin wrote, “The sense of beauty obviously depends on the nature of the mind,

irrespective of any real quality in the admired object.”

Students who agree with Descartes, Spinoza and Darwin that “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” are usually contrasting beauty as a subjective emotion with science, as they understand it, which they believe to be objectively true, since its hypotheses are confirmed by experiments and controlled observations and unaffected by emotion or prejudice. It is interesting—but not really surprising—that students in the early twenty-first century should echo, without knowing it, thinkers from the seventeenth century and ignore major scientists of the last century.

Physicist Louis de Broglie (1892-1987) wrote, “In every epoch in the history of science, aesthetic feeling has been a guide that has directed scientists in their research.”⁷

Mathematician Henri Poincaré (1854-1912) was more existential: “The scientist does not study nature because it is useful to do so. He studies it because he takes pleasure in it, and he takes pleasure in it because it is beautiful. If nature were not beautiful, it would not be worth knowing and life would not be worth living.”⁸

The twentieth century physicist who dealt with this theme most explicitly, Werner Heisenberg, was one of the brilliant cohort of scientists who developed Quantum Mechanics after World War I, building on the work of Max Planck, Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr. His accounts of the practice and theory of

⁷ Louis de Broglie, *Savants et Découvertes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1951) 379

⁸ Henri Poincaré, *Science et méthode* (Paris, 1909) = *Science and Method* (London: Norton, 1914)

science return again and again to the theme of beauty and truth in science.

On April 28, 1926 Heisenberg talked with Einstein about Quantum Mechanics. Einstein was a great mathematical physicist, but he could not accept a theory dependent on statistical probability with no physical model. He wrote Max Born, Heisenberg's teacher and co-worker, *Jedenfalls bin ich überzeugt, daß Er würfelt nicht*. "I am convinced that He (God) does not play dice." Instead of debating individual problems with Quantum Mechanics, Heisenberg urged on Einstein his aesthetic experience of its beauty and simplicity.⁹

I believe, just like you, that the simplicity of natural laws has an objective character, that it is not just the result of thought economy. If nature leads us to mathematical forms of great simplicity and beauty—by forms I am referring to coherent systems of hypotheses, axioms, etc.—to forms that no one has previously encountered, we cannot help thinking that they are "true," that they reveal a genuine feature of nature... You may object that by speaking of simplicity and beauty I am introducing aesthetic criteria of truth, and I frankly admit that I am strongly attracted by the simplicity and beauty of the mathematical schemes with which nature presents us. You must have felt this too: the almost frightening simplicity and wholeness of the relationships which nature suddenly spreads out before us and for which none of us was in the least prepared.

⁹ Werner Heisenberg, *Der Teil und das Ganze. Gespräche im Umkreis der Atomphysik* (Zürich: Buchclub ex Libris, 1969) 110-1 = *Physics and Beyond. Encounters and Conversations* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 68-9

In 1970, Heisenberg addressed the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts on "The Meaning of Beauty in the Exact Sciences."¹⁰ The classically educated Heisenberg cited ancient definitions of beauty, but devoted his essay to one: "The proper conformity of the parts to one another and to the whole." This definition reflects Socrates' words at Phaedrus 264c: "Every speech like a living creature should be put together with its own body so that it is not without a head or without a foot but has a middle and extremities, written in such a way that its parts fit together and form a whole."

Heisenberg accepts the traditional beginning of science with Thales of Miletus in the sixth century BC. Thales saw in Water the material first principle of all things. From the beginning scientists were looking for unity, rationality and understanding. Soon after Thales, Pythagoras and his followers made an important contribution. They saw in mathematics the best chance of achieving Thales's goals. "The next step along this road was taken by Plato" with his theory of Ideas (or Forms) and his mathematical models of the universe and the elements that he presented in *Timaeus*.

Plato's great disciple Aristotle reacted by insisting on an observational and empiricist model of science, which led him away from physics and astronomy towards his great contributions to biology

¹⁰ Werner Heisenberg, "Die Bedeutung des Schönen in der exakten Naturwissenschaft", *Schritte über Grenzen. Gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze* (München: R. Piper Verlag, 1971) = "The Meaning of Beauty in the Exact Sciences," in *Across the Frontiers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971)

(to use our modern word made of Greek elements). Aristotle responded with impatience to the mathematical hypotheses of the Pythagoreans: “The Pythagoreans are not seeking for theories and causes to account for observed facts, but rather forcing their observations and trying to accommodate them to certain theories and opinions of their own.” (De Caelo, 2.13.292a)

Plato’s mathematical and aesthetic vision of science confronted Aristotle’s observational and empiricist one for a thousand years and is still with us. Heisenberg wrote, “The significance of the beautiful for the understanding of nature became clearly visible again only at the beginning of the modern period, once the way had been found from Aristotle to Plato. And only through this change of course did the full fruitfulness become apparent of the mode of thought inaugurated by Pythagoras and Plato.”

The history of modern science is often told as the tale of the growing influence of observation, empiricism and a mechanistic worldview. For Heisenberg, it is the story of the triumph of Plato and beauty. In the 1600’s Galileo and Kepler loved and quoted Pythagoras and Plato. Twentieth-century physicists accepted both relativity and quantum mechanics. “In both cases, after years of vain effort at understanding, a bewildering plethora of details has been almost suddenly reduced to order by the appearance of a connection, largely unintuitable but still ultimately simple in its substance, that was immediately found convincing by virtue of its completeness and abstract beauty.”

In 1958 American physicists Richard Feynman and Murray Gell-Mann published an article proposing a new

theory of the weak interactions of subatomic particles.¹¹ The theory had the advantage of mathematical simplicity and elegance, traits associated with beauty. Its major disadvantage was that it was contradicted by nine experiments. Feynman and Gell-Mann took the bull by the horns in defending their theory: “It’s universal; it’s symmetrical...it is the simplest possibility,” all of which are aesthetic considerations. For the two physicists the theory’s beauty “indicates that these experiments are wrong.” Gell-Mann was even franker when interviewed on this topic: “Frequently a theorist will throw out a lot of data on the grounds that if they don’t fit an elegant scheme, they’re wrong. That’s happened to me many times. The theory of weak interactions: there were nine experiments that contradicted it—all wrong. Every one.”¹² Observation and experiment play an important role in confirming scientific ideas and theories, but beauty leads the way to discovery and understanding. Sometimes beauty will trump observation and experiment, or at least anticipate their results. As Richard Feynman wrote, “you can recognize truth by its beauty and simplicity.”¹³

One of the iconic events in twentieth century biology is Watson and Crick’s discovery of the structure of DNA, recounted in Watson’s *The Double Helix*. After a series of adventures and misadventures Watson and his English

¹¹ R. P. Feynman and M. Gell-Mann, “Theory of the Fermi Interaction,” *Physical Review* 109.1 (January 1, 1958) 193-198

¹² Horace F. Judson, *Search for Solutions* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, 1980) 17

¹³ Richard Feynman, *The Character of Physical Law* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1965) 171

friend, Francis Crick, developed the double helix model for DNA. They first checked to see whether the model was physically possible and they discovered that it was. The two young men went out to celebrate. Watson explains their thinking:¹⁴ “Lacking the exact X-ray evidence, we were not confident that the configuration chosen was precisely correct. But this did not bother us, for we only wished to establish that at least one specific two-chain complementary helix was stereochemically possible. Until this was clear, the objection could be raised that, although our idea was aesthetically elegant, the shape of the sugar-phosphate backbone might not permit its existence. Happily, now we knew that this was not true, and so we had lunch, telling each other that a structure this pretty just had to exist.”

X-ray expert Rosalind Franklin confirmed the double helix model. “Like almost everyone else, she saw the appeal of the base parts and accepted the fact that the structure was too pretty not to be true.” For James Watson the relation of truth and beauty is a “fact.”

Beauty is important for discovery and understanding in science, as Werner Heisenberg noted, but neo-Darwinian materialist science cannot explain beauty. In Darwinism the driving forces behind the evolution of the primate brain are factors that increase the chances of survival. As Philosopher Thomas Nagel pointed out, a materialist worldview cannot explain realities such as

consciousness and ethical and aesthetic judgments.¹⁵

If we leave the issue of determinism aside, the distinctive conception of human beings that is implied by value realism is that they can be motivated by their apprehension of values and reasons, whose existence is a basic type of truth, and the explanation of action by such motives is a basic form of explanation, not reducible to something of another form, either psychological or physical.... Human action, in other words, is explained not only by physiology, or by desires, but by judgments.... We exist in a world of values and respond to them through normative judgments that guide our actions. This, like our more general cognitive capacities, is a higher development of our nature as conscious creatures. Perhaps it includes the capacity to respond to aesthetic values as well—construed realistically as a judgment-independent domain which our experiences and judgments reveal to us.”

The ideal attributed to Kepler, of “thinking God’s thoughts after Him,” might be extended to “affirming God’s judgment after Him.” The account of Creation that includes evaluation as well as action is the first chapter of Genesis, where the Creator judges each day’s work *kitov*, “that it is good.” *Tov*, like words for “good” in other languages, has a wide range of usage. It is used of plants at Genesis 3:6, Eve “saw that the tree was good for food.” It can also mean handsome or beautiful, like David in I Samuel 16:12, who was “goodly to look upon.” (*tov ro’i*) Our apprehension of the beauty of flowers, animals and humans, of art, poetry and scientific

¹⁴ James D. Watson, *The Double Helix. A Personal Account of the Discovery of the Structure of DNA* (New York: Atheneum, 1968) 120

¹⁵ Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 114

discovery makes most sense if it is the echo of what the master Creator experienced when He created them.

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Classical Education: Engaging the Imagination

by Dr. Ross Betts

In the present age, an education in experimental science is an important and necessary feature for students; however, the Classical Christian Education movement recognizes the shortcomings of an education whose principal concern is teaching science and technology. The human dimension is often lacking from a predominantly scientific program. A proper education attends to the *moral imagination* of students, drawing from traditional and classical sources. The moral imagination, that faculty which informs the habits, practices, affections, and dispositions of a people, should be nurtured through content and methods. Such an education involves religion, literature, and philosophy—the permanent things.

The Classical perspective also rightly rejects education that avoids engagement with tradition. Jean Jacques Rousseau, the philosopher who inspired the French Revolution, proposed such an approach. The program of Rousseau's book *Emile* looks directly to nature, without the mediation of culture or tradition, in the education of the child. The child's natural curiosity guides his education. Such a program is for unschoolers and those of the 1960's counter-culture. However, a traditional study of the Classics themselves does not make for a classical education in the full sense desired.

Education informs the affect and sensibility as well as the intellect. It looks also to integrate faith and reason in such

a way as to avoid dualism and fragmentation of thought. Classical education should avoid lesser goals: the secularist wanting better SAT scores from the Latin student, the Protestant wanting his student simply to be able to read Koine and the Greek New Testament, or the Catholic learning Latin to better participate in the Tridentine Mass.

A better education looks to a more comprehensive goal, one that attends to the moral imagination. The expression the *moral imagination* is one used by Edmund Burke in his famous *Reflections on the Revolution in France* to describe what was lacking in the French radicals. The phrase was popularized in the twentieth century by Russell Kirk. Moral imagination guides actions and thought. As Kirk says, “the expression of the moral imagination is ...to teach us what it means to be genuinely human.” Moral imagination is expanded in a culture especially by the culture’s great poets, and is apprehended by individuals within a culture as they expand their own individual poetic imaginations. Classical education, properly executed, nurtures this imaginative faculty.

Not all that is “classical” is to be promoted. The example of a type of classical education that we might avoid is presented in John Stuart Mill’s *Autobiography*. Along with Jeremy Bentham, Mill promoted utilitarian philosophy. He is probably best known for his tract, *On Liberty*, a staple of many introductory philosophy classes. The education of this Victorian era polymath, while superficially compelling, is ultimately a cautionary tale to be shunned as much as that of Rousseau.

In his autobiography, Mill describes the rigorous educational program that his

father initiated and managed. To a certain extent, Mill was his father’s educational guinea pig, as he groomed his son to be a champion of Benthamite Utilitarianism, the elder Mill’s philosophical commitment. Homeschooled in a rich environment, the results of Mill’s schooling were astounding. The study of Greek began at age three and by age eight, Latin. He could read *The Iliad* in Greek before he was ten and by age twelve was reading Horace, Livy, and Virgil in Latin. Mill was convinced that this program could be applied universally, that it was not simply for the genius, but that other students could be similarly successful. He taught his younger siblings using this course as he matured.

Mill’s education included methods of reasoning learned directly from the classics as well. The person of Socrates revealed in the Platonic Dialogs was very influential. Mill noted:

“The Socratic method, of which the Platonic Dialogs are the chief example, is unsurpassed as a discipline for correcting errors....The close, searching *enclus*, by which the man of vague generalities is constrained either to express his meaning to himself in definite terms, or to confess that he does not know what he is talking about; the perpetual testing of general statements by particular instances; the siege in form which is laid to the meaning of large abstract terms, by fixing upon some still larger class...all of this as an education for precise thinking, is estimable, and all this even at that age, took such hold of me that it became part of my own mind.” (Mill, 38-9)

The rigor of reasoning in the Dialogs excited him. One notes that Mill was attracted to the Dialogs for their usefulness in equipping the student for argument. Their intrinsic merit as philosophy may have been of less interest.

Mill's classical studies introduced him to an extraordinary amount of literature, studying at a high level. He became a critical thinker, able to analyze arguments incisively. Using his education, he made great contributions in economics, utilitarian philosophy, politics, and education. Towards the end of his life, he was elected as Rector at St. Andrews in Edinburgh. There he advocated for a classical program which was integrated with scientific pursuits, a program based on his own education. He recounted an address given at St. Andrews this way:

"I gave expression to many thoughts and opinions which have been accumulating in me through life respecting the various studies which belong to a liberal education, their uses and influences, and the mode in which they should render those influences most beneficial. The position I took up vindicating the high educational value alike of the old classic and the new scientific studies, even on stronger grounds than are urged by most of their advocates, and insisting that it is only the stupid inefficiency of the usual teaching which makes those studies be regarded as competitors instead of allies, was, I think, calculated, not only to aid and stimulate the improvement which was happily commenced in the national institutions for higher education, but to diffuse juster

ideas than we often find even in highly educated men on the conditions of the highest mental cultivation." (Mill, 225)

All of this sounds well and good, educating our students to be good scientists as well as good classicists, yet the man that Mill became and the education that he obtained is not one that we as Christians can endorse. Mill's course of study, while intensely classical in reference to antiquities, lacked any systematic study of Christian thought. His course of study, as dictated by his father, was non-Christian. As Mill puts it, his father directed him away from any connection between the Classics and Christianity:

"My father's oral convictions, wholly dissevered from religion, were very much of the character of those Greek philosophers, and were delivered with force and decision which characterized all that came from him. (Mill, 54)

In Mill's course of study there is no record that he studied any Christian writers from antiquity. No Augustine. No Jerome. No Greek fathers like Athanasius. His father, a lapsed Presbyterian and militant atheist, evidenced a negative mentality that may underlie all liberal thinking in one way or another. This thinking certainly influenced John Stuart Mill, a contented atheist throughout his life. Reading about Mill, however, one is struck with the thought that as great as his education was, he came up short.

One obvious consequence of his education is that Mill lacks an affective attachment to the Classics. Mill is detached from the classical sources themselves. Sir Philip Sydney, the sixteenth century poet and critic, in his

book, *The Defense of Poetry*, discusses the effect the reading of classical poetry *ought* to have on the student. Poetry, for Sydney, attends to virtue and inspires the reader. He recounts the scene in the *Aeneid* where Aeneas carries his father Anchises through the fires of the destruction of Troy. After reading this heroic action, Sydney asks rhetorically, "Who would not like to emulate Aeneas?" The classics live in the properly instructed reader in this way.

Recall in *The Confessions* St. Augustine's response to reading Cicero's *Hortensius*. He was emotionally engaged with this classic work in an intimate way that Mill lacks. The example of St. Jerome is also illustrative of this principle. Jerome was a trilingual man having command of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. He was a lover of the Classics, as well as a lover of the Bible. As Rome was sacked in 412 AD, he looked to the poetry of Virgil to express his grief and horror:

Crudelis ubique luctus, ubique et plurima mortis imago

Grief everywhere, everywhere terror, and all shapes of death (*Aeneid*, 2:368-9)

In contrast, Mill describes his response to the Classics rather dryly. He recounts going through a piece with his father:

"Even at an early age at which I read with him the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon, I imbibed from that work and from his comments a deep respect for the character of Socrates; who stood in my mind as a model of ideal excellence: and I well remember how my father at the time impressed upon me the lesson of the 'Choice of Hercules.'" (Mill, 51)

The 'Choice of Hercules' as rendered by Xenophon is a prose allegory where Hercules has to choose between a life of hard virtue and a life of easy vice. While naturally appealing to a 19th century moralist, the story hardly engages the imagination. Mill doesn't give the impression that the Classics had an effect on his imaginative faculty. One can't imagine Mill's marveling at Achilles returning to the trench in the *Iliad*, for instance.

Famously, in his early twenties, Mill plunged into a deep depression. He vividly describes this episode with an anti-Christian quip:

"I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to; unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasurable excitement; one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times becomes insipid or indifferent; the state, I should think in which converts to Methodism usually are, when smitten by their 'conviction of sin.'" (Mill, 112)

While depression is a problem for the Christian and the non-Christian, the quality of his depression may be a reflection of his education. A Christian might speak of a depression as "a dark night of the soul" or a feeling of being abandoned by God. Mill's own account of his depression points its beginning with dissatisfaction with his political perspective. His detachment from affective education and overemphasis on politics and liberal progress as intellectual pursuits is at the root of his problem. He notes:

"In this frame of mind it occurred to me to put the question directly

to myself, 'Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you were looking forward to, could be effected at this very instant: would that be a great joy and happiness to you?' And an irrepressible self-conscious (voice) distinctly answered "No!" At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down.'" (Mill, 112)

The quality of Mill's depression seems also to be associated with shortcomings in his moral and poetic imagination. His education, "the whole foundation on which his life was constructed," had steadfastly been directed at the temporal sphere. He, therefore, directed his life in a way to accomplish certain political ends: more even-handed treatment of the common man over against the landed gentry, a better and more equal treatment of women, etc. The accomplishment of these temporal goals, he saw, would not be ultimately satisfying. His depression suggests that his resources with respect to philosophy and religion, his perspective on the transcendental realm, were lacking.

He sought relief from his despondency in studying the works of Samuel Coleridge, a conservative and traditionalist in matters of religion and culture. Coleridge, a man of great poetic imagination, is deeply within the realm of the "permanent things," suggesting that grounding in that tradition is what Mill lacked. In an essay on Coleridge, Mill admits a loosening of his attachment to Bentham as result of contemplating that traditional perspective.

The education of J. S. Mill, though quite classical in form and content, is deficient in two ways. The Classics, as he studied them, were not integrated into Christian thought. Also, his study of the Classics did not leaven through his life beyond his intellectual perspective. It did not inform his moral imagination. Perhaps, one might suggest, this could have been remedied if he had not had an atheist father and an insular education sequestered from others. Likely, however, the *program* of his education, apart from these considerations, would have produced the same result: a classically-trained, liberal atheist.

To avoid this result for our students, classical educators, in my opinion, must pay attention to the period of Late Antiquity. In the period of 350-550 AD, the Classical world became Christian. At the conversion of Constantine, the world of antiquity was largely pagan, but by the end of Justinian's reign, it was thoroughly Christian. During that period a variety of Christian thinkers engaged the classical world, integrating the Biblical and the Classical perspectives. Their works, when included in an educational program, can remedy the separation of the Classical and the Christian that Mill experienced.

As a candidate period for study, Late Antiquity is not perfect. As a matter of Latin style, the authors of that period are inferior to Cicero, Virgil, and the early period of the empire. Macrobius and Cassiodorus, two sixth century authors of enormous influence in the Middle Ages, are excessively wordy and not suitable for the beginning Latinist. Likewise, the philosophy of Late Antiquity may be deficient. Neo-Platonism is the prevailing philosophical strain at this time amongst both Christian and Pagan writers. Aristotle, to the extent that he is

understood, is comprehended in Neo-Platonic terms.

Nonetheless, the richness of the discourse is worth the study. This period was coincident with the Fall of Rome. As a consequence, there was a great deal of weighing the past and preserving it as the threat of barbarism grew closer. Handbooks for the study and propagation of the Liberal Arts were produced by many authors for this purpose.

The obvious giant of Late Antiquity, particularly for those of us in the Latin West, was St. Augustine. His influence over theology, philosophy, ecclesiology, and education is immense. *The Confessions*, *The City of God*, and *On Christian Doctrine* are relevant for study by classical students. Apart from the early books of *The Confessions*, those that are biographical rather than philosophic, the study of Augustine probably should be reserved for a post-secondary context.

Boethius (480-525 AD) is a good candidate for study by our students as a representative of this period. The adopted son of a Christian Roman Senator, he entered a life of intellectual pursuit as well as service to the crumbling empire, at that time under the control of the Gothic and Arian king, Theodoric. Boethius produced a variety of works on Mathematics, Logic, and Music. These works were profoundly influential through the 13th century. His theological treatise, *On the Trinity*, attempts to comprehend the trinity in strictly rational and metaphysical terms, remaining a text to be reckoned with through the time of Aquinas.

The Consolation of Philosophy, a short treatise by Boethius, written while he awaited execution by Theodoric, is a masterpiece, accessible to students, with

poetic and philosophical excellence. The work begins as a lament for false imprisonment and the vagaries of fortune. In the text, Boethius is consoled by the figure of Lady Philosophy. She gently guides him to understand his predicament from a more philosophical perspective. The book is a compilation of prose sections alternating with poetry. The central poem "*O qui perpetua*" is one of striking beauty and insight. It closes with this passage:

“Grant, Oh Father, that my mind may rise to Thy sacred throne. Let it see the fountain of good; let it find light, so that the clear light of my soul may fix itself in Thee. Burn off the fogs and clouds of earth and shine through in Thy splendor. For Thou art the serenity, the tranquil peace of virtuous men. The sight of Thee is the beginning and end; one guide, leader, path and goal.”

Lady Philosophy cures Boethius of his despair through philosophical inquiry. The final section explores the nature of God's providence in a world of chance and fortune. The error of thinking of God as a being in time as opposed to one *over* time is explored. God is an eternal being rather than a perpetual being. This alters how Boethius thinks of providence and divine causation.

The Consolation represents a work to be studied both for its intrinsic merits and for its influence on subsequent culture through many writers, political figures, and artists. Its influence began to wane only with the coming of Descartes, Francis Bacon, and the Scientific Revolution. Both Bacon and Descartes encouraged the West to turn away from prior classical Philosophy, and especially

Metaphysics. They sought to improve our material lot by focusing on the material. Consequently, by the 1700's, *The Consolation*, with its philosophical emphasis, lost much of its power as a formational work in the Western Mind.

Prior to that, the effect of *The Consolation* on culture was large. Alfred the Great (849-899 AD), in the peace that followed after defeating the invading pagan Danish army, sought to re-establish learning amongst the clergy and the laity. He established schools modeled after Charlemagne's. Alfred personally participated in the translation of *The Consolation* for his own edification and for the education of his children.

Political life is always subject to the vagaries of fortune. The special gift of *The Consolation* is to calm the souls of those bemoaning their political fate. The work appeals especially to monarchs and temporal leaders. In the sixteenth century, Queen Elizabeth I watched closely the progress of the Protestant Reformation in continental Europe. A great blow to the Reformation in southern Europe occurred when Henry of Navarre in Spain converted back to Catholicism before ascending to the throne in France. Elizabeth, an accomplished Latinist, was discouraged by this development. To lift herself and her spirits, she translated, by her own hand, *The Consolation* into English.

The effect of *The Consolation* on literature is large, as well. Two prominent authors among those influenced were Dante Alighieri and Geoffrey Chaucer. Even though Boethius lived seven centuries before them, the central place that he played in their imaginations is great.

Prior to writing the Divine Comedy, Dante had a relationship of courtly love with a

young woman named Beatrice Portinari. When Beatrice died, Dante was despondent and sought comfort in *The Consolation*, a book with which he personally had not been familiar prior to that time. He found it to be very helpful, such that when he wrote the Divine Comedy much of the role of the Beatrice character was informed by *The Consolation*. Beatrice serves as a guide of Dante through *The Purgatorio* and also in *The Paradiso*. She exhorts him to greater understanding, much in the manner of Lady Philosophy in *The Consolation*. Dante includes Boethius in *The Paradiso*, praising him as a "sainted soul."

The influence of Boethius and *The Consolation* on Geoffrey Chaucer is even more direct. Chaucer was a man of politics, working as a diplomat, and of great Christian faith. He translated *The Consolation* in full. There are numerous references to Boethius and *The Consolation* in his many works. The Knight's Tale in *The Canterbury Tales* shows this clearly, as he reflects on the lovers' misfortunes with Boethian wisdom. The women of that story are also prominent in dispensing wisdom which cools the passions of the men, in a manner akin to Lady Philosophy.

At the end of *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer comments on many of his works that he regrets for one reason or another. Regarding Boethius, though, he is unequivocal:

"But for the translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* and other books of saints' legends, homilies, moralities, and devotions, I thank our Lord Jesus Christ and his blessed Mother, and all the saints of heaven, beseeching them that

they from henceforth unto my life's end send me grace to lament my sins, and to meditate upon the salvation of my soul, and grant me the grace of true contrition, confession, and satisfaction for sins in this present life..."

Whether educators choose a work like *The Consolation* or another from the Western tradition, attention must be given to presenting the classics in harmony with Christian development. Reflection on the authors of Late Antiquity in a Classical education can accomplish this. Such attention will more properly guide the moral imagination of our students and give them a more unified picture of Western Culture.

Romano Guardini, writing in the early 1950's in his book, *The End of the Modern World*, speaks to those classicists such as Mill, as well as more formidable ones like Nietzsche, who seek to divorce the Classics from Christianity. He notes:

"In many cases, the non-Christian today cherishes the opinion that he can erase Christianity by seeking a new religious path, by returning to classical antiquity from which he can make a new departure."

Those, like Mill, who seek this path, are mistaken about antiquity. Classical education following the time of Christ is of necessity Christian. As Guardini asserts:

"As a form of historical existence classical antiquity is forever gone. ... Even at the height of their cultural achievement the religious attitudes of the ancients were ancient and naive. Classical man lived before that crisis which was

the coming of Christ. With the advent of Christ, man confronted a decision which placed him on a new level of existence.... With the coming of Christ, man's existence took on an earnestness which classical antiquity never knew simply because it had no way of knowing it. The earnestness did not spring from a human maturity; it sprang from the call which each person received from God through Christ. (Guardini, 101-2)

We can all say a hearty "Amen" to this and bear it in mind as we craft our classical educational programs.

Dr. Ross Betts, physician, husband of Lynn and father of four, developed an interest in classical Lutheran education through homeschooling. Dr. Betts serves as President of the American Friends of Augustine College, a small liberal arts college in Ottawa, Canada.

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Efficiency in the Classical Lutheran Home School **by Mrs. Kelly Rottmann, M.A.**

Classically trained students are systematically taught how to think, evaluate, and measure the worth of new knowledge (Bauer 2011). They become lifelong learners, well-equipped to serve their neighbor. Organization helps make classical education *different* from progressive education. Progressive education often utilizes unorganized, trendy, experimental, child-directed, or random teaching philosophies and methods. This is in direct contrast to classical education. Structure in classical education makes a difference, because a poorly planned educational journey has the potential to produce cluttered and disorderly minds helpless to make fundamental connections between basic ideas (Bauer and Bauer 2004). Without organization, the classical home school begins to resemble its progressive counterpart.

A few essentials may assist in structuring the classical Lutheran home school. For the purposes of developing and maintaining a well-organized classical education, consider each of the following needs: creating day-to-day structure and scheduling, establishing good record keeping, and tracking students' yearly, weekly, and daily progress.

For day-to-day organization in the home school, a standard teacher's planner can be useful. Options for teacher's planners vary in price, and they come in several styles. Interactive teacher's planners, like the *Homeschool Tracker* or *Schoolhouse Planner*, are usually more expensive. Less

expensive options include printed teacher's planners such as *The Homeschooler's Journal* or *The Homeschooler's High School Journal*. The most economical choice is to create a customized "do-it-yourself" planner that utilizes free organizational templates offered either through pre-purchased curricula or the Internet. Whichever planner style is chosen, consider functionality as well as affordability, because each classical homeschooling family is unique (Desmarais accessed 2012).

Pocket or accordion folders make great day-to-day organizational tools for both teacher and students. Two-pocket folders with a different color for each day of the week can be a good method for the teacher to organize worksheets for daily lesson plans. Each student's daily bundle of worksheets for every subject is paper-clipped together, and each daily bundle is put into its corresponding daily folder. Differently colored two-pocket folders help students stay organized, too. Each student can be given his own two-pocket folder to store daily work. One inside pocket is labeled "To Do" and the other inside pocket is labeled "Done." Every day, the teacher puts the appropriate bundle of paper-clipped worksheets for that day's lessons in the "To Do" side of each student's folder. When the student completes a worksheet, he puts it in the "Done" side of his work folder. This helps keep the student organized, because all of his daily work is kept in one folder. Additional and differently colored two-pocket folders, one for each subject, are also good for storing each student's completed and graded papers, as some states require a portfolio of student work. Accordion folders can be utilized in a similar manner with sections labeled to

indicate a specific day of the week or individual student, and paper-clipped daily worksheet bundles are distributed accordingly. Additionally, one idea for student use of accordion folders is to have students label each section of the folder by subject and place completed work in this folder. Both two-pocket and accordion folders can help teacher and students save time, minimize loss, and keep good records.

Well-organized records are necessary, especially because many states require tangible evidence both for what is learned and for the amount of time spent on academics in the home school. Knowing and complying with state educational standards is in keeping with the Fourth Commandment in which we are required to honor more than fathers and mothers; we are called upon to "serve...other authorities by gladly providing what they need or require..." (Concordia Publishing House 1991, 75). There are several tools available to assist with record keeping. They include standards lists, grading scales, and grade books.

Standards lists offer objective means for assessing students' academic progress. To avoid the progressive nature of lists provided by state education departments, consider the Core Knowledge Sequence (Holdren and Hirsch 1996), the World Book standards found on the Donna Young website, or lists in classical curriculum packages. Standards can serve not only as academic skills checklists, but also as informal report cards for lower grammar students. Skills and content knowledge can be checked off as they are mastered. More systematized records of students' grades for learning levels upper grammar through rhetoric stages are needed. Grading scales well-suited to classical education include two separate

grading scales used by Memoria Press Academy, one for lower school (3rd-7th) and one for upper school (8th-12th grades). Record grades in a spiral-bound grade book from an office supply store, inside the teacher planner, or in an interactive grade book, like Edu-Track Homeschool (PC).

With methods for day-to-day organization and record keeping chosen, another helpful step is to schedule yearly goals based on an organized plan for a classical education. Some follow the patterns of their favorite classical publisher or curriculum. Others, including Susan Wise Bauer, recommend dividing twelve years of education into "...three repetitions of the same four-year pattern: the ancients, the medieval period through the early Renaissance, the late Renaissance through early modern times, and modern times" (2004, 15-16). Still others prefer to spend more time on each area, especially classical periods, and will devote an entire year to ancient Greece and another to ancient Rome. When the overall pattern is determined, school years can be chunked into trimesters or quarters. Divided annual goals determine quarterly lessons for each school year, and these, combined with each student's age and abilities, then determine weekly and daily goals.

Daily goals, or lesson plans, within the quarterly unit can often be best recorded on a weekly chart or worksheet inside the teacher's planner. For example, weekly worksheets on the Tapestry of Grace Online Loom webpage indicate days of the week in columns along the top, with enough rows to accommodate various "stage appropriate" subjects of the trivium and quadrivium. When writing weekly and daily plans, remember to focus "...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 trace developments, lines of reasoning, patterns of action, recurring symbolisms, plots, and motifs" (Bauer and Bauer 2004, 17). This focus is especially important when teaching multiple children at different learning stages, because good plans keep the teacher's time with each student running smoothly and efficiently.

Creating and using a master daily schedule can be a good way for organizing time with each student. This provides each school day with a definite beginning and ending. Though some prefer more flexibility, a structured school day assures that every student has a guaranteed time slot with the teacher and ensures that long-term projects move forward. The master daily schedule also gives an at-a-glance estimate of how much time each student works on each content area, and this is especially useful if a state or province requires a certain number of hours per subject.

For all of the practical benefits, perhaps the most important benefit of an organized, efficiently home school is that through this means classically trained students can be stimulated toward virtue, independent learning, and achievement. They can be encouraged through disciplined study to act in accordance to what they know to be right and work against "baser tendencies" like laziness (Bauer and Bauer 2004, 17). Each day students can be given periods of instruction with the teacher and periods of independent study or "homework." When students cannot discover solutions to academic problems themselves, they can be taught where to look or which older student to ask for help. For many, such structure – whether through a

master daily schedule or independent study planner - assists in teaching classically trained children organizational *and* thinking skills over time. These skills support a main purpose of classical, Lutheran education which is the development of lifelong, virtuous learners able to measure the worth of new knowledge, as they serve their neighbor daily in their God-given vocation.

In one of his many prefaces, Martin Luther points out the benefits of living under the rule of a classically educated prince, "...who seeks, increases, and upholds the glory of God and the well-being of the commonwealth," (Brown 2011, 60:314). After hearing two young princes' impressive Latin orations, Martin Luther reflects on "...what a good education is and how much it can achieve, particularly when brought to bear...on a teachable nature and an apt mind" (Brown 2011, 60:313). It is through the coherent and orderly teaching methods of classical education that teachable natures and apt minds have been and continue to be developed.

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A Review of Simply Classical: A Beautiful Education for Any Child **by Cheryl Swope**

Review by Dr. Gene Edward Veith

This book shows how classical education can enrich the lives of special needs children. The value of this book, though, goes far beyond that particular purpose. It is, in fact, one of the best treatments of classical education—for anyone, at any level—that I have ever read.

The author, Cheryl Swope, is not just spinning theories, though her explanations of the ideas behind the classical liberal arts are lucid, illuminating, and more complete than many accounts. She shows classical education in action, as she and her husband learn to become classical educators and in the affect it has on their two children. Michael and Michelle are the two heroes of this book. They are twins, and they both have had to struggle all their lives with profound mental, emotional, developmental, and physical difficulties. But as we read this book and follow their education, we see them wake up to the joy of language, the satisfaction they find in beauty, and their quite astonishing academic achievements. It isn't that classical education solves all of Michael's and Michelle's problems—and their story makes us appreciate what their parents have had to undergo, how hard it all is—but we come to know them as human beings.... And this is what is sometimes forgotten or never mentioned about classical education: how profoundly human and humanizing it is.

That is in stark contrast to the way special education is often carried out. Most educational programs for special-needs children limit themselves to training for “practical” living. Often this involves what Mrs. Swope rightly calls “dehumanizing behaviorism,” controlling the children with rewards and punishments in an effort to keep them in line. Many programs never even attempt to enrich their lives. Mrs. Swope has a graduate degree and professional experience in special education teacher. She draws on that expertise in this book, sketching out what parents need to know about medical conditions and behavioral problems. But she offers a more three-dimensional picture of special-needs students, and shows how a classical Christian education can build up what many people assume they do not have; namely, the intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual parts of their lives.

If special education can be dehumanizing, the same can be said of progressive education in general. In recounting her own training and early experiences as a teacher, Mrs. Swope captures just what is wrong with conventional education—its reductionism, its trendiness, its romanticized view of children, its oblivious disregard for the wisdom of the past, and its overall triviality—and in doing so throws the classical alternative in high relief.

One of the odd criticisms of classical education is that it is elitist, that while it is fine for elite boarding schools for the wealthy and privileged, it is too hard, too challenging, for us “ordinary” people. My usual reply is that if people who can afford the best kind of education for their children favor the classical approach, we need to make that available to everyone. Classical education, properly considered,

addresses what is universal in human beings. The word “liberal” in “liberal arts” comes from the Latin word that also gives us “liberty.” A liberal education was required for the “free” citizen, as opposed to the “servile” education given to slaves. People who need liberating need a liberal education. Marva Collins has applied the principles of classical education in tough, inner city schools, with children bogged down in poverty and social dysfunctions, and she has shown just how liberating logic, rhetoric, and Shakespeare can be. Special-needs children also need liberating. Cheryl Swope is the Marva Collins for special education.

As Mrs. Swope explains it, classical education works so well for children with cognitive problems because it is ordered, integrative, and formative. Instead of leaving them as isolated selves, classical education connects them to the outside world and makes them part of a human community. More than that, classical Christian education makes them part of a spiritual community. Notice the faith of Michael and Michelle, how they participate in church, how they pray and ask Christ for forgiveness, how they have learned to love and serve their neighbors.

Mrs. Swope explains how classical education, contrary to some stereotypes,

is actually flexible and can be adapted to a child’s level. Contrary to other stereotypes, classical education is very individualized, cultivates creativity, and is designed to be enjoyable.

This book tells some compelling stories, not only about the Swope’s children but about other children and their families. It is also full of stimulating ideas and practical advice. Mrs. Swope recommends curriculum, gives book lists, identifies helpful websites, and even draws up sample daily schedules. But lingering in the reader’s mind after finishing the book is the personality and complexity of that poet, musician, and Christian known as Michelle.

This review is excerpted from Dr. Veith’s Foreword of *Simply Classical: A Beautiful Education for Any Child*. Dr. Gene Edward Veith has authored more than 100 scholarly articles and 18 books on classical education, Christianity, and culture. Founding member and permanent Board member of the Consortium for Classical and Lutheran Education, Dr. Veith serves as Provost and Professor of Literature at Patrick Henry College.



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