

“SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO”

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VOLUME XXIII NUMBER II

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# CLASSIS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE  
ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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MAY, 2016

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AND CAN IT BE? NEW HYMNS

*by David Goodwin, ACCS President, with Keith Getty*

TRIBUTE: THE JUSTICE WHO SAID HE HATED WRITING

*by William Jay, Goodwin Procter LLP*

PETRA'S PURPOSE STATEMENTS

*by Petra Academy*

SPIRIT VS. FLESH

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THE DESKS SPEAK: THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHIES  
BEHIND OUR CLASSROOM SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

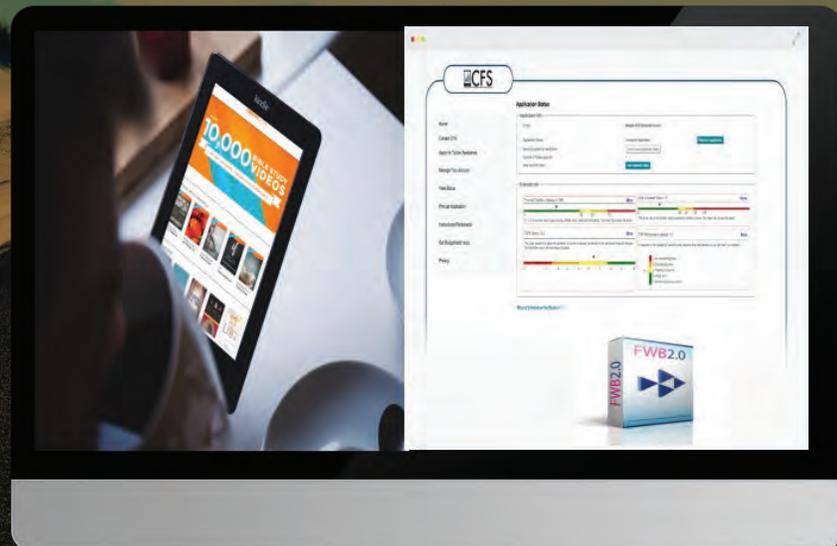
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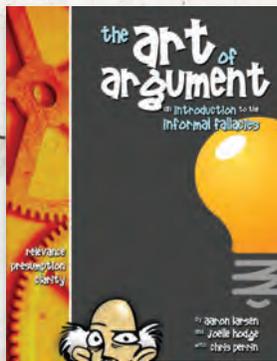
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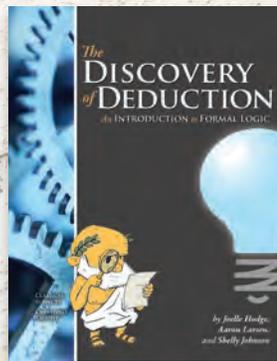
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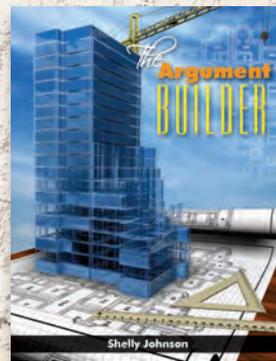
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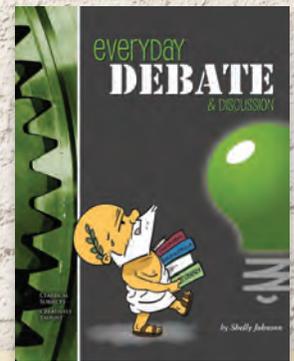
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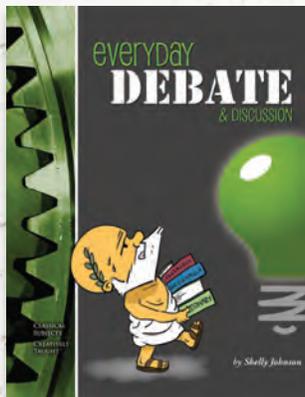
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Classical Christian Education:  
A New “Old-Way”

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The primary mission of this association is to promote, establish, and equip schools committed to a classical approach to education in light of a Christian worldview grounded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

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*CLASSIS is a quarterly journal of articles and book reviews designed to support and encourage schools around the world which are recovering classical Christian education. Hard copies are available to ACCS members and by subscription.*

**Publisher:** David Goodwin | **Senior Editor:** Tom Spencer | **Technical Editor:** Deb Blakey

# AND CAN IT BE? NEW HYMNS!

by David Goodwin, ACCS President, with Keith Getty

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*The blind Irish monk, Dallan Forgail, penned “Be Thou My Vision” in the sixth century. Today, Irish hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty emerge in his footsteps with songs like “In Christ Alone.”*

---

It is estimated that no less than 40 million Christians sing their songs in church each year. Their 2015 annual tour, “An Irish Christmas,” aired on PBS, and they recently appeared on *CBS Sunday Morning*.

What is the secret to their success? It seems to share some of the same qualities that are behind the rapid growth of classical Christian education (CCE). Art and music are more than enrichment classes at school, they are integral to worship. They lift us up to higher things in a world that wants to keep our eyes firmly pointed toward the ground.

Keith Getty graciously took a break from the Proclaim ‘16 conference in Nashville to visit with David Goodwin about their music.

*David Goodwin: Classical Christian education seeks the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. Do these ideas resonate with your creative process?*

Keith Getty: Beautiful way to put it. . . . That phrase encompasses all that we try to do. Putting music and words together, and presenting theological truth in a unique way, but living, speaking to the lifeblood. Giving

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hope, consolation, joy, and peace to the brokenhearted. Music has to help and enrich that. And (he says with a smile) Belfast, where I’m from, is the center of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

*DG: What inspires your work as you create new hymns in today’s world?*

KG: After we looked at Old Testament patterns of worship, New Testament patterns of worship, and eternal patterns of worship in Revelation, and indeed as we look at church music as it walks through Christian history, there were three consistents and we felt they were all under attack as we looked at the whole thing



in the year 2000.

So, we approached our work with three principles in mind:

- 1. Teaching:** God's people learn their faith in significant part, intellectually, emotionally, and artistically, through what they sing . . . So, we wanted to write hymns that really taught the full canon of the God of Scripture. We live in a generation where there are more Christians in the world than at any point in human history, and yet the average person who calls himself evangelical knows less about the Scriptures than the average person who went to normal government school in 1950 in the West.
- 2. Congregational Singing:** All through history, God's people have been singing together. Congregational singing is a holy act and the Bible talks about the joy of being together, and that every tribe and tongue will sing together. So we wanted to write music that was all about congregational singing. We write melodies that borrow their structure more from classic music or traditional folk music that can be sung apace, with an organ, with a Chinese instrument, or in a rock band. Songs where the medium doesn't matter. That's the centerpiece.

- 3. Excellence:** The third thing that emanates from the first two is . . . that a biblical view of artistry means to take God seriously and to take creativity seriously. We want to write songs that lead to true theology, good music, and beautiful poetry.

*DG: There is no doubt music stirs the soul. Why do we leave church singing the last hymn, no matter how good the sermon was?*

*KG: We are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God, and God Himself is a creative God, so we love beauty. We are more than just flesh and bone. Hymns have that ability to capture and fire imagination and heart and intellect and perfectly weld them together.*

*Think of the words and music when you sing " . . . Exchange it someday for a crown . . ." The fact of the matter is you will rediscover that line many times in your life. It will come out of left field and will offer consolation and excitement."*

The title of our newest album, "Facing a Task Unfinished," was inspired by Frank Hotenoff who was Bishop of China in the 1930s. It's the power of hymns to galvanize in the most desperate of circumstances.

DG: *Why are hymns still with us in this modern age?*

KG: C.S. Lewis said, “All that is not eternal is eternally out-of-date” (*The Four Loves*). Great art is long term. We want to write songs that carry people through life—through the years of doubt, through devotional life, through teaching their own children, through congregational prayers, through personal prayer, through times of suffering, through growing old, and on their deathbed.

DG: *CCE believes in developing aesthetic for higher things, things that might be difficult to appreciate or understand at first. Do you think this is important?*

KG: Absolutely. I, as a father, and as someone who teaches indirectly by being a hymn writer, have a responsibility to want people to extend their minds. Lewis, Tolkien, Rowling . . . none of them are trying to explain to kids. They are trying to put things beyond their imagination, to extend them.

Trying to oversimplify things for kids is a huge danger. The God of the universe never pretends to reveal everything to us anyway. We have to learn everything in the context of Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.” . . . Don’t teach the “celestial Santa Claus” even from the beginning, but remember that not on earth will we ever get the whole picture.

DG: *This has direct application to what we sing in church. What would you like to encourage people to bring to songs in the church?*

KG: **Teaching:** If you pick up the book *Knowing God*, by J.I. Packer and go down [the index page] with a marker, how many of those attributes are mentioned in most modern worship songs? So are the songs true,

authentic? Picking up 10–20 percent of the attributes of God palatable for the modern upwardly mobile American and ignoring the rest . . . is that intellectual integrity?

The aseitic [relating to the uncaused cause] qualities of God don’t get your hands in the air. “Immortal, invisible, God only wise . . .”—where do I put my hands up and start feeling the way I felt when I was opening my Christmas presents? Nowhere.

To understand your place in the universe, you have to understand that in the beginning, God.

We believe God’s people singing is a holy act, so we help them sing . . . It’s the responsibility of the leaders to make people understand why they’re singing, not driving toward an emotional experience.

**Congregational Singing:** Pastors stopped teaching why we sing. The holy act of congregational singing is our infinitesimally small taste of heaven. We are commanded to worship in song on earth . . . and it’s a privilege.

If you pan across many churches, most people aren’t really singing. They’re either observing or in an emotional trance. It’s like spoiling a child from the start, telling them they’re the center of the universe.

**Excellence:** Does the style of music matter? Do I think there is anything evil about having a rock band playing rich, deep songs? No. If the rock band is helping people sing, it’s good. If the rock band turns 70 percent of them off, that’s not good. If the rock band means that they don’t care about singing anymore and want to listen, then tell [the band] to take a vacation. If we start idolizing young people and not old people [by our music choices] . . . then that’s a bad thing.

Pop music tends to focus on things we want to sing about instead of laments. So, if rock music becomes the driving force, in the same way if choral music or any other style of music becomes the driving force, then it separates the congregation sometimes.

You just have to think what’s all this about? and be

wise.

*DG: Kids need to learn the value of perseverance and hard work. What advice would you give creative students or anyone who aspires to create?*

KG: Ninety-five percent of what we create never goes anywhere. It's not sad, it's just life. Of the songs I write, 60 would be in hymn books, and that might sound like a lot, but over 15 years of writing that's four or five songs per year. Over 150 days of writing. That's a lot of days of failure.

Any good lyric is a beautiful poem, but not any good poem is a beautiful lyric. On one song, we wrote 17 verses over 15 months, and used four.

While I encourage creativity and songwriting at every level of life, I think the songs we use in our churches on Sunday morning have to be songs of high quality. I've seen churches use songs written by their youth instead of by Charles Wesley.

This is not only exchanging good for bad, but giving people far too high an opinion of their place in the universe. It's making people look to young people as leaders rather than mature people. They are nearly always going to be really bad songs, so it's just going to

harm congregational singing. It's going to give us fewer songs that we carry with us in life; it's going to give us a lower view of life, poetry, theology, all those kinds of things.

The role of a hymn writer is not to write singable melodies. Singable only scratches the surface. Because we are fearfully and wonderfully made, because we are creative people, because we have imaginations, the goals of a melodist and hymn writer are to write music that people can't wait to sing, that creates a new angle—the same way da Vinci did with his paintings.

*DG: Your music seems to reach us in the same way as a good story. Why is that?*

KG: We need more than just instruction manuals. I am a repentant sinner, failing father, ineffective brother. God could have given me a manual, or he could have told a story. The story of the prodigal son . . . opens up areas of my life in a way no manual could have done . . . That's why pastors must illustrate with stories, or things will be dead. Teachers need to find what makes their students excited and feed that into them.

“Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.” —Victor Hugo

# TRIBUTE: THE JUSTICE WHO SAID HE HATED WRITING

by William Jay, Goodwin Procter LLP

“I don’t read footnotes,” Justice Antonin Scalia often said, and perhaps he didn’t, but oh, how he could write them. His comment really referred to footnotes in briefs the Justices receive, which tend to be packed with colorless detail meant more for the law clerks than the Justices. But for Justice Scalia the footnotes were often where the fun was.

In the weeks since his untimely death, many of Justice Scalia’s greatest hits have gotten renewed airplay—“[T]his wolf comes as a wolf,” for example, or “Pure applesauce.” But for every high-profile dissent or resonant majority opinion, there were many more humdrum cases that became memorable only because of Justice Scalia’s pen.

Take, for example, the pressing question of what to call people from Wyoming. Dissenting in a complex interstate water dispute, Justice Scalia took a moment to announce that he would have none of the “dictionary-approved” term “Wyomingite,” which he found too geological. Instead, he coined the term “Wyomans,” because (as he wrote in a footnote that should be posted all over the Cowboy State during this period of mourning) “the people of Wyoming deserve better.” (Footnote regarding that footnote: I was the government lawyer who had put the offending term “Wyomingite” into the United States’ amicus brief. I had no idea I was serving Justice Scalia up a softball.)

Sprightly moments like that were among the

real joys of clerking for Justice Scalia. He lived life gleefully, and some of that glee is captured in the margins of the U.S. Reports, in those impish footnotes that may not have been strictly necessary to the opinion, but were what



made it a Scalia opinion. (If you don’t read footnotes, for example, you will never learn that Cole Porter qualifies as “classical music.” That’s from *County of Sacramento v. Lewis* (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/96-1337.ZO.html>), in the course of his calling the “shocks-the-conscience” test “the Napoleon Brandy, the Mahatma Gandhi, the Cellophane of subjectivity.”) Some would be added as he mercilessly revised a hapless law clerk’s draft on his computer, lopping away superfluous words, sentences, or (at least once in my experience) entire sections of the draft opinion, and substituting something shorter, analytically cleaner, and of course snappier. Some would be added as he edited on paper, red-penciling in his refinements while “booking” the opinion—rereading each original source before he would cite it in the opinion. Some might even be refined in the law clerks’ office after he had ambled in to discuss his latest inspired addition, belly-laughing

*William Jay is co-chair of the Supreme Court and appellate practice at Goodwin Procter LLP. He served as a law clerk for Justice Scalia during October Term 2004.*

“GOD ASSUMED FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THE WISE OF THE WORLD WOULD VIEW CHRISTIANS AS FOOLS . . . AND HE HAS NOT BEEN DISAPPOINTED . . . IF I HAVE BROUGHT ANY MESSAGE TODAY, IT IS THIS: HAVE THE COURAGE TO HAVE YOUR WISDOM REGARDED AS STUPIDITY. BE FOOLS FOR CHRIST. AND HAVE THE COURAGE TO SUFFER THE CONTEMPT OF THE SOPHISTICATED WORLD.”

—ANTONIN SCALIA

as he read it aloud.

Why bother with those little gems buried down there in the footnotes, where no one might notice? Because the craftsmanship mattered to him. He summoned up just as much literary force in forgettable statutory cases as in those destined for the constitutional-law casebooks—and often more, because he thought those cases reflected better and more rigorous application of the skills of a lawyer and a student of the English

language, as opposed to just “a democratic vote by nine lawyers.” Those cases might have been narrow, but they didn’t have to be dull.

“I hate writing,” Justice Scalia often said; “I love *having written*.” He meant that writing is hard when you won’t settle for anything less than perfection—but having achieved it feels glorious.

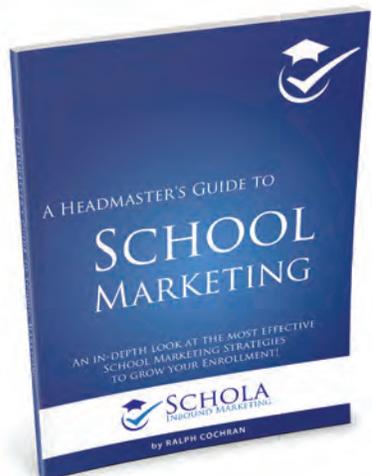
If only he were still writing. I can’t believe he has written his last.

## NOTES:

1. William Jay, *Tribute: The Justice Who Said He Hated Writing*, SCOTUSblog (Mar. 4, 2016, 2:16 PM), <http://www.scotusblog.com/2016/03/tribute-the-justice-who-said-he-hated-writing/>

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# PETRA'S PURPOSE STATEMENTS

by Petra Academy

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Vision (what we see): Students prepared to live purposeful, godly lives.

Mission (what we do): Recognizing our need for God's grace, Petra Academy strives to awaken love and wonder in our students by teaching them to observe with humility, think with reason, and articulate with charity for the flourishing of humanity and the renown of Jesus the Christ.

We want to see our **students** equipped with the "tools of learning" that will prepare them not only for further studies in college and in a wide range of vocations, but for living full and exuberant lives that take great delight in all God's works. But more than that, we long to see our students, so equipped, to give themselves to a hurting world, to be those "who will hold on to Christ firmly with one hand and reach out the other, with wit and skill and cheerfulness, with compassion and sorrow and tenderness, to the places where our world is in pain" (N.T. Wright, *For All God's Worth*).

We desire that our **faculty** exemplify the pursuit we envision for our students: that they are diligent and eager about what they teach, always learning themselves, and loving their students in Christ's love. We want them to have a clear understanding of classical education, both

DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE A DEFINED VISION FOR YOUR STUDENTS, FACULTY, RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS, AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?

in its application in their classroom and how their work fits into the whole.

As a school that bases its mandate from parental authority, we want to welcome the presence of **parents** at our school and in the classrooms. We want to be responsive to the concerns of parents within the parameters of the school's mission. We desire and need parents to share a sense of responsibility for the school, to be enthusiastically involved and supportive.

We want to be supportive of our local **community**, above reproach in our business dealings and engaged in community activities. Particularly, in the body of Christ, we long to exemplify our unity in Christ that transcends the diversity of our backgrounds.

*Petra Academy is an ACCS-accredited school in Bozeman, Montana.*



## AMPLIFICATION OF PETRA'S MISSION STATEMENT

### RECOGNIZING OUR NEED FOR GOD'S GRACE . . .

All of us are fallen; all of us need redemption. This includes parents, and this includes our kids. Because of our fallenness, we see interactions through blurred lenses that affect our desires, words, thoughts, and motives.

The solution is not to look to ourselves for hope in some self-deluded self-esteem (which, by the way, is not a virtue); the problem—for us and for our students—is not that we have too little self-esteem, but that we have too much! Any hope of solution is to look outside ourselves to Christ.

The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus is up to the challenge. Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us that, “. . . by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

We have been saved from death and hell, but we often forget verse 10: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Indeed, we have been saved *from* something, but we have also been saved *for* something.

To do any of this requires daily discipline, prayer, self-examination, repentance, and all of this requires

grace to even desire it, let alone do it. Obedience to God's word is what makes us fully human; we want and need to learn to love to obey. God's law is the trellis that supports our love growing. Obedience equals freedom, for us and for our students, but it is God's grace that makes any of it possible.

### . . . PETRA ACADEMY STRIVES TO AWAKEN LOVE AND WONDER IN OUR STUDENTS . . .

Our students run the risk of going through life in a state of slumber. Many have been lulled to sleep perhaps by a disengaged family life, a culture full of distractions, or perhaps a church that has sadly exchanged discipleship for entertainment.

Most of all, students—like all of us—are preoccupied with what they love, and what they love is not always good. James K.A. Smith, in his book, *Desiring the Kingdom*, sums up the quest of education in this question:

“What if education was primarily concerned with shaping our hopes and passions—our visions of ‘the good life’—and not merely about the dissemination of data and information as inputs to our thinking? What if the primary work of education was the transforming of our imagination rather than the saturation of our intellect? And what if this had as much to do with our bodies as with our minds? . . . What if education wasn't first and foremost about what we know, but about what we love?”

The good news is that our students have been lulled only to *sleep*, not to *death* (at least not yet). Like Sleeping Beauty, they need to be awakened to life through a kiss of love *from beyond*—engagement full of affection, wisdom, and understanding. Plato said that when we expose students to order, rhythm, and harmony, they will not only choose them, but also love them. As we expose them to size and scale, to precision and detail, to story and language, they will wonder—and wonder, said Plato, is the beginning of philosophy.

But philosophy to be true must be able to be lived, which is why we have teachers—those who have not only given their lives to learning and loving these philosophies, but are striving to *live* by them as well. As co-heirs of the promise given, as disciples of what has been taught, and as fellow human beings desperate for the same grace and redemption, our teachers have been awakened by Christ’s love and wonder, and strive to do the same in our students.

. . . BY TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE WITH HUMILITY . . .

Teachers occupy a unique position of presence and relationship with their students. Our teachers make use of time-tested means to teach, and are held accountable by God and our school for what they teach. And yet, while they are under authority, they are also *an* authority in the lives of the students, and are worthy of respect from those they seek to teach as well as from those who have asked them to teach *in loco parentis*, that is, “in the place of (but not in place of) parents.”

Good teachers do not teach *subjects*; they teach *students*—not just the *what*, but the *why* and the *how* as well. Good teachers teach students to observe, doing so out of a particular framework or story of the world, which affects how they and their students interact. They teach students that identity comes not from *within* but from *without*, that if students will observe the world around them—through their senses, with their curiosity,

in their context and environment—they will find their place in it with help from parents and teachers guiding them to such discovery.

Observation requires humility—to *receive* rather than to *project* meaning, to *respond* rather than to just *react* to an idea. To observe with humility is the result of a student recognizing that she does not know something, which Socrates calls the beginning of wisdom. To observe instead with arrogance is the completion of ignorance.

. . . THINK WITH REASON . . .

While we are emotive beings, we also can be and are called to be rational ones. Perhaps a better word here is “reasonable” to define a thought or action that utilizes both emotion and rationale.

But more than just reasonable thought is our need for *right* thought; that is, for “obedient” thought, for surely there is thought that is “wrong” and “disobedient.” Thomas Aquinas makes this distinction when he challenges us to “love truth and hate falsehood”—you can’t do both. We are to love truth because all truth is God’s truth, but it requires effort and is not easy since we are fallen. Jiminy Cricket got it wrong. We should be careful to “always let your conscience be your guide,” because our conscience is fallen like everything else and needs redemption.

To think with reason means to think God’s thoughts after him, to “set our minds on things above” as Colossians 3 reminds us. To recognize that words still carry weight and that that matters; to embrace that seeds of charity must be sown in order to grow souls that grow into logical emotive beings.

. . . ARTICULATE WITH CHARITY . . .

Mechanics of expression are important, which is why we attempt to teach students to learn to submit

to, practice, and emulate good forms. These good forms come by way of what might be thought of as an apprenticeship of revision, in which innate ability is considered, but not made more important than good preparation for expression.

Teachers promote a care for words, a right thinking based on obedient logic, and a gentle but firm rhetoric that causes students to blossom like the fruit of the Spirit of God's word. Students are taught the importance of exegizing their audience as much as their content, understanding that the whole point of their presentation is for the persuasion and benefit of *others* rather than for themselves.

We implement the historic modes of persuasion—ethos (or character), logos (or content), and pathos (or appeal)—to affect emotion and experience. We study the craft of language for the beautiful use of it, not for its own sake, but for the sake of influencing the embrace of Aristotle's transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty. We practice and hone the ability to speak and awaken others by way of conviction, integrity, love, and good will for our audience. This leads to flourishing and any growth in Christ.

### ...FOR THE FLOURISHING OF HUMANITY...

Mankind flourishes when in proper relationship with the God who created him. Augustine speaks of this in *The City of God* when he speaks of the enculturation (or *paideia*) of students to become good citizens of the City of God within the culture of the City of Man. We believe that as we build good citizens for God's Kingdom, they will be good citizens of our country. Rather than Republicans or Democrats, we are ultimately called to be Monarchists!

What are the results of a flourishing humanity?

- Development of heart, mind, and body (illustration

of facility)

- A value for what is old, not because it is aged, but because it is timeless
- A value for what is new, not because it is novel, but because it is what God is doing
- A value for what is true, not because we care about who's right, but because we're called to care about what's right
- A value for what is good, not because we are, but because we've been redeemed to be
- A value for what is beautiful, not because it is optional, but because it's essential to human flourishing

### . . . THE RENOWN OF JESUS THE CHRIST.

“Renown” is the condition of being known or talked about by many people. We value what Jesus says because this—all of this—is for the renown of his name, not ours. The narrative story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation is the story of God's desire from Genesis to Revelation that we would be his people and he would be our God. Jesus the Christ—the very Son of God—is the crux of this story, and as it has always been His story, we want our story at Petra Academy to reflect that.

# *BLAKEY PRIZE IN FINE ART*

FIRST PRIZE: DRAWING

“TO HAVE AND TO HOLD”

EMILY JORDAN

WESTMINSTER ACADEMY, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE



# SPIRIT VS. FLESH

by Tracy Robinson, Hickory Christian Academy

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*Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do [God's] will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of [Jesus] seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys. —C.S. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters*

There is much talk these days about the deterioration of American culture, and so much finger-pointing about who is to blame for our current mess, that I thought I would share some things that I believe God has shown me in recent days. It seems that we have become so comfortable with sin in our nation that all lines have been blurred, and all boundaries have been removed. In our race toward “freedom,” we have ended in indulgences. This should not be all that surprising as Scripture warns us, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9) The path of humanity will always continue in a confusing and sinful direction when left to its own volition. Flesh cannot heal flesh. Only Spirit can do that.

One critical point to make is that Christians need to refocus and decide whom their king really is. Churchgoing people are some of the worst to rely on a government election to fix spiritual issues. It should be a foregone conclusion that none of the current (or past, or present) presidential candidates is the answer to the spiritual freefall in our culture. Neither is any single person, nor group of people, the primary enemy. Again, the Bible is clear on this subject.

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. —Eph. 6:12*

But, with all the confusion on what is or isn't sin, and what is or isn't acceptable behavior, I find it important to continue to seek Scripture for clarity (as opposed to human opinion). Now, before we enter into this conversation, there are some preconceived ideas that must be addressed. First of all, we will go under the assumption that God exists. Second, we will assume that the Bible is actually communication from God to all of humanity, spoken through a select few writers, over a span of thousands of years. We are confident that this is true for many reasons, not withstanding the fact that the message over all those years and multiple authors is amazingly consistent and accurate across thousands of recovered ancient documents.

*Please understand that if either of these points is in doubt, then there is no basis for determining sin. If God does not exist, then no one has the ultimate authority to determine what is right or wrong. Lying is sin because God says so. Murder is sin because God says so. Adultery is sin because God says so. If left up to man to determine, one may think adultery to be sin, while another finds it perfectly acceptable. Who is to say which is correct? God is the ultimate authority. Secondly, if the Bible is not an authentic word from God, then our faith has little to stand*

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on. How would we even know that Jesus existed, and what words He spoke? If we cannot take Scripture literally, then we are left in the impossible position to determine which parts are figurative or inaccurate, which leads us back to each man's interpretation.

So, going on our assumption that the Bible is truth, let's look at our current culture in light of Scripture. What we see is a rush toward acceptance of any lifestyle or behavior. The argument is often made that, "While I may be committing sin, aren't other things sinful as well? Who is to say that my sin is greater than yours? Doesn't God hate all of them equally? Besides, most of the lists of sins are in the Old Testament anyway, and Jesus freed us up from being held accountable for those in the New Testament, right?"

There are dozens of dangerous holes in these arguments, but I will point out just a couple. Paul tells us in Romans 6:15-18:

*What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

The grace that God has given us through the shed blood of Christ is not to be taken for granted or adulterated in licentiousness. The problem is that most people have no clue of the price that was paid for their sins, so instead of humble thankfulness, we respond with arrogant entitlement. Studying Scripture and understanding the nature of our Savior leads one to love Him to the point of complete submission, resulting in righteousness. Having a distant "head knowledge" of Jesus, but no real relationship with Him, often results in

a celebration of the flesh, disguised as living in "grace." As Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16-18,

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.*

Take special note of the phrase, "so that you may not do the things that you please." We must understand that our flesh (every one of us) craves sin (see Rom. 1:24-32, I Cor. 6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:3-6 to see if you qualify as a sinner). We must also understand that apart from the Spirit's rescue, we are powerless to fight it. Each person on earth is born in sin, and in greater detail, every person has certain sins which are more powerful in their lives than others. Some are born with a special tendency toward bursts of anger, some are born with tendencies toward gossip, some toward lying, some toward sexual sins, and so on. You don't have to think too hard to know which one has you captive.

A true biblical worldview says that I recognize my sin nature, I admit that certain sins (ultimately all of them) hold me captive, and I know that my own sinful flesh (nor the sinful world around me) cannot free me from this addiction. So I surrender myself to Christ, asking Him to rescue me from myself. I also know that even after the blood of Christ covers me, the battle between flesh and spirit will continue to rage within me, but my ultimate desire is to reject the flesh and embrace the Spirit.

It really comes down to that last phrase: *embrace the Spirit*. We can talk all day about whose sin is worse, and who is hypocritical in their approach to sin (all of us, by the way). Let's face it, when Christians address the sins of the world around them, we have a hard time determining who is really saved sometimes. In the

Bible, we see Jesus addressing sinners every day of his ministry in a very patient and loving manner, but still finishing with the phrase, “Go and sin no more”. In other words, He exhibited grace, while keeping a standard of holiness. But, we see the sins of our neighbors and we gossip about them, slander them, and belittle them. It is critical that we focus on our own holiness, before pointing out everyone else’s sin (Matt. 7:1-5). When we go there, we are not embracing the Spirit, but embracing the flesh instead.

So, that is what it all boils down to. What are you embracing? The argument over what is defined as sin was over about 2000 years ago. The New Testament lists of sinful behavior referenced above are pretty clear. In addition, the question over whether you and I are personally sinners is also very apparent. We are. So, the real issue in each of our lives, and in society as a whole, is our response to our sin problem. Are we embracing the Spirit, or are we embracing the flesh? If I know that I am a serial gossip, do I parade that fact around with pride, and ask everyone to love me anyway, even though I might be gossiping about them as well? Or, do I understand that God is offended by that behavior in my life, causing me to repent and desire cleansing that can only come from His great grace and mercy?

For me personally, I am the greatest sinner I know. I can think of no one else who falls short of God’s glory more often than me. However, that fact produces humility and shame in my heart. I don’t want to try to defend my sin nature. I want to change. I want to grow in my faith. I want to know my Savior in a deeper, more intimate way. And, I understand that when I hold fast to my sin, I cannot gain in my relationship with God, because, in His holiness, He cannot fellowship with sinful man. If I pridefully embrace my sins, I will never open up the door for Christ to restore me into beautiful fellowship with the Father.

*Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and you cannot look on wickedness with favor. —Hab. 1:13a*

*Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith. —Hab. 2:4*

In summary, here are some key points:

1. Humanity is caught in sin. Always has been. Always will be.
2. We should fully expect a world without Christ to act sinfully. It is our nature, like a duck to water or a pig to mud. Anything else would be abnormal.
3. Christians, of all people, should be the leaders in knowing Scripture, understanding their own sin nature, grieving their own spiritual failures, and repenting of their behaviors.
4. We all have a choice to embrace flesh or Spirit. God asks us to embrace Spirit, as defined in His word.
5. The Church’s response to the sins of our culture needs to be focused on loving others well, and pointing them to righteousness—not griping, gossiping, and arguing with them, which further alienates the lost world to the church. I agree that truth is at stake here, but you will never win the truth war with bitterness. Let God be angry with sin, and pass judgment as He sees fit. We have been called to truth in love.

*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ. —Eph. 4:14-15*

Our desire at Hickory Christian Academy is to be a true reflection of Jesus Christ, understanding truth, loving a lost world to repentance, and maintaining personal holiness in our daily lives. Each of our sin natures hinders this process, but ultimately, that is what we are embracing.

# THE DESKS SPEAK: THE UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHIES BEHIND OUR CLASSROOM SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

by Sadie Greever, Highlands Latin School

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“Why are the desks in your classrooms in straight rows? Why are all the desks facing the front of the room?” These common inquiries reflect those of many observers of the traditional classroom. A certain trivialization of the matter is common, especially when it seems like classroom seating arrangements are insignificant. However, there are concrete explanations for these questions available to the astute interlocutor. In fact, I propose the answers to these questions reveal that classroom seating arrangements actually reflect ones’ philosophy of teaching.

To begin, let us examine the seating arrangements found in the typical contemporary American classroom. Designations such as Four Squares, Horseshoes, and Clusters, though they sound like by-products of a child’s imagination, are actually the names of various seating arrangements. If this doesn’t stir an image in your mind, just imagine small groups of four desks pushed against one another so the students face their fellow peers. Perhaps another image that is easy to conjure is of a room where desks aren’t present at all, but have been replaced by round tables. Notably, the desks are conducive to *student-centered* learning, which is acutely obvious by the ergonomic tendency to face peers rather than the instructor. These types of desk arrangements have become so commonplace that a classroom with rows of straight desks actually presents itself as abnormal. Yet, a mere sixty years ago educators would have been rift over the thought of moving

## UPON FURTHER REVIEW A SPACE FOR REFLECTION

*Articles included here are intended to provide an opportunity for educators to review hidden assumptions about learning.*

desks out of their straight, tidy rows that faced the front of the room.

To what can we attribute this shift away from traditional seating? The central theories that led to this shift came from the European Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Romanticism was chiefly a rebellion against the intellectualism of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, or “Age of Reason” as it has been so deftly termed, embraced the idea that man could be improved through the faculty of reason. The Enlightenment theories promoted the idea that man’s nature is corrupt from birth and needs guidance, therefore a distrust of human nature prevailed. In stark contrast, Romanticism embraced the idea that perhaps man could make good choices completely uninhibited by outside sources. This idea purported that perhaps inner-goodness is natural. Following those presupposed convictions, if inner-goodness is natural, then the best thing for the human nature must be to leave it alone so it

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can flourish unencumbered by the corrupting tendencies of structure and society.

This influx of Romantic ideology so heavily influenced nineteenth- and twentieth- century philosophers and psychologists that the principle American universities for teacher education at the time, such as Teacher's College of Columbia University, universally came to accept these Romantic theories without question. These theories eventually became known as progressivism, the term we now use to refer to modern educational methods in American education. Even now, it is the general American belief that natural must mean better, just as most believe desks in circles must be better than desks in straight rows. Interestingly enough, one of the first evidences of Romantic theory pervading American educational theory was the unbolting of the desks from the classroom floor so that they could be arranged into student-centered groupings. Yet this has become so mainstream that today a classroom with straight rows stands out as backward and archaic to the uniformed observer.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, consider the traditional one-room schoolhouse of the previous century for a moment. All of the desks are nailed to the floor, therefore making a decision regarding desk arrangements obsolete for the teacher. Also, think of the way the teacher is teaching. The schoolmaster or schoolmarm is at the front talking to the students, placing examples on the board, and occasionally calling students up to the desk to work with them on an individual basis. Upon further meditation, one reaches the conclusion that this is a *teacher-centered* classroom. Students face the teacher, and thus learning is received from the teacher.

This presents a picture of the traditional philosophy found not only in American education, but also in Western education. This form of education finds its roots in the ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates, where the student is imparted knowledge from the teacher.<sup>2</sup> Our forefathers, children of the Enlightenment, showed their obvious distrust in human nature merely

by drafting the Constitution which called for a system of checks and balances.<sup>3</sup> This very system upon which our country was birthed is constructed upon the belief that man's nature needs guidance. The traditional forward-facing desks are a reflection of this deeper philosophy at work. This philosophy identifies the need for guidance and direction in order to educate well. It is the assumption that unguided students will not automatically choose the right thing if left to their own predispositions.

In conclusion, traditional straight desk rows represent the need for guidance on the assumption that the innate nature of the student needs to be molded and shaped. This guidance comes to the student via teacher-led instruction. The helter-skelter arrangements that now pervade the public education system represent the dominant American belief that natural must mean better, therefore education should be student-led, with the teacher present simply to act as a facilitator for the students' natural ability for learning. These explanations lend credence to the idea that desk arrangements reflect distinct philosophical beliefs that provide the foundation for learning.

## NOTES

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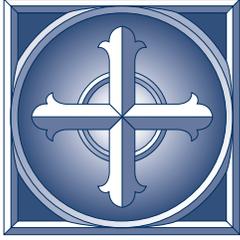
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