"SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO"

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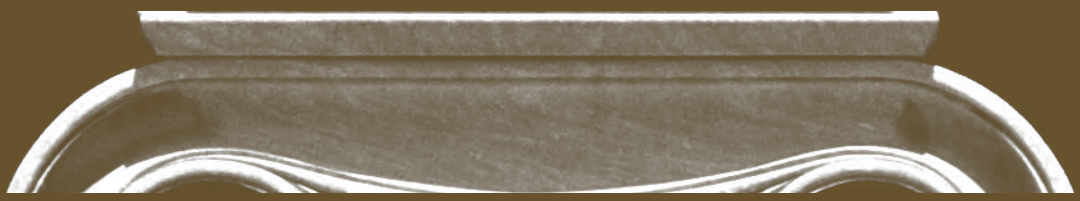

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Classical Christian Education:
A New "Old-Way"

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COULD AMERICA SURVIVE WITHOUT RELIGION?

by Robert P. George, Witherspoon Institute & Princeton University

Can freedom survive in a society in which most citizens believe that human beings, who are supposed to have inalienable rights, are merely material beings inhabiting a universe of purely material and efficient causality?

2017
REPAIRING THE RUINS
PLENARY SPEAKER

John Adams famously said that our Constitution was made "only for a moral and religious people and is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Was he right?

Perhaps the first thing to note is that our Constitution is, to borrow a phrase from Hayek, a "constitution of liberty." Under it, the power of government over the people is checked and limited, and the people enjoy a large measure of freedom. But freedom can, of course, be used for good or for ill. Freedom can be used wisely or irresponsibly.

Like the other Founding Fathers, Adams recognized that freedom does not guarantee virtue; yet the maintenance of freedom and the cultivation of its cultural conditions require virtue. Freedom itself is placed in dire jeopardy when free people become corrupt or foolish. It is also put at risk when fear, absent the virtue of courage, induces them to abandon freedom for the sake of security—be it economic or physical.

So, virtue is one cultural condition of freedom, and it is necessary to the establishment and preservation of freedom's other cultural conditions. Beyond that, there are other social goods—essential aspects of the common good of any political society—that require virtue among the people. When freedom degenerates into what the Founders called "license"—a counterfeit of true freedom—these goods, too, are placed in grave peril.

All of this may be common sense, but it was a sense that was by no means common when Adams and his fellow Founders launched what they themselves understood to be an "experiment" in republican government and ordered liberty. And it is a common sense that, as the conditions of contemporary intellectual life have made all too clear, can be forgotten. Indeed, it is a common sense that can be derided and mocked

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by people who regard themselves as too worldly, sophisticated, and enlightened to believe in things like morality and virtue. So in the face of modern nihilism (sometimes, paradoxically, masquerading as the most high-minded moralism) the defense of Adams's proposition takes on a kind of urgency.

IS RELIGION NECESSARY FOR MORALITY?

Let's look at Adams's proposition regarding virtue in the context in which he asserted it. Here are his words:

> *But should the people of America once become capable of that deep simulation towards one another, and towards foreign nations, which assumes the language of justice and moderation, while it is practicing iniquity and extravagance, and displays in the most captivating manner the charming pictures of candor, frankness, and sincerity, while it is rioting in the rapine and insolence, this country will be the most miserable habitation in the world. Because we have no government armed with the power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, and gallantry [by which Adams evidently meant sexual license] would break the strongest cords of our Constitution, as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.*

Among those intelligent, honest, and humble enough not to think themselves too sophisticated to agree with Adams that the common good and freedom itself depend on virtue, some will say, "Well, yes, virtue surely is required, but individuals—and even nations—can be virtuous even if they are not religious." So Adams, they maintain, should have said, "Our Constitution was made for a moral people, whether or not they are religious."

Are they right?

Adams was hardly alone among the Founders in viewing morality and religion as required for the success of their experiment with a constitution of liberty. In his Farewell Address, George Washington famously said:

> *Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity.*

So far, Washington has basically said what Adams said. But the Father of our Nation then turned specifically to the question whether we, as a nation, could get along without religion:

> *Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.*

I think this answer—which we have reason to believe was drafted by Alexander Hamilton and, I suspect, refers to Hamilton's political adversary Thomas Jefferson—is a good answer, though more can and should be said.

PERSONAL VS. NATIONAL MORALITY

The answer concedes that in the case of particular individuals, reason can indeed support virtue even in the absence of what he calls "religious principle." But he supposes that such persons are rare. Their minds are of a *peculiar* structure, and they are among the few

who, on top of that, have had the benefit of a *refined education*. What he calls "national morality" cannot be sustained by a few such people, even if they exist. Reason itself, and experience, teach us not to pin our hopes on virtue ungrounded in, or unsupported by, faith in God. Washington, like Adams, believed that reason, given man's fallen condition, was a bit too uncertain a trumpet, and that human passions of the sort that compete with virtues and lead us into error and sin are too powerful for reason to reliably prevail over them.

Washington and Adams were, to be sure, men of the Enlightenment—believers in the power of reason. And their Constitution was one that would test whether "societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force," to quote Hamilton's famous line from the first *Federalist Paper*. What's more, they certainly did not believe, as many ignorant people today seem to believe, that faith is the enemy of reason. But they *did* believe in the power and importance of faith and, indeed, in *the harmony* of faith and reason, when faith and reason are rightly understood.

So those of us who hold, as Adams and Washington held, that ours is a Constitution made for a moral and religious people, need not and should not deny that there are virtuous people, good citizens, among those of our neighbors who profess no religion, or for whom religious belief only hovers in the background of their consciousness. Many do muster the moral resources to avoid falling into the vices that Adams and Washington rightly viewed as fatal, should they become widespread, to a free society. Some are among those citizens whose selflessness and patriotism would enable them to volunteer for missions in which they might give what Lincoln described as "the last full measure of devotion."

And yet, dare we suppose that liberty-sustaining virtues can survive if the great mass of people over a great expanse of time lose or abandon a sense of the transcendent, the spiritual, the more-than-merely-human source of meaning and value? That is a proposition that we should, as Washington warned, "indulge with caution."

THE MORAL HEART OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

There is an additional reason for caution—a reason that goes to the distinctive nature of the American constitution of liberty. The Constitution bequeathed to us by men like Washington, Adams, and Jefferson effectuates a particular understanding of political order—one set forth with admirable clarity and candor in the Declaration of Independence. The moral heart of that understanding is the idea of God-given natural human rights.

> *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

The American proposition is that the basic rights that it is government's highest duty to protect and strict obligation to respect are not the gifts of kings or presidents, parliaments or congresses—or courts. They are not given to us by any human power; so no merely human power may legitimately transgress them or take them away. It is the duty of human government, rather, to protect and respect them.

Now this is not an affirmation that can be made only by Christians and Jews—heirs of the biblical tradition of ethical monotheism. Certainly Muslims, Sikhs, Baha'is, and people of other traditions of faith can make it. Even a Deist (in the old-fashioned sense, not the contemporary one) can make it. Jefferson, after all, speaking of slavery, said "I tremble for my country when I consider that God is just, and His justice will not sleep forever." (Jefferson

said this despite being a slaveowner—a fact that all college students today know, even if they know nothing else about Jefferson.)

But what about the non-theists?

NON-THEISM, MATERIALISM, AND TRANSCENDENCE

Well, there are non-theists and there are non-theists. There are non-theistic traditions (such as some forms of Buddhism) that recognize the spiritual nature of man. Typically, these traditions, though God is not part of the picture, assume the existence of transcendent reality in an economy in which the human person is subject to moral requirements and responsible for his actions. As more-than-merely-material creatures, human beings can have fundamental dignity—even sanctity—and be the subjects of rights and duties.

But things get murkier—quickly—when we consider forms of atheism that reject the transcendent and spiritual altogether, supposing that human beings are random products of meaningless forces being pushed around in a universe governed exclusively by material and efficient causes. In such a universe, human beings cannot truly have freedom of the will or capacities for more than merely instrumental rationality. How such creatures could possess dignity—much less sanctity—and be the bearers of unalienable natural rights is, to say the least, less than clear.

Given the sometimes extreme stresses and strains that inevitably come into the lives of nations as well as individuals, can we confidently say that the conditions of constitutional freedom—and thus freedom itself—would survive where the great mass of citizens had settled into believing that human beings, supposed subjects of inalienable rights, are merely material beings inhabiting a universe of purely material and efficient causality? That, it seems to me, is a proposition that should be indulged only with the very greatest caution.

TEXTS AND TIMING

by Douglas Wilson, Christ Church

2017
REPAIRING THE RUINS
PLENARY SPEAKER

I have been in the thick of the classical Christian school movement from the very start of it, and I like to think I have been around. I have been to all the ACCS conferences. I have browsed more vendor tables than Carter's got pills. I have visited numerous classical Christian schools, both the start-ups and the established ones. I have served on the board of Logos School from the beginning, have taught numerous classes at Logos, and in my role at New St. Andrews, have taught many alums of classical Christians schools (and home schools) from around the country. I am a close observer, and a big fan.

So if I were to make one *academic* criticism, what would it be?

There is a very pronounced tendency within the classical Christian school movement to emphasize texts over timing. What do I mean? When this problem happens, the badge of the classical education provided is the mere presence of the "great books" in the curriculum, and the sooner the better. As classical schools start to compete with one another (which can be healthy within limits), one way to do this is by moving the great books up to an earlier point in the curriculum. And this is how you wind up teaching Boethius to sixth-graders.

This in turn starts to create other problems. Ironically, to accelerate the pace of learning in this way is to disregard Dorothy Sayers' great insight on the *timing* relevance of each stage of the Trivium. A big part of the reason why classical education can get such powerful results when done right is that you deliver the right material at the right time. It is not enough to have the right tennis ball. It needs to hit the sweet spot on the racket. A thorough classical education in a Christian context is about both material and pacing. We are talking about both texts *and* timing.

One problem is that the students choke on it. And the problem is not the book itself, the problem is the timing. If material from the dialectic stage is pushed down into the grammar stage, the kids will not process it well. The

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same is true of material from the rhetoric stage pushed earlier. What would be edifying and enjoyable when taught at the appropriate time becomes at best a chore and at worst an affliction.

If the students stick around through their logic course in junior high, they will learn, or should learn, what is happening to them. The fallacy is called affirming the consequent. True classical learning is hard. This thing I am doing right now is hard. Therefore, this thing I am doing right now is true classical learning. But it followeth no way. Eating a bowl of driveway gravel is also hard, but that is not true classical learning either.

Some students don't make it through. They assume they are not good or smart enough to make the grade, or that classical education is a scam being run on parents who for some reason want to send their children to a school for show poodles. They leave with a bad taste in their mouth, soured on the whole thing. *Blecch*.

Other students make it through, but have simply done a difficult thing, which prepares them for the next difficult thing, which is admittance to a prestigious college. They do their chores because they are good kids and know that we were not put into this world for pleasure alone. They have a certain kind of smart going for them, a will-that-be-on-the-test? kind of smart, but they are not acquiring any kind of real *love* for what they are learning.

When they graduate from their classical Christian high school in this frame of mind, they do so believing that they have now "done that." It has been checked off the list. They have read Homer. Sure, they did it before they could mentally chew and digest and enjoy any of it, but they *did* it. When the prospect of going to a school like New St. Andrews is raised, they recoil. You expect me to do all that *again*? That reaction misses the point almost entirely, and it is an indicator that the school providing such alums may *also* be missing the point almost entirely.

But of course, a K–12 course of study is preparation for a lifetime of learning. The students are being given the tools of learning. They are practicing their tools on good materials, but those materials are capable of repaying return visits, and repaying them with interest. They can do so for the rest of their life.

In his great work, *Experiment in Criticism*, C.S. Lewis argues that a book should be rated by whether or not it attracts return readers. Who wants to read that book again? We do not evaluate algebraic skills in the same way. I learned certain things about math in high school that I still use today, but on rainy Saturdays I don't go back to browse through old math textbooks. That math skill—for most people at any rate—is something you learn, and then you use. There is a difference between learning such skills in high school, and being introduced to the Brandenburg Concertos in high school.

If someone dismissed an invitation to listen to a glorious piece of music because they had "done that" at some time in his life before, we might be excused for thinking that whatever he had been doing before, he had not done *that*.

So in my view, the fruit of a solid basic education is being challenged from *two* directions. The first is the obvious one. Those who fail to provide such an education are the adversaries of it. Students cannot receive what no one offers to give them. But a second challenge to classical education is coming from well-meaning classical educators, and it is being done in the name of classical education. There is a better way, one that pays close attention to *pacing*. The classroom should be life-giving milk for the students, and one of the things Scripture teaches us to do with milk is to not cook the kids in it (Ex. 23:19).

WHY A LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE IS COMPLETELY WORTH IT

by John Macias, St. Gregory's University

It just might help you become a more virtuous person.
And isn't that what it's all about?

But what are you going to *do* with that degree?

Every English major, music major, and philosophy major has learned to deflect or ignore this question. Then they grow up and start asking the same question of their own kids.

Turns out most Americans think the whole purpose of a college education is to get a job—to be marketable to potential employers. College, the theory goes, is really just the price of admission to meaningful and sustaining work.

In such a cultural climate, a liberal arts education seems to have no value at all. A literature degree will not teach you to fill out a balance sheet, and Aristotle will not help you change a tire. Such studies "bake no bread," as they say.

But the liberal arts in fact have plenty to offer us—in this Jubilee Year, I would like to suggest that liberal arts are an important tool precisely for cultivating the virtue of mercy.

How so? Well, mercy, as Aquinas explains, is the virtue whereby we are able to recognize another's pain and feel it as our own. He calls it a "heartfelt sympathy for another's distress, impelling us to succor him if we can."

John Macias *is the resident scholar at St. Gregory's University in Shawnee, OK.* *This article was originally published by Aleteia, October 10, 2016, at http://aleteia.org/2016/10/10/why-a-liberal-arts-degree-is-completely-worth-it/. It is reprinted by permission.*

Alasdair MacIntyre, in his book *Dependent Rational Animals*, echoes Aquinas in explaining that "to understand another's distress as our own is to recognize that other as *neighbor*" [emphasis mine]. So, if I am a merciful man, then I see each individual as my neighbor, deserving of sympathy when suffering, regardless of his relationship to me. This is precisely the lesson of the Good Samaritan of the Gospel.

Being an English major or a music major can contribute mightily to these facets of mercy as explained by Aquinas and MacIntyre. How? Well, the liberal arts are those branches of study and research ordered, not to some practical end, e.g., healing a broken bone or building computers, but to the attainment of truth for its own sake. These studies are, quite strictly, "pointless." They seek to discover the truth about reality simply to know it, because knowing the truth is what—beyond the balanced ledgers and the innovative codes written for our technologies—we are ultimately made for.

In the liberal arts, a central question concerns the nature of the human person. What is a human being, what are its powers, and what separates human persons from animals and plants? Philosophy and theology take a more universal scope, while literature, poetry, and the arts seek to concretize these systematic views of the human person. These arts, when correctly pursued, allow us to recognize the common nature that each and every human being possesses. Regardless of race, sex, religion, or economic status, all human beings seek after the same ultimate good.

Therefore, liberal arts help us recognize our shared humanity. They help us to understand who we are as persons, and to detect the things that cause our nature distress. They help us to take it a step further, not merely recognizing the suffering of others, but also understanding that the suffering person in fact has a relationship to us, regardless of who he is. The arts burnish empathy, which in turn drives action to improve our lives and the lives of those around us.

So the liberal arts—while they might not guarantee six digits upon graduation—are an important tool in developing the virtue of merciful regard, in expressing the human condition and then inspiring action to move mercy—and justice, and assistance, and human dignity—forward.

And that's precisely what we can do with such a degree.

HALF CUPS OF COFFEE

by Shawn A. Roberts, Classical Christian Academy

What victory stories do you share with your faculty, parents, students, and community? It is good to remember and share how our benevolent God has financially provided for our schools. We are also to honor others as evidenced by our trophy cases filled with awards and trophies which are cool and shiny. There is another type of victory that needs to be shared: victories of the heart.

The first time I read "Apple Nailing" by Paul David Tripp, my spirit leaped exclaiming "Yes, I want that!" For those unfamiliar with the article published in the Autumn 2013 *Classis*, Dr. Tripp states he is concerned with the structure of Christian schools and whether or not we are asking the law to do what only grace can accomplish in the hearts of our students. Classical Christian schools have a good reputation for decorum. This is to be commended. As administrators and teachers in classical Christian schools, there are behavioral standards and policies to guide our mission published in the Parent-Student Handbooks. These are important, but do we allow these rules to become like the law which reveals sin but will never deliver your children from it? Dr. Tripp says our students live, act, speak, and respond out of their hearts. This is true. If our hope is in "the right set of demerits, the right set of rewards, and a good system of consequences" relying on the structure to "change the life and character of a child", this will only produce hard, pulpy, dry inedible apples from the hearts of our students. To repeat, we are asking the law to do what only grace can. How do we reach our students' hearts and maintain handbook rules, decorum, and academic integrity? Do we sacrifice the heart on the altar of discipline? Or, do our students' hearts yield to the Holy Spirit and yearn for repentance when disciplined?

To answer these questions, we must ask one more: How does God reach my heart? Romans 2:4 instructs us that God's goodness leads us to repentance. Out of His lovingkindness, He reaches our heart. As a Good Shepherd, God leads His sheep toward green pastures for nourishment, still waters to quench our thirst, righteous paths to bring Him glory, and discipline to shape our heart. God desires the same for our students. His will is to use discipline to lead the student to repentance shaping their heart in the process. As disciplinarians in our schools, this is an awesome responsibility. Yet, as teachers and

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administrators, God has called us to this ministry. God loves each student, deeply. His Son died for that student to cure him from sin and death.

I asked one of our students to calligraph and frame my favorite passage from *Mere Christianity*. It hangs behind my desk. C. S. Lewis writes:

> *"But the great thing to remember is that, though our feelings come and go, His love for us does not. It is not wearied by our sins, or our indifference; and, therefore, it is quite relentless in its determination that we shall be cured of those sins, at whatever cost to us, at whatever cost to Him."*

I often tell the student that God loves you so much that He allowed them to get caught in sin and there is a cost. God is relentless in His pursuit of us because of His great love for us. He loves you! So do your parents. So do I.

Am I reflecting God's goodness? is the question that guides my words and actions during a disciplinary event. If not, then I need to repent. There have been those times as well. Do you ever get frustrated with a student because they are not responding "out of the heart" as we want them to respond? I hope you nod your head yes. It's okay. Just repent and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. He will. It is His promise.

God is intimately involved in every act of discipline at our schools, for the hearts of our students are at stake.

Our teachers love our students! It is the one thing I express to every family. One year I noticed our faculty had become frustrated with a couple of students. After asking questions, praying, and reflecting, the Lord reminded me that He has established a hierarchy with boundaries. The hierarchy for discipline is teacher then administrator. We are both to partner with the parent in the spirit of "in loco parentis". I realized that our faculty were overreaching their established boundary. The faculty were giving too many warnings, too many talks in the hallway, and the students were not responding rightly. The proper thing to do was for the faculty to send the student to the office sooner. I trained on biblical discipline, outlining responsibilities and boundaries for faculty, administration, and parents. Because our faculty love our students, there are times where they feel the students are their own. But they are not. God has given those children parents. The principle is the same with sheep. Sheep who go beyond the established boundaries experience danger and hardships. When teachers and administrators go beyond God's established hierarchal boundaries it often manifests in frustration and only produces hard, pulpy, dry, inedible apples in the student's heart. We are treading where God did not intend. Teachers should be quick to address the sins of the classroom and know their established boundary. The same is true for administrators. Then we both can delight in the students.

I recently had a situation where the heart of a student was not being reached. I was asking all the right questions, actively listening to the

student, and seeking the Holy Spirit for understanding and guidance. The Lord proved His faithfulness, reminding me that I was not the student's father. I excused the student from my office and called her dad. He was in the area and drove right down. I explained the situation and allowed dad and daughter to use my office to hug, cry, correct, and pray together. This young lady needed her dad. Only he could reach her heart. It was beautiful. It is how God has designed the family and our schools to operate. What if I had not called dad to the rescue? The end result would be hard, pulpy, dry inedible apples. She is one of our heart victories!

As custodians of our school's culture, we are to protect academic integrity. Often the student is aware of the consequence of cheating or plagiarism as outlined in the handbook. He or she knows they will get a zero on the assignment and perhaps even a paddling depending on the age of the student.

There came a knock on my door. A teacher was holding a paper in hand. I knew exactly what was up—plagiarism, by a rhetoric student. It was after school and the student had gone home. Do we call the student and parent informing them of the consequence? If we do, the end result would be hard, pulpy, dry inedible apples. Because integrity is a matter of the heart, we prayed asking the Holy Spirit to do His work in the student's heart. That student had a restless night and ended up telling her parents that she had plagiarized a paper. She then called the teacher at home and confessed, though it was late in the evening. The teacher cried with the student, forgave the student, and informed the student that I was in the know, and that we had prayed for her asking for God's will to be accomplished. We met with the student and parents the next morning. It was beautiful because God was at work in the heart of the student and His Holy Spirit led the student to repentance and shaped her heart in the process. I love this student and we have a wonderful relationship though she is a young adult now. She is one of our heart victories!

The students know that I love them. They also know that I will never judge or hold a sin against them. Jesus warns us of that. I call it "sticks and logs." I let the student know that we are all sinners saved by grace, and yes, I have sinned and made foolish choices. These are covered by God's grace and mercy, and have become an associate headmaster despite these adolescent acts. I often reflect on my frame when I was in 7th or 8th grade. I will tell stories of the knuckle-headed, impulsive, and foolish things I did, just like they do. One memory stands above most. I was sitting in my chair waiting for English to begin. The teacher was not yet present and I noticed a rubber stamp ink pad sitting on her desk (you know where this is going if you were ever a 7th grade boy). I thought it would be funny to slide the desk chair out, lay the open ink pad on the seat, then slide the chair back hoping the teacher would sit on it. And that is exactly what I did, and exactly what the teacher did. My impulsive ways continued and culminated with me receiving a paddling by my principal, in 7th grade. This paddling redirected my path, thank God. Transparency can be good, and bad. It calls for wisdom —so be careful what stories you share as you might find a whoopee cushion in your chair!

Transparency helps to establish honesty in a relationship and is necessary for discipline. If we are going to reach the student's heart, then the student must be honest and transparent which is difficult, even for us. This is why building relationship with the students is critical, and relationship takes time. I once asked a faculty member, a former pastor, how I could become a better leader. I expected the feedback to be fruitful but the response surprised me. He replied, "Have half cups of coffee." How long does it take to drink a half cup of coffee? 10 minutes? He encouraged

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me to spend more time with the students even if just a half cup of coffee's worth. This counsel pays dividends! The sheep know the voice of the Good Shepherd because there is relationship and administrators who handle discipline must have relationship with the students. But it takes time.

There are two places in Hebrews the word *consider* is used. In the Greek, the word is katanoeö and commands us to set some time aside and seriously dwell on this personhood. In 3:1 we are commanded to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus" and 10:24 admonishes us to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works." Do we set some time aside and seriously dwell on a student, asking God how we can spur that student toward love and good works? As administrators, we ask our teachers to consider the frame of the student. So must we. We must *consider* our students. One of my favorite passages in Scripture describes an intimate conversation between Jesus and Peter as they take a walk on the beach after breakfast. Can you imagine? On this walk Jesus is asking Peter deep heart issues: "Do you love me, Simon?" Jesus is the Master teacher, and He provides an example of how to reach someone's heart . . . go on a walk with them. Jesus *considers* Peter. Sometimes a student simply needs to go on a walk and talk. It is during these times where God is wanting to ask the student deep heart issues. There is a heart victory waiting!

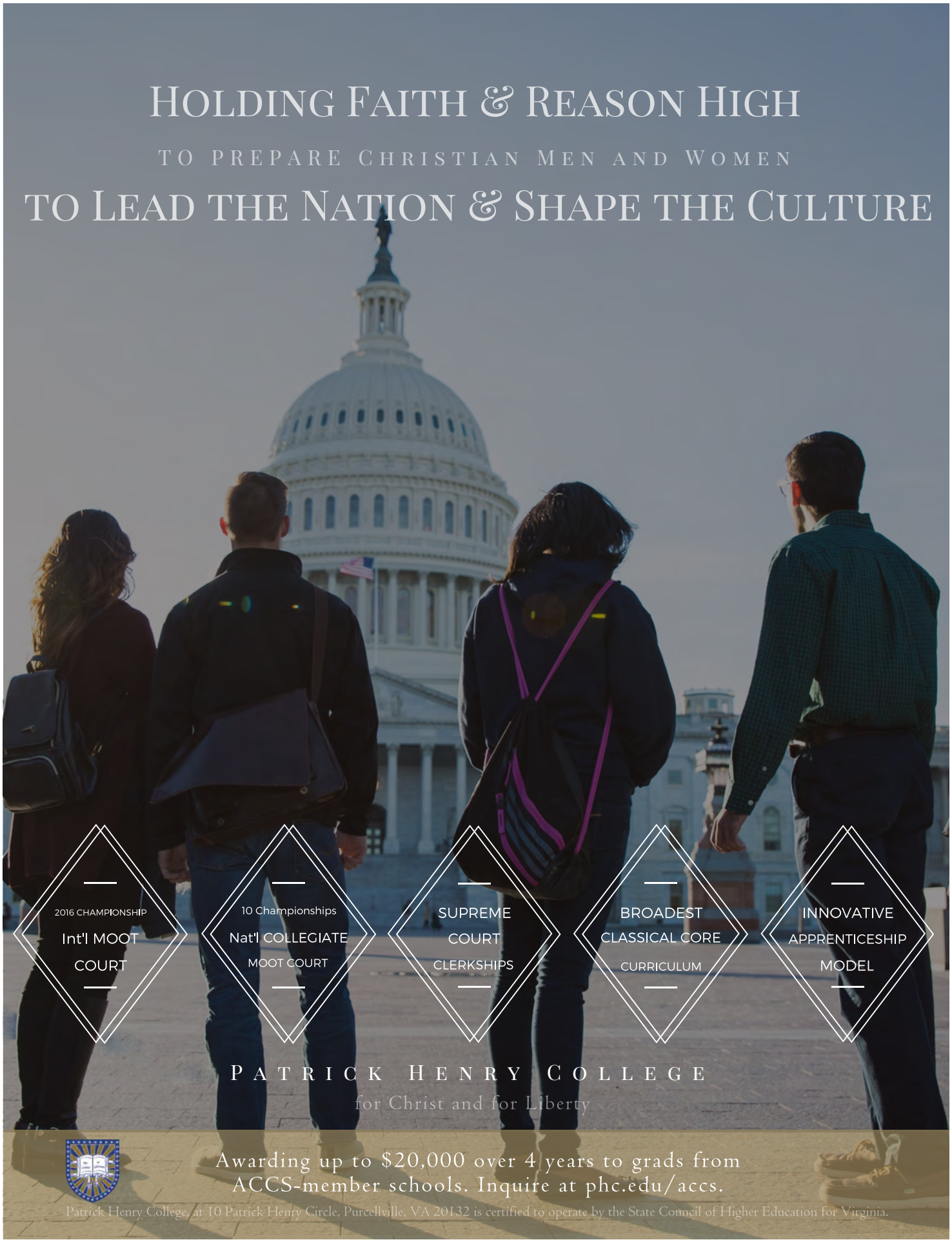
Despite all these efforts, there are times a student needs to be dismissed from the school. One student was asked to leave the school due to behavioral issues. It was the right decision. Just as we believe that every student should have a classical Christian education, I believe this student needed to be in our school. However, my headmaster and I would not compromise in his misbehavior and rebellion. After one year, the dismissed student and I met for lunch a number of times. I was able to ask deep heart issues. God used this dismissal to reach the heart of the student who was admitted back into the school. He is one our heart victories!

I appreciate Dr. Tripp's concern for Christian schools. Like the law, our policies and handbooks reveal sin, but only redemption provides the cure. I encourage reading "Apple Nailing" with your faculty and coaches so our schools may be a culture of grace and where heart victories are won.

Here's to half cups of coffee!

NOTES

1. "Apple Nailing", *Classis,* Volume XX, Number 3, Autumn 2013, p. 2.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DO NOT FORSAKE THE ASSEMBLY

by Ron Gilley, Trinitas Christian School

If you could get the attention of your whole school for ten minutes every morning, what would you say? What would you do to make the best use of that time? What would you do during that ten minutes to make an impression on your students that would last all day or all week or even a lifetime?

Every morning students stream into your school from different places, their last exchange with mom or dad sticking as tightly to their faces as the remnants of the jelly-slathered toast they ate on the way to school. How do you turn that page and get them all into the same story? How do you call them into the school community and prepare them for the day ahead?

There is no better way to start a school day than to gather everyone together first thing in the morning and spend a short, purposeful time as a school worshiping and dedicating the day to the Lord. For the past eighteen years every school day at Trinitas Christian School has started with ten minutes of worship that we call, simply, Morning Meeting.

Most classical Christian schools are made up of dozens or even hundreds of students from different familial, social, experiential, and theological backgrounds. Calling all of these students into a common community—one that forms a unique bond between them and sets them apart as members of something distinct and other—is imperative to a unified school culture. In fact, if we fail to create a unique community and culture within our schools, we run the risk of being no more than a loose collection of factions all inhabiting the same building. Indeed, failure to begin each day together means that each class begins its day in its own way, necessarily making it distinct from every other class from the outset of the day. Beginning each day with a short assembly, however, a time of corporate worship that draws students from diverse backgrounds and experiences together and orients them toward a common purpose and love, is a solid foundation upon which to build a tight community and sweet culture in our schools.

Furthermore, calling students into community by practicing a daily liturgy not unfamiliar to orthodox Christians from a multitude of different denominations, but unique to the school itself, establishes for students

Ron Gilley *is the headmaster of Trinitas Christian School, an ACCS-accredited school in Pensacola, Floria. Learn more about Trinitas at http://trinitaschristian.org.*

and teachers, not a community in competition with the ones they belong to in their churches and homes, but one that, rather, shares the language of those communities while still being unique to the school. Beginning the day in an assembly where worship takes place according to a unique liturgy, then, causes students to focus on those things they hold in common as orthodox Christians. This unique liturgy to begin each day can give your students a reference point that draws them closer together. You might liken this idea to your own family worship or family devotions, or even to your family table where you begin and end each day together with a family meal.

Very much the same way your family table reminds members of the family that you all belong to each other, that you are accountable to each other, so a morning assembly at your school will do the same for students and teachers. When we are members of a community and are reminded of that often through the things we say and do together, through the beliefs we profess and act upon, we become accountable to one another; we hold each other to a common standard that we have accepted as our own. One doesn't recite the historical creeds of the faith with his friends each morning and then live like the devil before them the rest of the day. One doesn't answer catechisms and memorize Scripture and sing Psalms and pray prayers together in community without expecting to be reminded of those things throughout the day. Common confession of a common faith in morning assembly, and then common action upon that faith throughout the day at school becomes the standard we hold each other to as we live our days in community with each other.

And so the actual liturgy of a morning assembly, what we recite and pray and sing together, is vital to building, growing, and strengthening the community in a certain direction. At Trinitas, we use a few key components in our Morning Meeting, strung together in a simple order that we maintain with only slight variation, to set our students' feet on a common path each morning. We have codified these components in their order and compiled them into a book, or Morning Meeting Guide. Actually, there are three Morning Meeting Guides as we maintain a three year rotation through the themes God's Character, Creation and Providence, and Redemption. Each student and teacher is given a Morning Meeting Guide at the beginning of the school year, and parents are able to purchase them as well. All the components of Morning Meeting are laid out in print this way as in an order of worship at a church. Here are the components of Morning Meeting at Trinitas in order and with a brief explanation of each:

SCRIPTURE READING

Each school day has its own reading that follows not only the theme for that year, but also the sub-themes for the month and week. Each reading is accompanied by a short exposition and/or exhortation that is not printed in the Morning Meeting Guide and generally does not extend beyond one minute. The main goals for the exhortation are application and encouragement.

CATECHISM (M, W, F)

Over the years we have put together a catechism based mostly on the Westminster Shorter Catechism but that reflects a non-denominational position for our school where as many as thirty-five different churches are sometimes represented within the student body.

CONFESSION OF APOSTLE'S OR NICENE CREED (T, TR)

We confess both creeds as excellent expressions of the Faith that can be agreed to by anyone who can sign our Statement of Faith. We memorize and recite them unapologetically: one in the first semester and the other in the second. These confessions alternate days of the week with the catechism questions.

SCRIPTURE RECITATION

Each month the entire student body learns a passage of Scripture together. We work on the passage together during Morning Meeting through repetition in unison, at first, and then recitation in unison by the last week of the month. 1 Corinthians 13 and Exodus 20:1–17 are two of our favorites. Because we use a three-year rotation, students graduate with some foundational passages of Scripture hidden in their hearts.

SINGING

Each day we sing a Psalm or hymn of the faith together. These, too, are selected for the year and the theme ahead of time and are printed in the Morning Meeting Guide with the music. Our music teacher and choir director uses his couple minutes each morning to teach the parts of each song. It takes a few weeks to get it down because he has only a couple minutes each morning, but we usually are able to learn the parts to each song and sing them beautifully by the end of the year.

PRAYER

We end the liturgical portion of our Morning Meeting by reciting a prayer in unison. We have a beautiful school prayer, but we also have eight to a dozen additional prayers from various sources that we rotate through during the year.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Of course, everyone wants to make an announcement when the whole school is gathered together. We end our Morning Meeting with as few announcements possible, mentioning only the two or three most important items and keeping the details to a minimum. We then dismiss with the exhortation to love God and neighbor and to go in peace.

DOXOLOGY

At the end of each day, the entire student body gathers back in our Grand Hall to sing the Doxology as a way of closing out the school day. We see this way of closing the day as the necessary other book-end for our day at school.

The reasons you can cite for not conducting a morning assembly at your school are probably many and varied. Two of the biggest reasons I have heard for not having a school-wide assembly each morning are (1) the idea of it becoming a worship service in competition with students' churches, and (2) it takes up too much time. To the former, I have already spoken but will add that any liturgy or worship components you put in place must represent first the school's statement of faith and second the constituent families who have signed that statement of faith. Focus on the things Trinitarian Christians agree on, and do it in such a way that you build the appetites of your students for real, full worship at their churches. Complaints about Morning Meeting at Trinitas have been so rare, superficial, and easily resolved that they are hardly worth mentioning. To the latter, I concede that time is an issue—it always is. The answer at Trinitas was to begin the school day ten minutes early: we begin at 7:50 am. We also work very hard to keep the duration of Morning Meeting to ten minutes. This commitment requires planning well, starting on time, not being given to superfluous commentary on the Scripture reading, and keeping the announcements to the bare-bones minimum.

Perhaps the Trinitas Morning Meeting model won't work for every school, but doing nothing together and instead letting each class start the school day on its own is at best an opportunity lost, and at worst the very undermining of community and culture within your school. In other words, a choice to do nothing at all to start each school day is still a choice for a certain type of daily liturgy—you simply will have left the decision to someone else about what kind of liturgy it is.

THE WORLDLINESS, DEATH, AND SALVATION OF IVAN ILYICH

by Monte Jay Knetter, Baldwin Christian School

"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." –Proverbs 14:12.

Blinded by sin and selfishness, many men tragically fail to recognize this truth. Death is mankind's great curse, the just penalty for his rebellion against God. Yet God's redemptive power is greater than sin. Consider mankind's greatest sin: deicide. The maker and sustainer of the universe entered His creation. God deserved honor and worship, but the pinnacle of His creation, that which He made and formed to bear His image, murdered Him. God took this unimaginably wicked sin and used it to undo the curse, to free man from sin and the clutches of the devil, and to bring mankind into a place of new life. This proved once and for all that God's redemption is greater than even humanity's greatest sin.

Yet God does not just redeem sins; in His power He is capable of redeeming the just consequences of man's disobedience. In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich,* Leo Tolstoy showed how God can use death, the penalty of sin, to bring life and free a foolish and worldly man from the clutches of sin.

"Ivan Ilyich's life had been most simple and commonplace—and most horrifying."[1] Ivan is like most men and most men are worldly, self-indulgent, selfish, and sinful. To live a commonplace life in our fallen world is to live a life apart from Christ, a life that can only end in death and damnation. It is to live, in a word, a horrifying life.

Throughout his life Ivan pursues ease and pleasure. This keeps him from developing meaningful relationships with others. For example, he diminishes his wife to a cook, housecleaner, and partner in bed.[2] She, being a living and breathing woman, is both unwilling and incapable of being reduced to this role. As a human being with free volition she interferes with his pleasant life. For this reason he makes his job the center of his life. At work Ivan attempts to abstract himself from himself and live his life passively. He does this by focusing on the tasks at hand while ignoring their significance and the people that his decisions affect.

Ivan also seeks solace in mindless entertainment. This selfish and shallow approach to life is best embodied in his love of cards. Whist is his central pursuit and consumes the majority of his free time. Why does Ivan love it so much? It is pleasant and it requires nothing of him.

The faults of Ivan are obvious to most readers, but Ivan is completely blind to them. Why is this? Everything Ivan does is approved of by those in his society. Given this he has no reason to doubt their morality. Ivan is attracted to his fellow man's approval like a moth to light.[3] This is a startling image for when a moth attains its object and reaches the flame it loses its life. In the same way, attaining a worldly society's approval can only come at the cost of losing one's soul. This is the situation

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Tolstoy in his study, 1908.[1]

that Ivan is in when his health begins to deteriorate: he has gained the world, but has forfeited his soul.

While Ivan is healthy it is easy for him to ignore the fact that he is in a state of sin and damnation. But illness soon makes him confront his mortality and the way he has lived his life. While he was healthy, cards were his greatest care and pleasure. This changes as his illness progresses. At one point during his illness Ivan misplays a trick and loses a hand. This would have been bad enough, but Ivan soon realizes that this doesn't even bother him. After all, what is one lost trick when one is confronting death? This apprehension terrifies him.[4]

Before his illness, Ivan was able to abstract himself from his job and his family. However, as his illness progress Ivan is forced to contemplate his death. This leads Ivan to the recognition that he is more than an abstraction. Contemplating the logical proof "Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal" Ivan agrees that it is a valid syllogism, but also sees at once that he himself is more than a mere syllogism. He is a man with a past, a man with hopes, a man who has experienced both pain and joy, a man that has loved and been loved—surely his existence cannot be reduced to this cold, hard fact of logic![5] In order to maximize his tranquility, Ivan had been striving to abstract himself from his life. In contemplating his death, Ivan comes to realize that he is more than a mere abstraction.

The growing physical pain that Ivan experiences begins to lead him to question more aspects of his life, but the approval of his fellow man prevents him from discovering the truth. " 'Perhaps I did not live as I should have,' it suddenly occurred to him. 'But how could that be when I did everything one is supposed to?' he replied and immediately dismissed the one solution to the whole enigma of life and death, considering it utterly impossible."[6] Ivan's failure to admit his faults keeps him from entering new life. He cannot discover the real purpose of life before admitting that he has been chasing a false purpose; he cannot have forgiveness without first admitting that he is wrong.

On the last day of his life Ivan finally admits that he has not lived how he ought to have lived. For a while this fills him with fear—he has lived a false and wicked life and there is now no time to make amends and live as he ought to live! This despair is graciously short lived. As Ivan seeks truth he quickly finds it. "Yes, all of it was simply *not the real thing*. But no matter. I can still make it *the real thing*—I can."[7]

What is the real thing? It is not found in religious observation. When Ivan receives last rites he immediately declares this is "*not the real thing*."[8] He has a vague sense that the "real thing" has to do with following his conscience and that it was wrong to have suppressed the natural goodness that he used to have. This is no

solution to this dilemma but rather begs the question: how can he retrieve what he has lost?[9]

It is only when his son kisses his hand that Ivan finds the "real thing." What is the "real thing"? It is love—specifically, gracious love given to a sinner in spite of his sin. Receiving this unmerited love transforms and regenerates Ivan. He goes from hating his wife to pitying and forgiving her. Instead of clinging to his life for his sake he seeks to die for the sake of others. But what of his fear of death? "What death? There was no fear because there was no death. Instead of death there was light."[10]

Death, that which brings an end to life, is used by God to bring life to Ivan. Facing his death forces Ivan to reevaluate his life and admit that his life was not true or good. After he concedes this he is able to enter into everlasting life by means of his death.

In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* we see the mystery of redemption and the power of God to redeem the worst of things and the most foolish of men. This work should challenge us to see ourselves in Ivan and examine the unexamined parts of our life. It is appointed unto every man to die. Any fool can see this in the face of death; a wise man will contemplate it when he is brimming over with health. Am I living as I ought to live? On what basis do I even answer that question? Am I basing my righteousness on that of Jesus Christ or the applause of my peers? Have I repented of my vain and sinful pursuits? Life is waiting for us, but we can only enter it by dying to ourselves. Reading this novella should lead us to seek our life in Christ now and not wait until it is too late.

NOTES

1. Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 49.
2. Ibid, 58.
3. Ibid, 50.
4. Ibid, 82.
5. Ibid, 93.
6. Ibid, 120.
7. Ibid, 132.
8. Ibid, 128.
9. Ibid, 126-127.
10. Ibid, 133.

PHOTO

1. CREATED/PUBLISHED: [1908 May]; CREATOR: Prokudin-Gorskii, Sergei Mikhailovich, 1863–1944, photographer. REPOSITORY: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leo_Tolstoi_v_kabinetie.05.1908.ws.jpg

HOW I ALMOST LOST THE BIBLE

by Gregory Alan Thornbury, The King's College

Had it not been for the first editor of Christianity Today, *I likely would have gone the way of liberal scholar Bart Ehrman.*

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I was born at the Evangelical Community Hospital in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania—a fact that once prompted a friend of mine to say, "You're evangelical born, evangelical bred, and when you die, you'll be evangelical dead." My father, John Forrest Thornbury, was the model of a country parson, serving as the pastor of Winfield Baptist Church, a historic congregation in the American Baptist tradition, for 44 years.

My childhood environs prefigured what has become my life's passion: the relationship of Christian faith to higher education. Lewisburg is home to Bucknell University, an elite private college whose alumni include two evangelical luminaries: Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, and Makoto Fujimura, acclaimed contemporary painter. Several years ago, Tim told me that he had occasionally attended my father's church while at Bucknell.

Founded by a Baptist association, Bucknell originally existed to further the cause of Christ. Writing to fellow churches across Pennsylvania, the association's leaders explained that through Bucknell, they sought "to see . . . the cause of God, the honor and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom promoted in all our bounds, and spreading far and wide until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ." Bucknell held its first classes in the basement of the First Baptist Church in the fall of 1846.

The school's reputation loomed large in our community, but like so many other premier U.S. colleges and universities, it slowly abandoned orthodoxy. Today, you would be hard-pressed to find anything on Bucknell's website about its origins as a Christian institution. As I grew up, perhaps unconsciously I was aware of this fact: faith is something that can be lost.

Gregory Alan Thornbury *is president of The King's College and the author of* Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry *(Crossway).* *This article was originally published in the Jan/Feb 2015 issue of Christianity Today and is reprinted by permission. Receive a free 6-month subscription to CT magazine by visiting: http://www.christianitytoday.com/orderct/ACCS.*

Still, because of my father, I heard the gospel faithfully preached every Sunday. My mother cooked bacon and eggs for me every morning and read to me passages from Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Henry, and Scottish minister Robert Murray M'Cheyne. But John and Reta Thornbury weren't fundamentalists. My father wrote biographies of Reformed evangelist Asahel Nettleton and missionary David Brainerd, but he also kept the house supplied with records by Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jerry Reed, and Marty Robbins. And he never came home from the newsstand without bringing some comic books for me.

I professed faith and was baptized at age 9. My father had been nervous baptizing me, saying that I should be buffeted about by the world more before being baptized. I remember him citing as support Edwards, who said that authentic child conversions are rare. He was right. On every level, I seemed to be a fine Christian young person. I even preached my first sermon at age 14 to a statewide Sunday school convention, but I had no business doing so.

After high school, I attended a Christian liberal arts college. In the first semester of my freshman year, I signed up for a course with a brilliant, articulate, recently minted DPhil graduate of Oxford University. The textbook for our introduction to the Bible course was *Jesus: A New Vision*, by Marcus J. Borg, a prominent fellow of the Jesus Seminar. The scholarly project intended to discover "the historical Jesus" apart from creedal commitments or church teaching.

In that volume, Borg coolly explained that Jesus had never claimed to be the Son of God and had never thought of himself as Savior. We learned that the Bible was a pastiche of traditions and sources, cobbled together mainly in the second century. Our task as biblical interpreters was to unravel what was "authentically Jesus" from mythology and church tradition.

In a subsequent course on the synoptic Gospels, we

Photo by Brad Guice

read works from Robert W. Funk, the founder of the Jesus Seminar. We learned how to do form and redaction analysis, a method of study that assumes the author of a biblical text is motivated by a theological agenda rather than by reporting what he had seen. We simply "knew" that the book we were holding in our hands did not have a direct connection to the apostles whose names were associated with the Gospels and Epistles.

For me, this dose of higher criticism was nearly lethal. Any sense that the Bible was divinely inspired and trustworthy, or that the creeds had metaphysical gravitas, started to seem implausible. The best I could muster was that, somehow mystically, perhaps Jesus was the Christ, existentially speaking. I was approaching something close to New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman's own story of losing faith.

PHILOSOPHER'S DEFENSE

When I told my father what I was thinking, he was alarmed. He recommended different apologetics works that defended biblical authority. I sloughed them off. Keep in mind that this was an era before figures such as Craig Blomberg, N. T. Wright, and Luke Timothy Johnson had gained notoriety among evangelicals and had written their best work on the historical reliability of the Scriptures.

Then Dad had a brainstorm. He knew that I was enamored with modern philosophy. So one day when I phoned home, he said, "There's an evangelical theologian who might interest you. His PhD is in

philosophy. He believes the Bible is inerrant. His name is Carl F. H. Henry. Find the volumes of *God, Revelation, and Authority* in your library, and read them before you decide to give up the faith."

Soon after, I walked down the long staircase at the college library, sat down on the floor in the stacks, and pulled out *God, Revelation, and Authority*. It was my own tolle lege—"take up and read!"—moment of crisis. The first lines of the first chapter of the first volume rang out to me:

> *No fact of contemporary Western life is more evident than its growing distrust of final truth and its implacable questioning of any sure word.*

That was me. I kept reading for days on end. I cried and kept searching, and genuine faith began to awaken.

Henry helped secure my faith because he was doing more than responding tit-for-tat to higher critics of the Bible's historical reliability. Henry did that, but he went one step further: He brought philosophical gravitas to *God, Revelation, and Authority*. His focus was broad. He addressed epistemology—how we can know the truth, which was my primary concern as an undergraduate philosophy student.

I had come within a whisker of losing my faith. But because Henry was a philosopher defending biblical authority, I rallied.

Humanly speaking, had it not been for the first editor of *Christianity Today*, the theologian with a titanic brain and a journalist's pen, I could have gone the other way. Henry showed me how to be both a scholar and a follower of Jesus. From that moment in my undergraduate days, I covenanted with God to help people like the 18-year-old version of myself—people who are on the boundary of leaving the church, and are

looking for just one good reason to stay.

Nearly one decade after my dark night of the soul, Paul House, C. Ben Mitchell, Richard Bailey, and I wrote Henry at his retirement home in Watertown, Wisconsin, to express our collective appreciation for and indebtedness to his work. He wrote back, and invited us to visit him and his wife, Helga. Our time together began a wonderful season of visits, correspondence, and mutual encouragement.

Carl combined head and heart. Both piety and doctrinal precision mattered to him. Once, in a PhD seminar, a student asked twentieth-century evangelicalism's leading thinker: "What is the greatest question being asked in contemporary theology?"

Carl didn't miss a beat: "The same question that the apostles posed to their generation: 'Have you met the resurrected Lord?' "

That gritty, realistic response took me back to that library and to the books that helped secure my faith in the resurrected Lord. And all these years later, it's clearer to me now more than ever: Carl F. H. Henry is still asking the right questions.

EDUCATION

by Webster's Dictionary

2017: "EDUCATION: THE ACTION OR PROCESS OF EDUCATING OR OF BEING EDUCATED; . . ."

. . .

1828: "EDUCATION, NOUN [LATIN EDUCATIO.] THE BRINGING UP, AS OF A CHILD, INSTRUCTION; FORMATION OF MANNERS. *EDUCATION* COMPREHENDS ALL THAT SERIES OF INSTRUCTION AND DISCIPLINE WHICH IS INTENDED TO ENLIGHTEN THE UNDERSTANDING, CORRECT THE TEMPER, AND FORM THE MANNERS AND HABITS OF YOUTH, AND FIT THEM FOR USEFULNESS IN THEIR FUTURE STATIONS. TO GIVE CHILDREN A GOOD *EDUCATION* IN MANNERS, ARTS AND SCIENCE, IS IMPORTANT; TO GIVE THEM A RELIGIOUS *EDUCATION* IS INDISPENSABLE; AND AN IMMENSE RESPONSIBILITY RESTS ON PARENTS AND GUARDIANS WHO NEGLECT THESE DUTIES."

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