CLASSIS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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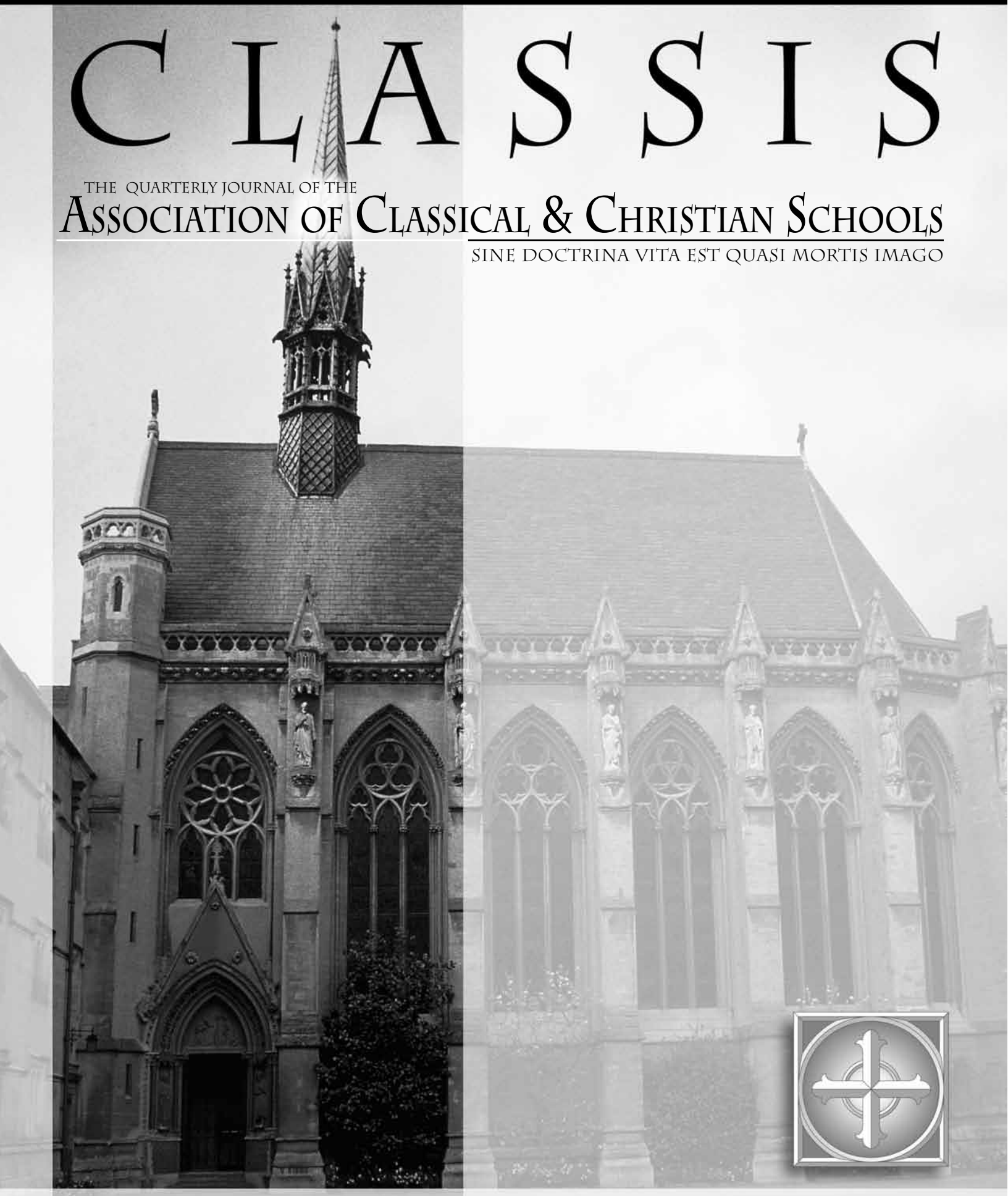

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Classical Education

From its beginning, ACCS has advocated as its definition of "classical" the form of education that Dorothy Sayers described in her 1947 essay, *The Lost Tools of Learning*, and subsequently popularized in *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* by Douglas Wilson. Both of these authors advance the pedagogical methodology of the Trivium, which includes three aspects: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. Further, ACCS advocates, along with Miss Sayers and Mr. Wilson, that children tend to grow through developmental stages that generally coincide with the three areas of the Trivium. Children that are taught with these developmental stages in mind are receiving an education using classical methodology.

But there is another aspect to this, and that is to teach children their Western heritage through reading the great works of the West. These books provide the classical content. Such books are necessary to appreciate the arguments that have formed the way we think. This is so that our children can adequately provide the Christian antithesis to the humanistic arguments of our heritage that are still being advocated by our godless culture today. ACCS willingly acknowledges that it has a defined understanding of what constitutes a classical education and seeks to encourage that concept without apology.

ACCS

Excerpt from the ACCS Position Paper: "What Constitutes 'Classical & Christian' for ACCS?" The entire paper is available at www.accsedu.org > About.

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ACCS

Classical Christian education for the world

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.

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mission statement

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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Mutual Provocation

by Patch Blakey

There are a couple of Bible verses that I hear often and am personally partial to. One is from Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The other is similar, found in Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Without getting into a deep meditation on these verses, it seems apparent that at some level, we as Christians share a mutual need and a mutual responsibility to encourage and build one another up.

In addition, Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example" (Phil. 3:17). We are to look for godly examples and follow them. Just as teachers in the classroom are required to be godly examples to their students, teachers are also required to be godly examples to their fellow teachers.

Proverbs tells us that there is an incremental approach to learning that shifts from a passive intake to an aggressive pursuit. Ultimately, all knowledge comes from the Triune God of the Bible.

> My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;
> So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;
> Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;
> If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;
> Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.
> For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.
> Proverbs 2:1-6

What should all of the above mean to teachers? One thought is that we are always either teaching or being taught ourselves. The latter should have at least the purpose of equipping us to be better teachers. We want to be found following Paul's advice to Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Of course, we may not be pastors as Timothy was called to be, but nonetheless we need to know our subject matter well, know our students well, and know our trade of instruction well.

We need to find others who can stretch us to perform at our maximum potential. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise" (Prov. 13:20a). This kind of "walking" is a self-conscious action on our part to be discriminating in seeking out good examples for ourselves to follow, using the word *discrimination* in its best context. Jesus assured His disciples that "a disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). It therefore makes sense that we would want to find and follow those who are exemplary in their calling as teachers.

The articles in this issue of *Classis* were all written by teachers from ACCS schools. The authors all understand and are committed to the application of the Trivium and to John Milton Gregory's *Seven Laws of Teaching*. These essays were written by teachers for teachers. They are intended to be stimulating or provoking; to be like "iron sharpening iron."

My hope is that in reading these articles, you will be challenged in ways that you may not have been previously. You may be inspired to alter your approach to classical Christian education in a more productive vein, to become more diligent in applying the basics. You also might become motivated to write an article yourself for possible publication in a future issue of *Classis* that would challenge your peers in other classical Christian schools.

In any eventuality, I am thankful for those teachers who responded to our request for articles, and I think you will be pleased with the collection provided in this issue of *Classis*.

***Patch Blakey** is the executive director of ACCS.*

Writing Tests for Rhetoric-Level Students

by Stephen Rippon

The purpose of this article is to promote discussion about how we can write tests that better reflect our values in classical education. In particular, I encourage rhetoric-level teachers who have been relying on recognition and memorization to include more essays in designing their tests—not only in literature and history, but in all subjects.

Teachers have long recognized the value of tests. As German Reformer Philip Melanchthon wrote in *De Studiis Adolescentum* (1529), "No academical exercise can be more useful than that of Examination. It whets the desire of learning, it enhances the solicitude of study, while it animates the attention to whatever is taught."[1] In their survey of the history of educational measurement, Madaus and O'Dwyer quote Melanchthon to show that educators still recognize the importance of testing, even though the nature of testing has changed over the last two centuries. As modern schools moved toward a "factory model," exams changed from oral to written, from qualitative to quantitative, and from short answer to multiple choice.[2] More recently, in the postmodern period, many educators have rejected multiple-choice tests for various reasons, so that there is no longer a consensus on how to test—nor, for that matter, *what* to test.[3]

While many postmodern educators critique multiple-choice tests for their racial and cultural ideology, cultural historian Jacques Barzun critiques them as poor pedagogy. In his 1991 book *Begin Here: The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning*, Barzun identifies the widespread use of multiple-choice tests and its variants—filling in words, rearranging items, matching diagrams, choosing summary statements, telling true-false, or the simple identifying of names and terms—as methods that are "peculiar to our century."[4]

Like everything else we do in our schools, our tests—unlike the Scantron forms of modernity—should encourage students to love the order, coherence, and beauty of God's world.

What's wrong with these modern, more efficient testing methods? "Mechanical testing," as Barzun calls it, "tests nothing but recognition knowledge."[5] He gives an example: "It is one thing to pick out Valley Forge and not Albany or Little Rock as the place where Washington made his winter quarters; it is another, first, to think of Valley Forge and then to say why he chose it instead of Philadelphia, where it was warmer."[6] Barzun suggests that mechanical tests may be used as quizzes that test whether a reading assignment was done—but certainly not as any significant grade.[7]

In addition to relying too much on mere recognition of information, another mistake rhetoric-level teachers are prone to make in designing tests comes to our attention through John Milton Gregory. His 1884 book *The Seven Laws of Teaching* includes "The Law of the Learning Process": "The learner must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be acquired."[8] Gregory explains, "As that is not true teaching which simply pours out before the pupil the treasures of the teacher's knowledge, so that is not true learning which merely memorizes and repeats the teacher's words and ideas."[9]

Perhaps we are especially prone to violating "The Law of the Learning Process" in classical schools, where we value memorization of facts as the grammar of every discipline. The problem arises when we stop with memorization. In his own day, Gregory identified some common mistakes, such as how "college students have been known to learn the demonstrations of geometry by heart, and never to suspect any meaning in them."[10]

Because multiple-choice-type tests reward recognition of pieces of knowledge apart from their original context, and because mere memory exercises likewise do not challenge students to understand the relationship among and significance of the facts, I encourage teachers—especially at the rhetoric level—to use more essay tests.

Essay tests have great benefits for students. The prospect of an essay test motivates students to attain a thorough understanding and not a mere recall of facts. In her book *Tools for Teaching*, Barbara Gross Davis cites three different studies which report that "students study in ways that reflect how they think they

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will be tested. If they expect an exam focused on facts, they will memorize details; if they expect a test that will require problem solving or integrating knowledge, they will work toward understanding and applying information."[11] In classical education, we do not create an either/or dilemma between facts and problem solving. Well-designed essay tests presuppose that a student has learned the facts, but they also give the student opportunity and motivation to show an understanding of how to apply those facts.

Good teachers use essay tests to help students make connections and applications—to help them see the big picture. Jason Saxon Smith, who teaches at Providence Christian School in Dothan, Alabama, explains his approach to testing his students on the *Iliad*. In addition to having students show a knowledge of key information and themes in Homer's epic, Smith encourages them to "pull the lens back" and ask, " 'So what?' . . . '*What is Homer suggesting about life and culture through his treatment of these themes?*' I want the kids, in their evaluations, to be doing some evaluation of their own . . . They need to be adopting the attitude of a literary and cultural critic."

What are some examples of essay questions that encourage rhetoric-level students to express original ways of understanding and applying what they have learned? Here is a sample from my test on *Paradise Lost* for our eleventh and twelfth grade Advanced Literature class. After a section of closed-book quote identification worth twenty percent of the overall grade—the purpose of which is to encourage students to be more sensitive to language, so that they can distinguish Milton's Adam from Milton's Eve, and Satan from the Son of God—the test includes these instructions: "Part 2: Short essays (3 paragraphs, about a page in length; 40 points each; suggested time: 20 minutes each). Each essay should have a clear thesis, logical organization, and a well-informed interpretation of the text with support from at least two relevant direct quotations.

"1. In his *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, C.S. Lewis writes, 'Eve fell through pride . . . . Adam fell by uxoriousness.' Based on your reading of the text and class discussions, is Lewis' summary correct?

"2. The romantic poet William Blake wrote, 'The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it.' Was Milton 'of the Devil's party without knowing it'? Can you provide another plausible explanation for Blake's observation, based on your reading of the text and class discussions?"

My essay tests are usually open-book and open-notes, rewarding students who have being reading and marking their texts all along—or, if they are not allowed to keep their books, making notes directing them to relevant passages in the text. Also, I include specific instructions about essay length, structure, and other criteria.

Admittedly, writing and grading these essay tests takes time and practice; it is, as Barzun notes, a "lost art."[12] I am constantly refining my tests. I used to offer three essay prompts, asking students to choose only one or two of them to write—but after considering Davis' advice in *Tools for Teaching*, I decided that offering students too many essay topics to choose from has some negative effects: students begin to assume they need to study only part of the required material, and then they may use too much time during the test deciding which topic to write on.[13]

We may see how essay tests are good for literature and history courses—but what about math and science? Our science teacher at Tall Oaks Classical School, Mrs. Rebecca Trudeau, expresses the difficulty: "Often sciences are taught solely at the grammar level (biology courses, in particular, tend to focus primarily on naming parts and describing how they work.)" Still, Trudeau looks for opportunities to integrate writing into her tests. She provides a sample test question: "How do members of the phylum Chrysophyta differ from members of the phylum Pyrrophyta? How are they alike? (You should include at least three ways they differ and at least three ways they are alike.) You must use technical language."

Moreover, immediately following the tests on each of the five kingdoms in biology, Trudeau has the students complete a "rhetoric question," writing an essay on an organism in that kingdom which they did not specifically cover, yet applying concepts and terminology that they learned. That writing component becomes part of a larger test-event in keeping with the ideal of John Milton Gregory when he writes, "There is a still higher and more fruitful stage in learning. It is found in the study of the uses and applications of knowledge. No

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lesson is learned to its full and rich ending till it is traced to its connections with the great working machinery of nature and of life."[14]

Math teachers can apply Gregory's principles as well. Mrs. Christina Schneider of Tall Oaks applies "The Law of the Learner" in her calculus and physics classes: "We find nice 'short-cuts' and methods for 'taking the derivative,' but it's very important for students to have a conceptual understanding of what a derivative really represents, and so asking them to explain that in their own words is a good indicator of their level of understanding." Schneider explains, "In math in general, we've been trying to encourage our students to think of problem solving in terms of essay writing. I'm not just interested in the answer to the problem, but how they arrived at that answer: the solution. A solution is a step-by-step listing of the process of solving a problem. It tells a story; it's an explanation. This is beyond just giving an answer."

When students understand problem-solving in math in terms of essay writing, and come to see a solution as a story, they are making connections between disciplines in ways that are rare for our fragmented age. Some of my most gratifying moments as a teacher have been after essay exams when students said, "Thank you for that test. It was fun. It helped me put things together in a way I hadn't thought of before." Like everything else we do in our schools, our tests—unlike the Scantron forms of modernity—should encourage students to love the order, coherence, and beauty of God's world.

ENDNOTES

1. Cited in George F. Madaus and Laura M. O'Dwyer, "Short History of Performance Assessment: Lessons Learned," *Phi Delta Kappan* 80.9 (1999): 688, Questia, 12 Oct. 2009, http://www.questiaschool.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=5001256493.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Jacques Barzun, *Begin Here: The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning*, ed. Morris Philipson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 33.

5. Ibid.

6. Barzun, 34.

7. Barzun, 36.

8. John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (Lancaster, PA: Veritas Press, 2004), 124.

9. Ibid.

10. Gregory, 134.

11. Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 239.

12. Barzun, 36.

13. Davis, 274. Her chapter on "Short-Answer and Essay Tests" has good advice on how to craft and grade essay questions.

14. Gregory, 127.

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Don't Boil Your Teachers in Classical Milk

by Tom Garfield, Logos School

The covenant people of God were told three times in the Old Testament: "*Do not boil a kid in its mother's milk*" (Exodus 23:19, Exodus 34:26, Deut. 14:21). Each time God commanded (that is, prohibited) this was in the context of eating laws and tithing. It's also a command unlike most other eating commands—it's a prohibition on *how* to cook, not necessarily what to eat (or not).

Let's see if we can articulate and then apply the principle behind the prohibition: **they were not to take what is precious and meant for nourishment of offspring to use as a means of death.**

What is classical "milk"? We as classical Christian educators believe, along with Dorothy Sayers, that there really is a value in the Trivium for nourishing and training young ones. We know it works because we see the delightful consequences in the way our children grow, display curiosity and wonder, seek to imitate, ask questions about what is good and what is bad, argue well, probe, define, and ultimately, in a winsome way, articulate and defend what is good, true, and beautiful. This is all as a result of nourishing, tasty, classical "milk" served up with biblical wisdom and love.

What does "boiling" entail? Are we classical Christian education administrators really boiling teachers? Well, yes, actually. Don't misunderstand; I believe we actually do understand how *valuable* this classical milk really is or can be. We know this is good stuff that we dish out. But it's just at that dishing out point that I want to stop and focus: How do we who head up ACCS schools treat our teachers, the ones doing the actual dishing out of the classical milk? I have derived both the impetus and the content for this discussion from knowing many classical Christian teachers. So, in what ways do we "boil" our teachers?

We boil away time. We administrators set calendars, daily schedules, class times, school rules, classroom rules, special programs, etc. We tell our teachers how much and what we want them to teach; we give them texts and primary documents to master for every discipline they teach, as well as our own unique curriculum guides. We expect them to do recess duties, plan for assemblies, Christmas programs, Open House displays and talks, and Grandparents' Days, not to mention making out (student-specific, of course) comments and report cards. We want them to carefully follow the seven laws of teaching, become proficient in classical methodologies, and, oh yes, be a living example of Christ-likeness—all while maintaining great control of their classrooms. Oh, and can they coach a team and/or direct a play, too? Do we have a really accurate idea of how much time our teachers put in each week or weekend? Do we have a good grasp on what our change of schedule does to them or our additional training assignment? Do we even have a clue about their personal lives and the challenges in time they face there?

Your teachers teach because they love seeing students grow and learn; that doesn't necessarily mean they don't get discouraged or over-taxed by your (no doubt) unintentional boiling of them.

We boil away energies. It takes a lot of physical energy to teach any length of time. To do it right, any and all teaching is draining. One of the worst things, therefore, we can do to our teachers is to give them the idea that their work has been in vain. How do we do that? By any seemingly arbitrary change in our program priorities, plans, or emphases. Obviously we want to always be improving our schools, but these changes may need to take longer than some of our impatient personalities may like. (Being a Navy man, "trying to turn an aircraft carrier on a dime" really resonates with me.) The teachers need to be brought along gently and wisely, not making sharp turns without time for teacher input. You want them to be as excited and even energized by good changes as you are. By the way, I strongly believe that all administrators should teach a class and/or coach a team regularly. Even one class will give you amazing insights into the tasks your teachers live with every day.

We boil away enthusiasm. When your teachers are over-

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burdened, tired, and lacking long-term motivation, your school will suffer. How do we boil away our teachers' enthusiasm, that is, being excited and secure in their purposes? A couple ways come to mind: lack of protection and a lack of respect.

Protection: Do we adequately protect them from chronic student problems? Of course we expect the teachers to address and even nip the majority of student problems in their classes, but do we do enough observing to know what's really happening? Sometimes novices don't even realize what problems they've got, they just go home each day discouraged. Or how about protecting the teachers from over-bearing parents? Your teachers are adults, but they need to know that you will back them up or even directly take on parental concerns that have elevated to complaints.

Respect: This is particularly needed for your male teachers, although the ladies can feel its absence, too. Unlike what the world says, the Bible says to give respect, even, and maybe especially, if it's not "earned." We have lots of small ways of making teachers feel small—the way we word memos, the tone in a staff meeting in front of their peers, the way we speak to them with students or parents present. Related to this is how we recognize, or not, our teachers' accomplishments. Do we even give them a note of thanks after a particularly difficult program, or season, or presentation? Do we have ways of acknowledging their years of service to the school?

We boil away effectiveness. All the above could be happening every day in our schools and we might still be under the impression that we have a strong, healthy program. As far as you might see, the honor rolls are still pretty full and you had three National Merit winners last year. Right. Your teachers teach because they love seeing students grow and learn; that doesn't necessarily mean they don't get discouraged or over-taxed by your (no doubt) unintentional boiling of them. Sooner or later, this low-grade fever of unhappiness will affect their job performance. Maybe they'll leave before that happens. Is that the best option? Their effectiveness is the measure of success or not for your school, and that depends a great deal on the solid connection between you, as the voice of the vision, and the teachers—those that put feet on the vision.

Remember teachers' frames. It's simple: treat them as you want them to treat the students. You expect the teachers to understand and work with, not against, the frames of their students. The classical methodology uniquely promotes this very idea. Have you taken the time to understand the frames of your teachers? How much do you talk with each one? Do you know the conditions that would best cut with their grain? Do you know them well enough that you could describe their unique characteristics to their parents? Have you noticed the unique teaching qualities that distinguish your male teachers from the ladies? You want your students to love learning, right? Do your teachers love learning? If not, why not? You want the students to grow in their love for the knowledge they are gaining, right? Are your teachers growing in love and depth of the knowledge they impart?

Nourish your teachers. One of the best ways we have cooked up to help teachers grow is through individual scholarship projects. Yes, it's work, but it's work that: fits into their own schedules, is chosen by them, allows them to pursue deeper knowledge in an area they feel weak in, and is assigned well in advance of the completion date. Especially for our veteran teachers, this kind of training is much preferred to yet another series of in-house basic training exercises. Assigned in the fall, the teachers present the results of their projects in front of their peers in mid-spring. Our teachers have come up with amazing and worthwhile projects, all done without a single complaint or major stress.

How else can we nourish our teachers? How about giving them several personal days off, no questions asked? Or how about adjusting the school calendar to allow them valuable catch-up, prep, and grading time—a workday minus students? What about providing a four-day work week during long stretches between holidays? Even just limiting your staff meetings to once a week, with time for prayer and singing, would be an encouragement. If you run out of ideas, try asking the teachers—in a healthy Christian environment they won't ask for the moon.

Channel enthusiasm. What can an excited, protected, respected, and nourished teacher accomplish? Teachers, given practical encouragement from us, want to improve their teaching and curriculum from year to year. They find that it's exciting and fulfilling to know they are doing a better job this year than last year, and not only that, the program is better because they had the opportunity and liberty to fix some things and improve lessons! They love to know the students will benefit from their labors!

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Provide accountability and practicality. Without the proper application of accountability, you are depriving your teachers every bit as much as not paying them their due wages. Simply put, they need to hear from you, in an orderly, planned out, and non-threatening manner regarding the quality of their work. Another word for all this is **evaluations**. You'd probably be shocked, as I have been, to hear the stories from Christian school teachers who don't have a clue about how well they're doing since their administrator never evaluates them. Here again, the simple equation is do unto the teachers as you would have them do unto the students.

Nourished teachers foster nourished students. All this good nourishment, not boiling, leads to joyful, contented and improving teachers, working in harmony with you, the administrator. Do you think this might have a healthy affect on their students? Classical milk, with all its nourishing, vitamin A content and methods, is not for boiling either young ones or their teachers in. Make sure everyone in your school delights in the refreshing taste and benefit!

Developing Engaged Students

by Troy Wathen

A wise teacher reminded me a few years ago that the process of repairing the ruins of our educational system takes time because the learning curve is steep. We are the workers, while at the same time partial beneficiaries, of this repair. In our efforts to restore something that has been lost, we sometimes find ourselves engaging in what C.S. Lewis referred to as chronological snobbery. We discount modern educational theories because we sometimes have a predisposition to distrust modern philosophies. Much of this distrust is warranted, but I would like to argue for a vein of modern educational theory and research that provides support for some of the strategies used in our ACCS schools.

According to John Milton Gregory, "Teaching is *arousing* and *using* the *pupil's mind* to grasp the desired thought or to master the desired art."[1] Most of us have read Gregory's *Seven Laws of Teaching* and agree that our role as teachers is to arouse the minds of our students and that our students must attend with interest to that which is to be learned. The issue is not convincing others that education is more fruitful when we have students who are awake and engaged; most teachers agree to this educational law. The challenge is actually convincing our students that *active engagement* in learning is a worthwhile endeavor. By active engagement, I mean the mental exercise of sticking with a line of thought or with a discipline of behavior necessary to make learning fruitful. Recent educational theory has reasserted the importance of understanding the nature of, and the training in, the strategies of the learner's internal motivation. This point is where we can, and should, utilize some of the findings of modern educational theories regarding metacognition and volitional strategies—strategies used by the learner to control his mind and will as he approaches learning. The precepts of Proverbs clearly supports this assertion as the wise calls on the young man to "be attentive," "incline your ear to my sayings," and "do not forget my teachings."[2]

In an assessment-centered educational culture, we must pursue wisdom for Christ's sake and His glory, not superior test scores for our own glory.

McKeachie addresses the issue of student engagement in the learning process. He argues that many students "are not clear about their educational goals in general or their goals for specific courses."[3] One of the themes in this vein of research is that of the *goal orientations* of both the student and the classroom environment. These theorists argue that students approach learning with two possible goal orientations: **performance goals** (getting As, getting into a good college, or being in the top ten percent) or **mastery goals** (learning the skill or concept, developing a particular virtue, or enjoying the learning endeavor). Likewise, teachers create classroom environments that foster performance goals or mastery goals or some mixture of the two. As classical educators, most of us want our students to perform well, but we should not forsake the inner growth in our students in pursuit of the accolades that come with performing well. In an assessment-centered educational culture, we must pursue wisdom for Christ's sake and His glory, not superior test scores for our own glory.

A second theme in theories of metacognitive and volitional strategies is that of self-regulation. Not only should we train our students to pursue wisdom for its own good, but the literature supports the training of students in self-regulatory strategies. This self-regulation means that students must first recognize what motivates them and what hinders their educational development. In order for our students to practice self-regulation, they must possess some ability to reflect upon their own thinking. Not only is self-reflection a distinction that defines us as spiritual creatures, but it is also a practice that develops our spiritual nature. Christian philosopher Dallas Willard supports this observation in his discussion of the nature of spiritual transformation. He argues, "If I intend to obey Jesus Christ, I must intend and decide to become the kind of person who *would* obey" [emphasis Willard's].[4] Not only is the educational endeavor

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affected by our self-regulation, but our spiritual transformation into Christlikeness relies partially on our intentional engagement. Training our students to be self-regulating in the academic process has been demonstrated to be highly profitable. I believe that this training in self-regulation can also have implications beyond the classroom as self-regulation translates into introspection, self-evaluation, and the spiritual dispositions that come with these pursuits.

As educators in classical Christian schools, we must not only recognize our need for practicing the seven laws of teaching: we must go further to sharpen our understanding of the factors of motivation and the pitfalls of some types of motivations. We must also train our students in the skills necessary to become self-regulating as they approach the learning process. Any time we recommend that we read educational journals, we often must add the caveat that not all ideas in this vein of literature fit our educational philosophy; however, enough is useful that I can recommend our attending to the theories of volitional and metacognitive strategies. A good place to start would be to read *Teachers College Record Volume 106*[5], devoted almost entirely to the topic of volitional strategies. From there, follow the citation trail to other articles that cite research supporting many of the practices that are becoming common in classical Christian schools.

ENDNOTES

1. John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), p. 19.

2. Proverbs 1-2 (NIV).

3. W. J. McKeachie, *McKeachie's Teaching Tips* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), p. 271.

4. Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002) p. 90.

5. *Teachers College Record* Volume 106 Number 6, 2004, can be purchased at http://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=11565.

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in the Classical and Christian Classroom

by Leslie Collins, Trinity Christian School

The movement of classical and Christian education has been propelled largely by high achieving students and parents. I believe that we are at a crossroads. More and more families with members who have disabilities are asking for these students to be included in the classical classroom. The first reaction of a classical school is often "What about our standards?" or, "Won't this mean dumbing down? Are we now egalitarians?" Douglas Wilson charged the attendees at the 2009 conference with the idea that our schools should not be judged by the academic awards our students achieve as much as whether those students love the standards and the subjects themselves. Can't a student with a disability love the standard of classical education, even while they are never able to achieve it?

"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' *On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,* and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. *But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other* (emphasis mine). If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:21-26).

Here we see God's purpose in each part of the Body of Christ. Are not covenant children with disabilities part of that Body? If the Lord has a purpose in combining the members of the Body, why are we keeping them out of our schools? Most of us began our schools because we considered the Lord's call to families to train up their children "when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7). We considered this as a good reason to bypass our own fear of failure. That same obedience to His call should motivate us to overlook that fear now.

> *Inclusion isn't about asking schools to lower standards or change their curriculum. . . . Exceptions do not nullify the standard; they uphold it.*

Defining Inclusion

Inclusion is a misunderstood term. It is not mainstreaming or dumping. It is not dumbing down or compromising. And, it is not sugarcoating a significant problem. Instead, it is the inclusion of individual educational needs into a general classroom environment and curriculum.

Inclusion is a biblical model whereby we make several assumptions. The child's parents are the primary educators and must bear the weight of the child's educational needs with the help of the school. Most inclusion requires additional adult support. This can be provided through grants or personal funding. This person should be hired and trained by the school and accountable to both the school and the parents.

All children are capable of learning and need to be guided through a curriculum that is based on their abilities and needs, including the need for a biblical worldview.

These needs can be interwoven into the general curriculum of the student's peers without compromise to either, with strategic and skillful planning and implementation.

Children should be with their same-aged peers as much as possible because this is the Body of Christ that God has put them in. Both the students with disabilities and the students without have much to learn from each other. These lessons will be life shaping and will have an impact of the work of the church for that generation.

Strategies and Principles of Skillful Planning and Implementation

There are several factors that must be included in

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an inclusion-based model.

The challenged student's program must begin with the essentials: individualized reading, writing, and math instruction based on his/her ability with objective criteria for success.

Paralleled instruction of these activities must be attempted so that they are following the typical class schedule wherever possible. Often parallel instruction can occur in the same classroom but it is also appropriate to find another location.

The student's individual goals are woven into the typical classroom routine. For example, when the class is working on math facts, the student with a disability can work on math facts at their own level and the amount can be adjusted to fit in the time given to the class, or they can practice writing their numbers legibly in the time allotted.

Peer-to-peer instruction is an optimal way of teaching those who are potential teachers and leaders how to care for those who struggle. *The Seven Laws of Teaching* by John Milton Gregory reminds us that when children talk, they learn more than when they listen. This must be done, however, without compromise to either student.

Curriculum Modifications

Students with disabilities will need modifications in order to succeed in the general classroom environment. Modifications must move toward increasing levels of independence and normalcy. The following considerations should be made.

Respect the student's age and ability. Try to match the font and appearance of the modification as much as possible so that the student is not unnecessarily embarrassed.

Match the skills taught as much as possible so that the student is learning about the subject, not just matching letters and coloring pictures. The student may only be able to learn 10% of what the typical student learns on their modified worksheet; this is enough.

As an example of modification, during *classroom instruction*, the class begins with singing and chanting and then moves to learning about James Madison. The class worksheet reflects a paragraph of information about James Madison, his reasons for limited government power, and the conflict around the Louisiana Purchase.

For *modified instruction*, the student joins the class in singing and chanting and then moves to learning about James Madison from a modified paper. It explains that James Madison was the fourth president and one of the founding fathers of our nation, that he did not want the government to have too much power, that he was known as the "Father of the Constitution," and that he helped our country to buy land called the "Louisiana Purchase." The paper directs the student to copy the new words, match their meaning, re-tell the information, and fill in the blanks to rephrase the information so that what is learned is truly learned and remembered.

Require the student's best work and redefine "best" regularly. Don't just look for ways to keep the child busy during the class; look for ways to teach the skills and keep looking. Inclusion is not about throwing the kid into the class and giving him work that is loosely based on the topic so that he is busy during class time. It is about considering what the class is doing and how they can attempt that same skill at their own pace and level.

Suggested Modifications

Latin: get keys of teacher lessons and have the student highlight answers and read along with the class—the correct answers on the page provide immediate reinforcement of teacher instructions.

History/Science: use a large "post-it" on the worksheet to write answers as the teacher says them; the child then copies from the "post-it." This assists with auditory discrimination. If the child's handwriting is illegible, consider using small labels for the child to place where needed on the worksheet.

Bible: use a dry-erase marker on the student's desk to copy key words mentioned by the teacher. The student can copy these as able onto their paper. Or, insert a plain piece of notebook paper on top of the worksheet as an added note page.

Music: using a recorder, cover up all the holes on the recorder with Silly-Putty to create the note desired and teach the student to blow properly and at the right times only. This eliminates problems with dexterity and perception but allows for independent participation.

Art: prevent potential mistakes by using paper and tape to block out areas on art work so that coloring, painting, and erasing can't get out of control. This also limits the task to small areas and allows gradual success and progression on the project.

Physical Education: adjust the amount and intensity of the physical requirements of the student. For games and fast-paced activities, provide peer support for

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being part of the game, guiding the student in how to think with peer-shadowing. For competitions, plan ahead to balance the levels of the teams to compensate for a slower child so that constant losing due to the slower student is not a source of conflict within the class.

These suggestions are by no means exhaustive, nor are they appropriate for every situation. They were used in a fifth grade classical classroom for a student with Down syndrome and autism.

Demand an increasing level of performance and skill. Finding ways to include students in the task at hand is good, but these activities must constantly be improved upon so that the student is growing stronger and more independent, more like his peers. We should never be content to find something that works and stick to it all year. The Reformation cry, *semper reformanda* (always reforming), applies to the special educator, too.

Example 1: The task of writing a spelling word can be modified by having the student write the first letter of the words, which can be improved to writing the first three letters of the words and eventually writing entire words.

Example 2: The task of class reading can be modified so that the student who may not be able to read at the same level as her classmates can read chapter titles, a list of character's names, locations, or a paraphrased summary of the story written at her reading level.

Example 3: The task of identifying a list of Latin words and phrases on a written test can be modified so that the student provides the answers orally, which can be improved to matching the correct answer from a list, which can be improved to writing the first letter of the English word.

Example 4: The task of alphabetizing a list of vocabulary words can be modified so that the student arranges the words on business cards, placing them next to the letters of the alphabet written on his desk using a dry-erase marker. The student is matching the first letter of the word to the letter of the alphabet written on his desk. This can be improved to arranging the words without the written letters on the desk, and eventually to having the student arrange the words in order without a written guide.

These examples are just the beginning of ways that curriculum can be modified to meet individual educational needs of students with disabilities in the classical classroom.

Biblical Inclusion

King David provides perhaps the best example for us as we prepare an educational feast for our students each day. Mephibosheth, the disabled son of David's best friend, was asked to join him at the king's table daily. Culturally and socially, this was awkward and unheard of. Wheelchairs were not available, much less accessible ramps. Imagine the added work to all of the king's servants. And the very idea that someone who is "lame" is dining with the king!

But David invited him anyway: "Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the king's table, and he was crippled in both feet" (2 Samuel 9:13). It wasn't that David didn't understand the importance of proper decorum at the king's table. He loved that standard. And so did Mephibosheth. And that's why he was there.

Inclusion isn't about asking schools to lower standards or change their curriculum. It's about making exceptions to those standards for the sake of the body at large. Exceptions do not nullify the standard; they uphold it. Families of students with disabilities aren't asking for your school to change for them, they just want a place at the table.

Teen Fiction

by Michael J. McKenna

Once in an airport, waiting to board my flight, I beheld a spectacle that was one-third entertaining, one-third saddening, and one-third clinical social observation, mixed, shaken well, and served up as a sad commentary about where our culture was headed.

A little girl—no more than four—was romping about the airport waiting lounge, running up and down the nearby escalators, knocking into adults she was having too much fun to notice, shrieking with delight at the entertainment she was making for herself, and generally being a disturbance to everyone in the vicinity, *save two*. (Honestly, I was trying very hard not to be a curmudgeon. But trust me—*this girl was getting on everyone's last nerve*. Well, *almost* everyone's.)

I was finally brought to the point at which I asked my fellow travelers, "Where is that girl's *father*?" I didn't have to look far. One or two rows over was not only that girl's father, but her mother as well. Every so often they would look up from what they were doing, get their daughter's attention, and say something perfunctory, like, "Come back here, Anna," and then continue on as before (as did she)! What were they up to, besides failing to properly supervise their young progeny? *They were playing video games on their cell phones!*

I looked from one train wreck to the other, from child to parents, and from parents to child, and soon found myself feeling like the animals in the end of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*: "The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig again; but already it was impossible to say which was which."

Last year, the Manhattan Institute published two essays on the modern twentysomething male, identifying what has come be to be known as "adultescence," a toxic brew of both adulthood and adolescence. Apparently, the sociologists have identified what I observed in the parents at the airport and given it a clinical name. The author of the Manhattan Institute article described these males as men content to wile away the hours "in a playground of drinking, playing *Halo 3*, and underachieving." She went on to say that these young men are the embodiment of our culture's failure to "define worthy aspirations" for its young people, and that we're allowing our young men to occupy their default state of adolescence far too happily and for far too long.[1]

Which raises the question: *What's up with this "default state of adolescence"?* Where did we ever get the idea that adolescence—or the teenage years—was rightfully about wiling away the hours playing games and underachieving? It seems to me that, once we gave away *that* farm, it was only a short time before the dawn of the adultescent. So where did the "teenager" come from?

In the 1920s, the word "teenage" was used to refer to clothing and activities, but young men and women were still, well, *young men and women*. Then, in 1941, the word "teenager" made a casual appearance in an issue of *Reader's Digest*, suggesting that it had actually been around for a few years prior. But the word is not so much a problem as the meaning behind the word. Social reforms of the early twentieth century, including mandated education through high school, extended pre-adult years. In times prior, a person reaching adult size at age 13 or 14 was ready to do adult work. Now adult size was achieved as it always was, but adult responsibilities were deferred until 18 or later. So, the years ending in *-teen* became something new and separate. Now, these years were either to be savored as the best of times, combining childhood freedom with adult physical maturity, or endured as years of hazard, combining childish irresponsibility with adult urges.

> *You'll rarely, if ever, hear us refer to our students as "teenagers." They're gentlemen and ladies, young men and women.*

So first we took away adult responsibilities from our young men and women—*er*, teenagers—and then we extended that period of freedom (license?) into adulthood, and *voila!* Adultescence!

It only takes a short time reading God's word until we find that there's a curious absence of the "teenager." There we find the words "youths, children, babies." We also find "men, women," even the word "adults" is found once in

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the NIV (I Cor. 14:20). In short, the Bible makes no allowance for something in between youth and adulthood. So why do we? In addition, if the Bible makes no allowance for the gray zone of "teenagerhood," it certainly gives no credence to the idea of adultescence, grown men and women *acting* as though they were teenagers. What's going on? What's at the root of this phenomenon?

Consider the testimony of a few adultescents and we'll see. One woman admitted, "I want to get married, but not soon. I'm enjoying myself. There's a lot I want to do by myself still." Another twentysomething stated that he might be interested in marriage, just not anytime soon. "It's a long way down the road. I'm too self-involved."[2]

Could it be that, at the very heart of the modern notion of both the teenager and the adultescent is a sinful desire to gratify "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"? Is it really just self-absorption? If so, let's not forget the rest of that verse: this "is not of the Father but is of the world" (I John 2:16).

Consider also, whether the modern notion of teenager or adultescent fulfills the biblical command to "honor your father and your mother." Oftentimes, the adultescent is a twentysomething (even a thirtysomething) living at home with a flat-screen TV in his bedroom and new car in the driveway, all the while testifying to mom's great lasagna and the fact that she does a mean load of laundry!

At Rockbridge Academy, we've begun addressing this cultural issue largely by going right to the root. We don't encounter adultescents to any large extent, so we're doing our part to prevent them from emerging in the first place. You'll rarely, if ever, hear us refer to our students as "teenagers." They're gentlemen and ladies, young men and women. I often refer to them as "Mr. Smith" or "Miss Jones." I believe that, in their heart of hearts, they want to be treated as young adults, so we gladly oblige them.

We agree with the Apostle Paul who said to Timothy, "Let no one despise you for your youth." But Paul didn't stop there. He added, "But set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (I Timothy 4:12). We don't look down on them because they're young, and we require that they set godly examples for their peers. We require meaningful work of them, for after all, idle hands are the devil's workshop.

How else should we, as parents, fight the good fight against the modern teenager and prevent the emergence of the adultescent? Let me go out on a limb and suggest a few ways: limit the amount of time our kids spend surfing the web or watching TV and movies. Instead, encourage them to read good books and talk about them with you. Don't permit them to live as modern consuming machines, spending the weekends plying the local malls, eating out, buying clothes they don't need, and so forth. Require them to help with jobs around the house. Encourage them to find a way to serve at your church, rather than seeing church as a place for the youth to be served (it's participation and support that makes a member, not attendance). Finally, encourage them to spend time in God's Word. Nothing will better equip us to be *men and women* of God than to have "the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly."

ENDNOTES

1. Kay S. Hymowitz, "Child-Man in the Promised Land," *City Journal*, Winter 2008, vol. 18, no. 1.

2. Lev Grossman, "Grow Up? Not So Fast," *Time*, January 16, 2005, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1018089-6,00.html.

Book Review: Nero

Reviewed by Patch Blakey

Nero: Makers of History

by Jacob Abbott

Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2009, 202 pages, $12.00.

What is unique about Nero Caesar that anyone would want to write a book about him? By all accounts, Nero was a monster. He was the sixth Roman Caesar, ruling half of the known world. He led a self-absorbed life of dissipation and immorality. He died young, but only after having done extensive damage to the empire and earning the opprobrium of all.

To provide some background for the rise of Nero, the author, Jacob Abbott, began with a brief sketch of Caligula and his assassination followed by the almost comedic succession of the fearful Claudius. As a youth, Claudius was held in such contempt by the people of the court that even his own mother considered him the standard for stupidity. After Caligula's death, Claudius, who was Caligula's uncle, tried to hide himself fearing for his own life, but was discovered because his toes showed underneath a curtain behind which he was trying to conceal himself. Claudius thought his time was up and dropped to his knees to plead for his life only to be surprised to find that he was being made the new emperor.

Claudius lived by fear more than reason. When his unfaithful wife was put to death by one of his courtiers, he never questioned it. He subsequently married his niece, Agrippina, Nero's mother. Nero was then adopted by Claudius and through the deceitful manipulation and intriguing of his mother, attained the throne over the rightful heir after Claudius was poisoned. But Nero's mother fully intended to use her son as a figurehead to allow herself free reign in the rule of the empire.

As Nero grew older, his degenerate friends helped him realize that he was being used as a pawn by his mother, and he began to take measures to subdue his mother's ambitions while simultaneously achieving his own. In the course of events that followed, he had his half-brother, the rightful heir to the throne, poisoned. He had his mother murdered and his first wife killed, and he kicked his mistress to death. These were only the beginnings of his wretched actions. He soon grew completely callous and none were safe from his wicked temper and vain paranoia.

The one object for which he was willing to make any personal sacrifice was his desire to sing and perform publicly. He went to great lengths to train his voice, and he went to great distances to perform, often paying the judges to make a skewed decision in selecting him as the winner in any competition despite his blatant public failure to comply with the rules of the competition. But such contemptuous conduct only further degraded his regard in the eyes of the people. Ultimately, the Roman people lost all respect for his authority. When a seventy-three-year-old general rallied the army to oppose Nero, he felt compelled to flee, ultimately dying at the hand of one of his servants.

Like Mary Shelly's Frankenstein monster, Nero's existence was one of complete tragedy from beginning to end. Unlike that monster, his life was real, not imaginary. It was, nevertheless, under such a tyrant as Nero Caesar that the Apostle Paul told Governor Festus, "I appeal to Caesar." And, it was under such a tyrant as Nero that Paul was put to death for his faithful testimony to Jesus Christ.

Jacob Abbott's book, *Nero: Makers of History*, was first printed in 1853. It is an exciting and engaging account, excellently written, but modified in places by the current publisher to bring the vocabulary up to date. It is a paperback book, but the cover looks like an aged, handsome, cloth-bound edition. It is the first in a series of similar books written by Jacob Abbott and being republished by Canon Press that will include accounts of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Hannibal and others. I highly commend the book to your reading enjoyment and personal edification.

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