

CLASSIS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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OS GUINNESS

Os Guinness is an author and speaker who lives in the Washington DC area. Great-great grandson of Arthur Guinness, the Dublin brewer, he was born in China in World War II where his parents were medical missionaries. Os has written or edited more than twenty five books, including *The American Hour*, *Time for Truth*, *The Call*, *Invitation to the Classics*, and *Long Journey Home*. His latest book is *Unspeakable: Facing up to the Challenge of Evil*, which was published by Harper San Francisco in January 2005.

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A Note from a Reader: “Enjoyed the cover—a picture of Exeter College Chapel in Oxford. My bedroom window is just barely visible to the left of the statue heads level with the small staircase window. I was at Exeter College reading philosophy, politics, and economics as a Rhodes Scholar 1973-1975.

—Ray Linder

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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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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School Accreditation

by Patch Blakey

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the church at Corinth, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12). Paul’s point was that there is wisdom in being held to a standard other than one’s own.

King Solomon wrote, “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?” (Proverbs 20:6). What is true of men is also true of the institutions populated by men. The natural tendency of men is to proclaim their own goodness, their own value, their own worth. While a school may accurately describe its educational value, praise is generally better accepted if it comes from an independent and objective source. But if they are comparing themselves by themselves, Paul says they “are not wise.” Accreditation compares a school’s performance to an objective set of standards.

So, what is accreditation? The verb “to accredit” means to certify a school as meeting all formal official requirements of academic excellence, curriculum, facilities, etc. So then, accreditation is the act of accrediting or the state of being accredited, especially through the granting of approval to an institution of learning by an official review board after the school has met specific requirements.

Why should a school seek accreditation? There is benefit to going through the accreditation process. It is hard work and makes a school reflect seriously on what they are doing and why they are

doing it. The process helps a school to focus on its internal functions and creates the opportunity to have outside eyes observe the school’s operation while providing constructive criticism from a more objective perspective.

Schools assemble a “self-study” which provides documentation to the visit committee that substantiates that the school meets each requirement in a broad range of accreditation criteria. This documentation is reviewed by the visit committee for compliance with the accreditation standards. The visit committee is comprised of three qualified people who are drawn from either the ACCS Board of Directors, heads of ACCS accredited schools, and typically the ACCS executive director who has participated on most school accreditation visits. The committee then conducts an on-site visit at the school to observe that what has been submitted in the self-study documentation is exactly what is actually happening in practice at the school.

School boards and administrators sometimes wrestle over which accreditation agency to use for evaluating their school. For schools in ACCS, one of the primary reasons for seeking accreditation is to have the school’s application of the classical Christian methodology confirmed. ACCS is the only agency that has accreditation standards specifically developed to evaluate the classical Christian methodology in place at ACCS schools. As one of the ACCS-accredited schools puts it, “The Association of Classical & Christian Schools, [is] the leading classical, Christian

accrediting agency in the nation.”

Some schools may want state recognition for any number of reasons, including, but not limited to participation in athletics at the state level, state-sponsored scholarships for graduating students, transfer of credits to the public sector, and others. ACCS accreditation is currently recognized in Texas and Virginia. As ACCS schools ask ACCS to seek recognition in their state or region, ACCS hopes to expand the scope of its accreditation authority, but without compromising its Christian foundations.

Why would schools not want to consider pursuing accreditation? I selected some reasons from an article titled “Schools Debate Value of Accreditation” by Bonnie V. Winston in the Richmond-Times Dispatch of January 30, 2008. Here are some of the prominent negative reasons that were offered in that article:

- It’s a waste of money
- I don’t see the need for it
- Non-accreditation has not hampered our students’ college admissions
- Parents don’t know what accreditation means
- It wouldn’t help the school to do a better job

Are there any valid responses to these objections? As ACCS has conducted accreditation visits over the past decade, one comment that continues to be mentioned is that just going through the process to prepare for accreditation has been a valuable experience for schools. Pursuing accreditation has forced schools to look carefully at what policies and practices they have in place (or thought they did), and forced

Patch Blakey is the executive director of ACCS.

School Accreditation ...

them to evaluate if what they were actually doing was consistent with what they said they were doing. The preparation for accreditation helped the schools to more clearly identify gaps in their policies and/or weaknesses in their classroom management, and fix them. In turn, this helped the schools to do a better job of educating their students and serving their families.

Parents want their children to receive a quality education. They want to know that some qualified organization outside the school has evaluated the school by a set of standards that helps ensure the quality of instruction that students receive. Parents are often more inclined to place their confidence in a school that has objectively demonstrated its worth by undergoing the accreditation process.

Students from unaccredited schools are admitted into colleges and universities. The results of the college entrance exam are often the determining factor. I suspect that even students from poor academic schools enter college. The question, though, isn't whether students from any given school enter college, but rather, is the school training the students to the best of their ability before they enter college? Accreditation by itself can't make a school operate better, but it can provide an outside set of eyes to help identify where a school can benefit by improving. The school still needs to take the initiative to make those improvements, especially if it wants to receive the affirmation of accredited status.

Accreditation does cost money. But so does a lack of enrolled students. Accreditation doesn't guarantee increased enrollments, but it is an indicator to parents

that a school is serious about the services it is providing. I don't know how to practically measure the difference in the cost of accreditation which can be determined, and the number of students that a school doesn't enroll because it is not accredited. How can one measure what isn't there? But if parents had to choose between an accredited school or a non-accredited school, which would be their likely choice?

As an aside, ACCS accreditation costs \$1,000 plus out-of-pocket expenses for the visit committee members which can be as much as \$1,500 for the initial site visit. This does not take into account all of the hours invested by board members, administrators, and teachers conducting their self-study over the course of a year.

ACCS posts its accreditation standards on its website (www.accsedu.org) so they may be seen by all. ACCS only accredits schools that are members of the Association. It would not be reasonable to expect non-ACCS schools to meet the standards of ACCS. Schools that are interested in seeking ACCS accreditation should contact ACCS for a copy of the ACCS Accreditation Handbook. It is a time-consuming and difficult process, to be sure, but every school that has been through the ACCS accreditation thus far has readily acknowledged how beneficial it has been to their school.

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Annapolis Christian Academy
Corpus Christi, Texas

Berean Academy
Tampa, Florida

Cary Christian School
Cary, North Carolina

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“But I never took logic!”

Equipping Parents to Help Their Children with Subjects They Never Studied

by Brittany DeVos

Education can be a mysterious realm in our society. Specialized degrees and certificates. Expensive classes to excel at the fill-in-the-blank must-take standardized test. Jargon that only those few blessed initiated can comprehend. So, is it any wonder that parents can experience confusion and frustration when they attempt to participate in their children’s educations?

A recent study in the United Kingdom found that 83% of parents need assistance helping their children with homework. Just having their parents attempt to help them confused over half of the kids questioned, while 81% of the parents themselves were open to receiving guidance on how better to aid their child’s learning.¹ If parents in general face confusion on how to help their kids with subjects they themselves took when in school, how much more must the parents who choose classical Christian education and its specialized curriculum feel puzzled when little Suzie brings home Latin or logic or rhetoric for the first time?

This may, at first, seem an odd question given the impetus which many times inspires parents to choose classical Christian education. Mom and dad, through a friend or pastor or the internet, come across Dorothy L. Sayers’ “The Lost Tools of Learning” address and read Sayers’ masterful

summary of the principle issue in modern education: “Is not the great defect of our education today—a defect traceable through all the disquieting symptoms of trouble that I have mentioned—that although we often succeed in teaching our pupils ‘subjects,’ we fail lamentably on the

... the very tools of learning which we laud as the building blocks of our students’ education provide the structure their parents need to help them in their learning.

whole in teaching them how to think: they learn everything except the art of learning.”²

“She’s got it!” the parents exclaim. “It’s not about ‘subjects’ at all. It’s about learning how to learn—how to think! This is what our child needs.” And nary a thought may be given again to subjects until the aforementioned day when little Suzie arrives home with the subject which mom and dad do not understand. How do we, as classical Christian educators, prepare our students’ parents for that day? How do we equip them to successfully help their children do homework and study subjects with which they have no prior experience?

I contend that the very tools of learning which we laud as the building blocks of our students’ education provide the structure their parents need to help them in their learning. The trivium—grammar, logic,

and rhetoric—form a useful technique for parents to assist their children in learning subjects that they never learned in school.

Grammar

Parents, like teachers, must begin at the beginning. John Milton Gregory writes in *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, “The language used in teaching must be common to teacher and learner. In other words, it must be understood by each, with

the same meaning to both.”³ He elaborates, “Too often elementary facts and definitions are not made thoroughly familiar.”⁴ Language, vocabulary, terms and definitions—these are the grammar of each subject where we should encourage parents to begin. A student will not be successful in his studies if he does not understand the terms used in class in the same way we the teachers understand them. Similarly, his mother and father will not be successful in helping him prepare for our class if they also do not have the same understanding. For this reason, parents of struggling students should drill them in vocabulary. What does *agricola* mean? What is the dative case? The ablative? Such drills require no prior training. With a textbook, study guide, or set of flashcards in front of them, any mom or dad can begin the process of making those elementary facts and definitions thoroughly familiar to their child.

Language itself is certainly not the only subject in which

Brittany DeVos is the secondary principal at Annapolis Christian Academy in Corpus Christi, TX. Learn more about this ACCS accredited school at <http://www.aca-cc.org/>.

“But I never took logic!” . . .

this approach works. Each field possesses its own required vocabulary and objective facts that must be learned. These are where parents must begin. What is the Pythagorean Theorem? What’s an integer? How about a syllogism? Who was Aeneas? Any question to which there is an objective, clear-cut answer is a question that can be asked by a well-meaning but untrained parent. When the drills are regular, both parent and student learn the terms. They are then ready for step two.

Logic

This step in the process for parents is both easier and harder than the grammar step. It’s easier because there is only one question we need parents to ask their students, though it can be asked in many ways: “How are term A and term B related?” or “Compare and contrast term A and term B,” or “How does term A cause term B?” This second step examines relationships among the terms already studied. It’s required because logic is the process, in any area of study, of making connections, learning how the pieces fit together. So, it’s easier because it is all about relationship.

It’s harder because the students’ responses are not as objectively right or wrong as they are in the grammar step. Our parents’ anxiety may well up again at this stage—how can I know whether my kid understands these connections if I do not already understand them? But parents, like teachers, should never work harder than their kids.⁵ The parents’ very question of how to know whether a student is correctly understanding relationships will lead the parents into the third step of the trivium technique.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric may be defined as “an ability in each [particular] case to see the available means of persuasion.”⁶ In other words, this is finding the way to prove your case. And, it is also the solution to

evaluate, summarize, narrate, or describe. And by the time a parent works his child through these grammar, logic, and rhetoric steps of studying, the child should know not only the things he is studying and how they are

. . . by the time a parent works his child through these grammar, logic, and rhetoric steps of studying, the child should know not only the things he is studying and how they are related, but also how to explain them persuasively to others.

our parents’ dilemma in the logic step. A father need not have prior knowledge that A propositions and O propositions are related as contradictories in order to help his son with logic. He only needs to be armed with four simple words, “Prove it to me.” A mother doesn’t have to know that Aristotle associated the deliberative form of rhetoric with the future time period in order to prepare her daughter for a rhetoric test. She just needs to say, “Prove it to me.”

Those four words require the student to articulate why the relationships they explained in the logic step exist. That one sentence commands the student to communicate why his answer is true. It places the burden of work upon the student, not the parent. “That’s what the book says” is not a sufficient answer to this request, though it could be the start of one. By the time the student has persuaded his parent that he knows what he is talking about, he should be well prepared to answer any essay question that begins with the words *explain*,

related, but also how to explain them persuasively to others.

This trivium technique necessitates certain conditions. First, we must know that these steps will not work with a student who rebels against the parents’ involvement, who willfully lies or who ignores parents’ questions. Clearly, these discipline issues must be handled first before the parents can assist the child. Next, we must recognize that the initial teaching of concepts still must occur in the classroom. The parents have delegated that authority to us by placing their children in our school. We want to give them the tools to help their children succeed, but we must not expect the parents to do the teachers’ job. Finally, we must encourage our students’ parents in this process. It will be time consuming, and there still will be times of frustration and confusion. But if more parents in classical, Christian schools know that they do not have to be Latin scholars, or logic whizzes, or debate champions, to help their

“But I never took logic!” . . .

kids receive the education they desire them to have, then those times of confusion can become fewer and further between. And the students in our schools will have not only teachers, but also parents, constantly training them both in subjects and in the tools of learning when they sit in their homes, or walk in the way, or lie down, or rise up.⁷

NOTES

1. Becta, “I’m stuck—can you help me? A report into parents’ involvement in school work at home,” 23 March 2010, <http://nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/stuckonschoolwork>.

2. Dorothy L. Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” <http://www.gbt.org/text/sayers.html>.

3. John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching: Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 54.

4. Ibid, 80.

5. Reference to Robyn R. Jackson’s *Never Work Harder than Your Students* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2009).

6. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 37.

7. Paraphrase of Deuteronomy 6:7 (NKJV).



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Mock Trial: Designed for Classical Christian Education

by Jeanette Faulkner, Ad Fontes Academy

In an era when words mean whatever they have to mean as long as the hearer believes or does what you want, an extracurricular called Mock Trial crushes that rebellious paradigm. That is only one reason mock trial provides critical training for classically and Christianly educated teens.

In mock trial, students assume the role of a prosecution or defense team as they enter a simulated court trial against another school. Student attorneys are required to learn a portion of the actual Federal Rules of Evidence and courtroom protocol in order to argue their case before real attorneys and judges. If the students object to evidence as “improper character evidence” when they should be objecting to “hearsay,” it doesn’t matter how they interpret the rule. The judge will overrule them, no dialoguing, and no corroborating, no postmodern feel-good moments. Precise words carry precise meaning.

Parents love mock trial for many reasons. Kids voluntarily cut their hair, wear a suit, and become adept at conversing with adults. Harvard offers a four-year, full-ride scholarship to any student on the national championship team. ACCS schools have found mock trial is a natural venue for students trained in logic and rhetoric; thus ACCS schools do well in this academic sport.

Usually, the State Bar Association sponsors the program. To find out how to register, google *high school mock trial* in your state.

Jeanette Faulkner teaches ancient and medieval literature, classical composition, and coaches mock trial for Ad Fontes Academy in Virginia. Ad Fontes is an ACCS accredited school.

Each fall, all teams receive the same case which is often based on a real-life trial. The case consists of six witness statements, pictures of exhibits, some supporting legal instructions and rules. The case

ACCS schools have found mock trial is a natural venue for students trained in logic and rhetoric; thus ACCS schools do well in this academic sport.

writers are evil geniuses who hide clues in the documents that could make the case winnable for either the prosecution or the defense. Finding the clues is what high school sharpies like to do best.

The next step is to find a legal coach. Your best bet is a parent in your school or church who is a litigator. They will be investing hours with the team, so this is a labor of love.

With your attorney coach, hold tryouts to choose three attorneys for each side and three witnesses for each side. The attorneys need to write a direct examination for their witness and a cross examination for a witness from the opponent’s school. Each side will choose a student to present their opening statement to the jury and another to deliver the closing statement. The witnesses need to know all the facts in their statement and take on the persona of their witness.

The beauty of this program is that mock trial is attainable for academic gee-whiz kids who can

argue a mustache off their father’s face, and for those who may not be academically gifted, but have a flair for the dramatic. A few of my best witnesses carried a C+ average.

Your students will surprise you because Jesus helps teenagers do things adults could only dream of making them do. Consider Eddie who came to Providence Classical School in Spring, Texas, as a sophomore. Eddie embodied the inner-city stereotype. He didn’t walk, he shuffled; he made

no eye contact, but only mumbled to his chest. Yet, Mom wanted him to be on the mock trial team.

I called my mentors, the coaches at Logos School in Idaho, Chris Schlect, Greg Dickison, and Jim Nance. They said to have Eddie read Dr. Seuss to me. *Rocks in My Socks* it was. They had me put him at one end of the parking lot and project his lines to me at the other end. Eddie wanted to learn and I learned what a hard worker Eddie was. We made Eddie a witness, the president of a software gaming company no less.

After our dress rehearsal, I heard his mother exclaim, “He talks! I didn’t know he could talk!” The next year Eddie was an attorney. Today he is on the Howard University Mock Trial Team, has successfully competed against Ivy League schools, and next year will enter law school.

In case you’re thinking this is impossible for you, consider my humble beginnings. Though I started mock trial programs at Regents School of Austin, Providence Classical School in Spring, Texas, and Ad Fontes Academy in Virginia, I’m really

Mock Trial . . .

not in high demand; my husband's career required job transfers. I wish I could tell you I had the command of classical orators that the Logos coaches do, but I was just a homeschool mom from Spokane, Washington, who discovered classical education in my kids' middle school years. I attended every conference and training opportunity Logos offered until my husband's job took us to Texas where I joined the Regent's faculty. When I petitioned for a mock trial program, the headmaster said, "Yes, and I'd like you to do it."

I knew nothing except what I observed at Logos. At teacher

training that summer, I literally took dictation as I peppered the Logos coaches with questions. With those notes in my clenched hand, we did exactly what they said. By our third year, we took fifth place out of 26 teams in Texas. Jim Nance gave me some of the best advice, "Read every word of your packet." Do it, every word from cover to cover.

Last year at the national competition, something wonderful happened. AFA was matched against Logos. I couldn't believe my team was behind the bar competing against the mother ship! Logos cleaned our clocks, of

course, but we emerged a stronger team for it. They modeled for my team how to be competent, but not pretentious; confident, but not arrogant; in short, how to do mock trial Christianly.

Now, many of my former students are in law school and have worked for congressmen or the Bush administration. Society needs young people who value precise communication, like Eddie who helped this grateful lady coach her team to back-to-back victories in Virginia. As the cliché goes, if I can do it, you can too. We'll be looking for your school at Nationals in the years to come.



2010 Chrysostom Oratory Competition



Champion
Anna Kitchen
Rockbridge Academy



Runner-Up
Krista Wilford
The Ambrose School

Congratulations, Anna and Krista!

The Grace of Warning

by Ted Trainor

In our Koine Greek class, the ninth graders learn the Greek word for gospel: euangelion (ew-ang-gae-leon). Literally translated, the term “gospel” is a compound of two word parts: “eu” means “good” and “angel” means “message.” The “good message” comes from the good messenger, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christ summarizes His message in many ways; meditate on this one: “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11: 27-30).

Consequently, we understand that all who rest in Christ grow more Christlike as they actively learn from Him. The more a believer learns to trust, the more a believer finds his earthly burdens bearable and lightened. However, the gospel’s goodness inherently compels listeners to hear the underlying warning in this passage: “Without Jesus, no one can know the Father. Reliance on self leads to restlessness. Ignoring the commands of Christ leads to pride and torment. All other allegiances weigh down and harden you.”

I heard a preacher term this other-side-of-the-gospel coin, “the grace of warning.” Think of all the instances Christ warns the Pharisees, “Woe to you . . .” Essentially, the preacher

surmised that the gospel coin is two sided: humility or woe to the prideful, selflessness or woe to the selfish, rest or woe to the restless, life or woe to the deathbound. Being saved is being saved from wrath and death. Thus, grace without warning is not grace.

In Christian education,

of schools: families. And, who feels the pressure more on a daily basis with regard to the topic at hand? One may consider teachers, in the place of parents, spend a good bit of time on grace and warning. But, the modern technical teacher in the modern age-segregated classroom (as if octuplets are rare

Essentially, the preacher surmised that the gospel coin is two sided: humility or woe to the prideful, selflessness or woe to the selfish, rest or woe to the restless, life or woe to the deathbound.

communicating the grace of warning to children by word and action is an immense challenge. Some Christian schools err when they emphasize one side of the coin only. For instance, the elitist-leaning school is austere, seldom flexible, my way or the highway, perfection with a byline in Latin which comes to mean, “Warning: Distinctively Classical and Christ-Centered or Else.” On the other hand, the roast-your-own-coffee-in-a-skillet set of Christian schools have simply asked people to pay what they can. After their typical financial demise, these schools and their constituents feel the sting from a misunderstanding and misapplication of mercy—the ideal of the other side of the grace coin: no cost, no sacrifice, all presumptive, willy-nilly, free ride, Christian utopia.

But schools are simply families doing life together, so when we look at schools under a magnifying lens, one sees the building blocks

enough in our day, who would ever invent schooling 16 or 20, let alone 30, first, fifth, or even eighth graders in one room!) wields a variety of tools to keep the institutionalized classroom machine running smoothly. Rather than teachers, the surer answer to the survey in question is: mom and dad. How much grace before a parent punishes? However, this is simply not even the right question. This question presumes reactive, angry, I’ve-had-it-up-to-here, you’ve-stepped-on-my-last-nerve parenting/discipleship. The proper question is: “How do I minister the gospel to my naturally sinful child in a way that clearly shows them the consequences of sin and law breaking?”

The key for answering this question means the magnifying lens magically morphs into a mirror. Are *you* prepared to model humiliation? Are *you* prepared to look at the log in your own eye? Do *you* take advantage of mercy yourself? Do you expect mercy? Do *you* enjoy submitting to authority? Do *you* consistently call out sin

Ted Trainor is the headmaster at Effingham Christian School in Rincon, Georgia. For more information, visit <http://www.effinghamchristian.org/>.

The Grace of Warning...

and enforce consequences for sin (e.g. laziness, disrespect, etc.)?

Ouch! I winced just writing these questions! Yet, I am compelled and convicted. Maybe, you are too. And, like you, I am perfectly imperfect and inconsistent. But, am I questioning my motives? Am I confessing my lack of faith and maturity? What do we do now?

First, bad habits often reveal sin and/or a presumptive view of mercy which cheapens the grace of God. Therefore, we start the process by humbling ourselves before the perfect Father in heartfelt repentance and confession, meditating on His mercy and reviewing His commands. This is the set-the-alarm-earlier wisdom which resets our spiritual clock for the day.

With this tone, we will confess our sin even when we wrong our children. Thus prepared, we forgo the yelling match between parent and child as the means for arriving at school on time. Then, parent and child spring from the car having given God the glory by delighting in obedience, joyfully submitting to authority, and edifying the other families of the school.

The utter challenge and consistent dilemma that every parent feels at home affects the school each day too. When children are visiting the headmaster's office at school consistently, when children are out of uniform consistently at school, when children are late for school consistently, when children are sitting out recess consistently,

when children are unprepared for class consistently, I begin to think it is time for the grace of warning. A temptation for all will be to cough, wheeze, and excuse the behavior due to "spring fever." Excusing sin is not grace. Excusing sin defaces grace. To truly appreciate the goodness God has provided in and through classical Christian schools, flip the grace coin over and heed the warning label!

Parents, we set the example; the children learn from us. Repentance, honest and sincere confession, and earnest fellowship are ironically the means and ends of the grace of warning. Grace without warning is not grace. Be graced by warning! And enjoy the fruit of the path of humility.

Education to What End?

by Dan Struble

Ideas have consequences¹. . . If we then ask the question, "Education to what end?," our answer will depend upon our answers to the great questions about the meaning and purpose of life, from which all the subordinate questions and answers flow. Across the ages, people have answered these fundamental questions in different ways, and the purposes and methods of education have changed accordingly. Let us now briefly trace some of the ways in which core beliefs have shaped the development of Western civilization, and likewise the development of education as we now know it.

The ancient world of Greece and Rome was pagan in its fundamental beliefs. People believed they were at the mercy of the gods, who were many, arbitrary, and powerful. The best

one could do was to be clever in appeasing the gods. Odysseus, the hero in Homer's *Odyssey*, was the archetype who cunningly played one god against another, but whose best efforts against, for example, the Cyclops or Scylla and Charybdis, still did not allow him to overcome fate, which had foretold that he alone of all his men would return to Ithaca. Honor was valued over life, such that a Spartan mother could say to her son, "Return with your shield [namely, with honor] or on it" [the Spartan way of returning the dead].

In the day-to-day world of these people, human life was tragic, cruel, and meaningless. In Sparta, the city council decided whether a newborn was big, strong, and healthy enough to live. If not, the baby was tossed off Mount Taygetus to shatter his or her helpless body, which would

rot on the jagged rocks below. In the more individualistic Athens, unwanted babies were placed in clay pots and left at the temples of the gods to die from the elements or to be consumed by animals.²

Inequality was obvious in the way of things. Slavery was normal. In Rome if a slave killed his master, all of the slaves of that master were killed. In one case, some 400 innocent men, women, and children were executed because of the misdeed of one.³ There was no sense of progress or direction in history, and no reason for hope; rather, life was a sad series of cycles, birth to death, and the endless repetition of seasons. And so life proceeded for many, many centuries.

Education in the pagan world focused on two main themes: physical training to prepare

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men for the ancient obligation of military service; and the study of the Muses, poets like Homer and Virgil, whose *Odyssey* and *Aeneas* were fundamental to the cultural tradition. The Greeks and Romans were interested in the development of heroic virtues and rhetoric (the ability to make moving speeches) because these were the essential skills for the building and governing of society.⁴ The link between character development and the health and coherence of society was at the core of the educational enterprise. The “good” was defined in terms of personal virtue that abetted civic ends.

You might be wondering about the Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who are often considered the founders of the Western intellectual tradition. It is important to note that in their day, they did not win the debate over the proper ends of education. Socrates, remember, was executed for corrupting the youth and for impiety. His impiety lay in his philosophical search for the good, which undermined belief in the gods who animated Greek culture.⁵ Socrates’ example teaches us that education can be a very dangerous activity indeed, and that what passes for truth in one’s own time may not be the final word.

Then along came Jesus, and Western civilization changed radically, but not all at once. In fact, it took centuries. There were millions of hearts and minds to change, over a vast area of territory ruled by the most expansive empire in the history of the West—one that persecuted those who refused to worship

Caesar and the Roman gods.

Beginning with the Apostle Paul in his famous speech on Mars Hill, Christians brought to Athens, Rome, and the West the radical notions that there is but one God; that *all* nations are “made of one blood”⁶ in the image of this living God and hence are imbued with meaning, significance, and personal dignity; and that we are called to love both God *and* our neighbors.

While some of the early Christians won converts by such disputations, David Bentley Hart tells us that many Christians “won renown principally for their sobriety, peacefulness, generosity, loyalty to their spouses, care for the poor and the sick, and ability, no matter what their social station, to exhibit . . . self-restraint, chastity, forbearance, and courage” in the face of persecution. For instance, the emperor Julian once remarked in a letter to a pagan priest: “It is a disgrace that these impious Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well . . . It is [the Christians’] philanthropy towards strangers, the care they take of the graves of the dead, and the affected sanctity with which they conduct their lives that has done the most to spread their [faith].”⁷

By the fourth century, Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, more likely reflecting the progress of Christianity in the Roman Empire than that of his personal devotion.⁸ Despite being known as a “violent, puritanical, ponderous, late Roman brute,”⁹ Constantine did end the official persecution of

Christians, thereby aiding the spread of the faith to much of Europe by the seventh century.

Christianity brought to the West a spiritual, cultural, and intellectual revolution of tremendous proportion. Christianity imbued human life with dignity—and hence, value—that made infanticide rare; that provided care to the poor, hungry, sick, lame, and elderly; that greatly increased the standing and rights of women; and that, over time, abolished gladiatorial games, human sacrifice, and slavery. Christianity created a new sense of the natural order and our place in it. No longer were people considered mere playthings of the gods; we now had dominion over the earth and all that was in it. The idea of having been created by a rational God made the natural order something to be discovered, and made discovery one means of worship. History now had purpose and direction.

Education in what had become Christendom changed to reflect the new answers to the fundamental questions. Initially Christians like St. Augustine adapted the Roman liberal arts tradition to Christian ends. Virtue was still the aspired end of education, but the definition of virtue was made compatible with Christianity. During the crumbling of Rome and through the “barbarian” invasions, Christianity kept learning alive in its monasteries.¹⁰ The great colleges and universities of Europe took root and grew from these monasteries. Philosophy and the philosophers who had lost the debate in ancient Greece (Plato and, especially, Aristotle) enjoyed a better reception in Christian Europe than they had

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in their own time and place. The Reformation, with its emphasis on the accessibility of the Scriptures to lay people, made the extension of education to all classes a priority. Finally, science as we know it came to flower only in Christendom¹¹ and eventually found a fertile home in its universities.

Much of this history has unfortunately been lost or obscured in the West. The severe brutality of the ancient world and the revolution that Christianity affected are little known, understood, or appreciated, and have often been devalued or reinterpreted, beginning with the “Enlightenment” thinkers of the seventeenth century.

The so-called “Enlightenment” affected its own history-changing intellectual revolution, which led to phenomenal political, economic, and cultural transitions. In this case, both the ancient gods and the Christian God were displaced by a new god—Reason.¹² Reason, universal and accessible to all who sought after it in the fashion of Socrates, would elevate the philosopher to the place of ruler in all spheres of human activity. The corresponding political revolution replaced government based on the idea of aristocratic virtue, with government based on the individual person’s fear of violent death; in other words, reasonable people would agree to limitations on their freedom if the state would, in return, provide military protection from outsiders and police protection from other citizens.¹³ Likewise, the economic revolution made a virtue of human nature’s inherent selfishness in a way that would cause people to be more productive. These political and economic revolutions were linked. In 1776, both the American Declaration of

Independence and Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, the founding document of capitalism, were published. Through these two documents, political and economic freedom were joined to create liberal democracy and capitalism—first in America, then throughout the West.

In the Enlightenment scheme for politics and economy, God’s role was greatly diminished because throughout Europe, the power of the church and tradition had to be broken to give Reason the sole authority to rule. Enlightenment thinkers, therefore, consciously worked to redefine matters of faith as being outside of the realm of knowledge—downgrading the status of faith to that of opinion only.¹⁴

Education would have to play an important role in a society ruled by Reason. Citizens would need to be prepared for their responsibilities, and scientists would need to be supported in their quest to tame all of nature for the benefit of humanity. Colleges and universities were critical in both areas as they equipped the teachers and leaders of the republic and trained and supported the scientists. The rule of Reason caused colleges and universities to grow and thrive as never before. Philosophy (the pursuit of truth) and science (once known as natural philosophy) became predominant within the university as never before. Thus, the cultivation of virtue as the leading “end” to be attained through education took a back seat and has largely withered away.

The American founders preserved a place for God—albeit one that was somewhat diminished—by grounding the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as

an endowment of the Creator, Nature’s God, and by explicitly assuming that liberty in a republic required a virtuous citizenry—a virtue that could only be properly nurtured through religion. For a century in most cases and longer in some, education in America continued to honor God and to “furnish the mind” and heart with explicit references to the Bible.¹⁵

Then along came Karl Marx, who took political science a step further and expelled God entirely and predicted the demise of capitalism and liberal democracy through a revolution of workers against owners. Lenin and his Russian successors worked to advance that revolution through a series of activities that eventually led to my personal encounter with the Soviet Navy.

Unlike its Christian and pagan predecessors, which reigned for a millennia or more, the Enlightenment’s reign has been cut short by its own critique of its basic premises. While the political regimes, economies, and universities promoted by the Enlightenment live on, the soul of each has been eviscerated by the nineteenth century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

Most educated Americans have heard that Nietzsche declared, “God is dead.”¹⁶ Fewer know that Nietzsche did not kill God, but merely proclaimed what Enlightenment philosophers had already done. Nietzsche exposed the fact that the Enlightenment philosophers wanted to have their cake and eat it, too: they took from Christianity its basic assumptions regarding the dignity of the person and the rational, predictable organization of nature, along with the values that flowed from biblical revelation (at least those

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they wanted), and then jettisoned the God who was the source of these fundamental commitments. Nietzsche mercilessly ripped this support out from under the Enlightenment philosophers.

Then he went a step further; Nietzsche killed Socrates (the icon of universal reason) all over again and, with Socrates, Reason and the underpinnings of Western rationalism.¹⁷ Without God or the godlike power of disembodied Reason, there was nothing left on which knowledge could stand. All knowledge became relative. All values became subjective. All forms of political and economic organization became a means for some to exercise power over others.

Higher education, which was well along in exorcising God from its hallowed halls, was left in a state of crisis.¹⁸ Without either God or Reason to validate its search for truth, without its former goal of cultivating virtue, what was it to do but teach us how to do things and to identify power relationships? This is the current state of post-enlightenment or post-modern thought.

In the practical world, Nietzsche's legacy has been the denial of universal truth-claims in favor of a freedom to choose that, in its fullest flowering, renders meaningless any distinction ". . . between good and evil, compassion and cruelty, love and hatred . . ."¹⁹

Ideas do have consequences. Our ideas lead to our actions, which influence the ideas and actions of others. We must be clear about our ideas. We must be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is within us, but we must do so with gentleness and respect.²⁰ Let us remember, as did the early Christians, that our actions speak louder than our words. . . .

NOTES

1. This sentence is a direct reference to Richard Weaver's classic work *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948) in which he argues that the catastrophes of our age are the product of unintelligent choice. The cure lies in the renewed acceptance of an absolute reality, in the right use of reason, and in the recognition that ideas—like actions—have consequences.

2. Christian Overman, *Assumptions That Affect Our Lives: How Worldviews Determine Values that Influence Behavior and Shape Culture* (Bellevue, WA: Ablaze Publishing Company, 2006), 38-40.

3. David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 122.

4. Bruce A. Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986), 16-22.

5. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1986), 275.

6. Acts 17:26 (King James Version).

7. Julian, Epistle 22, quoted in Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 45, 154.

8. Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 42, 45, 100, 127-128.

9. Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 100.

10. See, for example, Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story*

of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe (New York: Doubleday, 1995) and Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers*, 49-51.

11. Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 63.

12. See Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 284-293, who addresses the Enlightenment project's goal of rule by reason, and Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), Chapter 1, who discusses the need of education to serve a God or gods.

13. Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan*, 1651, originated this concept.

14. See, for example, Dallas Willard, *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), and Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 28.

15. The phrase "furnish the mind" and the role the Bible played in doing so within the American context comes from Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 56-60.

16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1891), *Prologue*, Part 2.

17. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 308.

18. See, for example, Norman Klassen and Jens Zimmerman, *The Passionate Intellect: Incarnational Humanism and the Future of University Education* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

19. Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 23.

20. I Peter 3:15.

He is the God of Fire Extinguishers: A Story of God's Provision

by Jerry Williams, Providence Academy

We had everything worked out. At least, I thought we did. The plumbers had fixed the burst pipes in the used modular classrooms, which apparently had been sitting in Virginia with water in the pipes, and the preceding cold winter had taken its toll. And although the

“... for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” Matthew 6:8

Johnson City (Tennessee) Electric Department had said that it could be two to four weeks before our electricity would be hooked up, out of nowhere they showed up one morning and—we did indeed have electricity . . . finally. As I said, it was all coming together . . . and I thought we had everything worked out. Little did I know that God was about to make His presence known even more dramatically.

The setting was August 2000. Providence Academy (Johnson City, TN) was utilizing the facility at Mountain View Baptist Church on the Bristol Highway. We had been there since 1994. The problem was that we were running out of space. The church building also housed a daycare downstairs, and there simply weren't enough classrooms. We had already added a two-room modular building adjacent to the church for our first grade classes. Now we were adding a high school—and we simply needed more space.

I had found some used modular classrooms in Virginia that were

in relatively good condition. The problem was that Mountain View Church was located on city property, but the land adjacent to the church, where we would place the modular classrooms, was in the county. The city had already informed us it wouldn't work. There was a required setback of so many feet for the modular units; additionally, no one located on county property had ever been allowed to tap into the city water and sewer system—at least, not to this point. So, of course, we prayed. And after a lengthy visit with the property owners (which was made up of a group of brothers and sisters from Florida and Tennessee who had to be unanimous in their vote to allow us to use the property), and a city official, and a county official, and a representative from the church—what seemed to be impossible became a possibility because God, in His mercy, intervened. We were told we could set our modular classrooms on this *county* property and tap into the *city* sewer and water and that they'd even waive the setback requirement.

Like I said earlier, it was coming together. We had not expected to have to send the plans for the modular classrooms to Nashville to get them approved; but because they had been approved only for Virginia usage, we did. That threw us off schedule by about two months, but here we were in August, only a few days from the opening of the school year, and the modular classrooms had arrived, just prior to the start of faculty in-service. The classrooms sat at the top of the hill in the mud—with

no electricity, with broken pipes, with no steps or ramps for access into them, and no walkway, only mud, *but at least they were here.*

Faculty in-service began with an honest “Do you really believe they'll be ready before next Monday, the first day of school?” from the faculty. It didn't seem humanly possible. But, we had no other alternative. Remember, there was not adequate classroom space within the church building. The modular classrooms simply *had* to be ready by Monday. It sure didn't look promising, especially with the mud, and burst pipes, and no electricity. So, we circled up, joined hands, and asked God to intervene. Then we went about our business preparing for the upcoming school year and the students that would arrive the following Monday.

It didn't all happen at once, the way that God began to provide. But things did slowly begin to happen as we continued to pray, and we had no doubt that He was intervening. To borrow a line from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, “Aslan was on the move.” The plumbers showed up and solved our plumbing problems. Out of the blue, the electric company came and hooked up our power. One of the board members had a friend who said that he could come in and prepare the property around the units and even build our decks, stairs, and ramps—that week. It was all coming together.

On Wednesday I phoned the state fire marshal and asked him if he could come by on Friday to inspect the units and provide us with a certificate of occupancy. He chuckled. Really. You see, he had already driven by the property on the way to another job and

Jerry Williams is the school administrator at Providence Academy in Johnson City, Tennessee. Providence Academy is a charter member of ACCS.

He is the God of Fire Extinguishers . . .

saw our units sitting in the mud. He had concluded that a Friday visit would be a waste of his time because there was no way they would be ready. I assured him that it was all coming together. Although it wasn't ready right then, I was hopeful, prayerfully hopeful, that all would be ready when he showed up on Friday at 2:00 p.m. to inspect the units.

Thursday was a wonderful day. The plumbing was completed. We had running water. The excavation around the units was finished. Workers were throwing down grass seed and straw. We had electricity. The steps and decks were slowly being built. I scheduled the fire alarm people to come Friday morning, which I thought was the last piece needed before inspection. Indeed, it was all coming together.

The Friday of inspection is a day that I will remember for the rest of my life. As a faculty and administration we had met that morning to prepare for the day and to give God glory for His provisions to that point. There was still work to be done, but it was a beautiful sunny day and things were sure to be in order by the time the 2:00 inspection rolled around.

Feeling confident of this, I made my rounds and was eventually back at the school office. I sat down and looked at the clock. It was 12:00 noon. The fire marshal would be here in two hours. Were we ready? I thought we were. Then it hit me! If I could have seen myself from a distance, I surely would have seen my jaw dropped open, my shoulders slouched, and a general look of panic on my sullen face. I remember saying aloud, as I was the only person in the office: "Oh no! I forgot the fire extinguishers!"

Everything else was definitely coming together, but how in the world, knowing that the "fire" marshal was coming, did I forget that we'd *have* to have tested fire extinguishers in place, one in each room, before we'd ever be issued a certificate of occupancy? At this point in the story I'll simply ask you to pay close attention because what happened next is truly remarkable.

"Excuse me, is anyone in here?" came the voice from the office door.

"Yes," I replied. "How can I help you?" (I was still in a state of shock thinking about how I had forgotten the fire extinguishers.)

"I noticed that there is a school that meets in the building. Do you know where I could find a school official?"

"Well, I'm the school administrator," I said. "What can I do for you?"

"I was just curious—you don't happen to need any fire extinguishers, do you?"

Try, if you can, to imagine the shock that came over my face when asked this question. "As a matter of fact, I do," I replied. "How many do you have?"

"How many do you need?"

"Well, I need four."

"Perfect. That's exactly how many that I have in my truck."

I walked this man, whom I had never met before and have not seen since, up to the modular classrooms and instructed him where the fire extinguishers should go. He shared with me that he had finished work early on a Friday afternoon and was heading back to the office when he looked over his shoulder, while driving down the state highway in front of the church/school, and noticed the modular classrooms. He said that, out of the blue, he made a U-turn and proceeded up the drive to the school. I then

told him how I had forgotten the fire extinguishers and all that God had done for us that week. He informed me that he was a Christian, and we both smiled as we considered what God had done.

After this angel from God left, I went back to my office, put my head in my hands, prayed a short prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord, and then wept. I wept because I was overcome by the mercy of God. How could the God of the universe care about such small details? It was so apparent that HE all along had made sure we'd be ready for school to begin on Monday. And then at the end, just so Jerry Williams wouldn't somehow be tempted to try to get the glory, He stepped in and did something so incredible, and with such perfect timing (two hours before the fire marshal would arrive and thirty seconds after I realized that we had no fire extinguishers) so that He and He alone would get the glory.

This story, which we simply refer to as the "Fire Extinguisher Story," is a rock of remembrance we will continue to tell the students at Providence Academy so that they will see how that God is the provider and builder of our school. Matthew 6:8 says, ". . . *for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*" God cares about the formation of Christian schools. He cares about the classical Christian school movement. This attempt to repair the educational ruins in our country through the establishment of classical and Christ-centered schools is a work that God Himself is doing. He allows us to be a part of it, but He is our provider—and He shows His provision in different ways to each school. With us He happened to use fire extinguishers. With other schools He provides and

He is the God of Fire Extinguishers . . .

shows His hand differently.

The same is true of God's working in our individual lives. Philippians 1 reminds us "that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." What God has started He is able to complete. He sowed a seed of faith in our hearts, and He is able to keep us as His own. He is raising up Christian families that desire a Christian education for their children. God is responding to that need via the classical Christian school

movement. And sometimes it's nice to go back to those stones and remember how God has provided. This increases our faith so that we can, with confidence, continue forward to the task at hand.

By the way, the fire marshal showed up right on time at 2:00, and we were issued a certificate of occupancy. But before he arrived, God showed up right on time as well.

May God, the Lord of even fire extinguishers, be glorified!



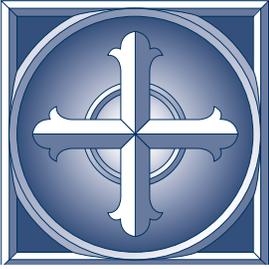
Classical Education

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.



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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