CLASSIS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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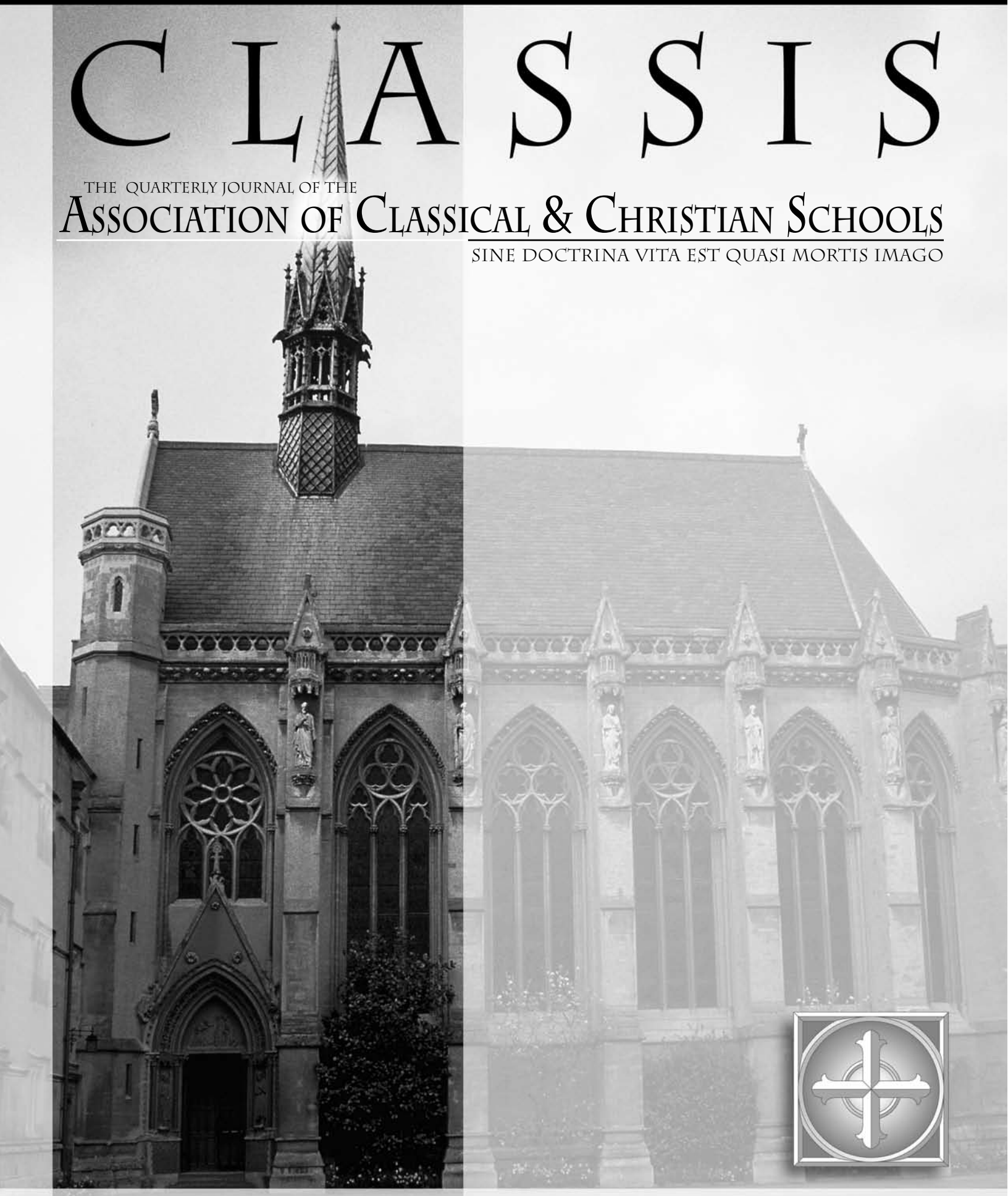

AUTUMN • 2008 VOLUME XV • NUMBER 3

Christian Education

What Constitutes Christian for ACCS?

ACCS Board

Approved June 27, 2001

Christian

We address "Christian" first because we are first, and foremost, Christian schools. Our understanding of all things, including all things pertaining to education, is shaped by Christian truth. Thus, to acquire a sufficient understanding of classical education, one must first be able to view it from a Christian perspective. While in other ages and other times, the "Christian" in classical education was assumed, today it is not so. Given the present state of affairs, we believe it is important to clearly spell out the Christian presuppositions that underlie classical and Christian education.

The ACCS Confession of Faith defines the scope and elements of Christian truth individuals or organizations must affirm to be considered for membership in the ACCS. We see no need to add a second definition here as the Confession is sufficient. However, we do want to emphasize certain principles inherent in the Confession of Faith as they relate to education:

Sovereignty

God is sovereign. He possesses absolute authority over all things. He has created all things, sustains all things, and governs all things. He is the fountain of all being and truth. He works all things together for His own glory.

Antithesis

The principles by which believers live are squarely opposed to the principles by which unbelievers live. The Scriptures are clear that we are to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Thus, to provide a God-centered and truly Christian education, it is necessary to break completely free from the educational philosophies that surround us. We must build from the ground up, with the Scriptures as the foundation, both our educational philosophies and the framework in which we understand and present all subject matter.

Worldview

Christianity is more than a set of propositions supported by proof-texts. It is rather an entire system of thought. A worldview shapes our perspective and interpretation of everything in the world. Christianity must be viewed as a whole and not just as a collection of discrete elements. The Christian worldview is the "lens" through which we see, understand, and teach all things. It is antithetical to all other worldviews and thus requires that we present all ideas and concepts as part of a larger whole defined by Christian truth.

Neutrality

Because God is sovereign over all of His creation, there is no aspect of creation that does not reflect His glory and truth; hence, there is no place, subject, or issue that is neutral and that does not point to the Creator of all.

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Sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago

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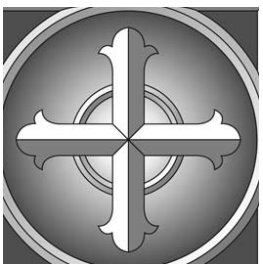

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Culture and Curriculum

By Bryan Lynch

"The medium is the message" stated Marshall McLuhan. That is, the way an idea is presented or delivered may often communicate more powerfully than the content of the message itself. Following McLuhan, Neil Postman has written (in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*) about the impact of television on our times. He is not concerned with the foolish or salacious content of the programs, but with the assumptions television makes—and trains in its viewers—about the world. The fast-paced, rapidly changing image, the need to constantly grab attention, the lack of challenging content, all communicate to the viewer, unconsciously, that the rest of the world ought to resemble television in these ways. We see the impact in education, religion, and politics. In a similar way, the curriculum of a school greatly impacts its culture, and in turn the culture acts as a powerful, if unseen, curriculum.

Curriculum, the course of study presented to students, teaches what is important by what it presents and what it ignores; by the questions it asks and those it leaves unasked or unanswered; by what it has the students fix their minds on, or meditate on. It shapes the very intellectual and spiritual air they breathe and in the end it creates a certain kind of person. Character—or virtue—is not just a matter of didactic instruction or principles derived from reading in theology or literature. The curriculum itself teaches by its inclusion or exclusion, and by the goal it is set up to achieve.

C.S. Lewis, in *The Abolition of Man*, tells us that Aristotle says that "the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought." Education is never merely the transfer of data. It is the enculturation of values from one generation to the next. Again, as Veritas' mission statement puts it, education is the cultivation of wisdom, virtue and godliness. Lewis writes about education as older birds showing younger birds how to fly. A very important part of that, of course, is learning what as well as how to think. Training the mind is critical, and academic skills, along with enduring knowledge, are vital. But the training of hearts goes together with the training of minds and bodies. Learning to live well and rightly is an inseparable part of learning. The well-educated person ought to be a good person. In fact, knowledge without virtue is dangerous. The culture, then, in which a student learns, is every bit as important as what he or she learns, and is often the most lasting part of what is learned.

...The culture, then, in which a student learns, is every bit as important as what he or she learns, and is often the most lasting part of what is learned.

Those who believe that schools are neutral institutions where "facts about things" are moved from one brain (teacher) to another (student) have failed to grasp the larger impact of the culture and curriculum. Education is not a neutral process and schools are not value-neutral places. Beyond even the topics discussed inside or outside the classroom, the very culture and curriculum of the school present students with clear and lasting, although perhaps unrecognized, impressions about truth, God, and life.

The overt culture of the school, consisting of school rules and behavioral expectations, is of critical importance to the growth of young people. How students are trained to treat one another and adults shapes them. But the curriculum itself is a silent shaper. The aim of the content is in many ways as powerful as the environment of the school, perhaps even more powerful because it is often unrecognized, assumed, and un-discussed. Rarely is the ultimate aim of the curriculum self-consciously addressed, much less how the mission of the school relates to it.

In a classical Christian school the purpose of the school is something other than social integration or job training, or even preparation for college. If a curriculum is designed to do one of these, then the message to students is: this is what matters, this is how one ought to live, not just in school but in the world in general. What

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Culture and Curriculum...

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we teach must be thoughtfully selected because it is not just content or even academic skills that are passed on but an idea about living itself. In ACCS schools, the curriculum emphasizes a core of learning that supports our mission to "cultivate wisdom, virtue, and godliness." All students learn to sing, all study the arts, all are helped to develop as well-rounded human beings made to live out the image of God in their world. Instruction in the truths of Scripture and of the Christian faith continues throughout their school years, and not just in the theology classes. The study of math and science, of history and literature, is carried out in an orderly and coordinated way meant to help students grow in their knowledge of the world around them. Growth in eloquent speech and writing allows them to communicate these truths to others. What we hope this curriculum permanently stamps within students is that the important things of this life are an understanding of, and love for, God's truth in its many forms, as well as the ability to explain them to others.

In many respects, what is really taught in schools is a way of thinking and living. The environment of the school—what is seen as the right way to live and treat others—is often a very lasting lesson, regardless of the important efforts of subject-area teachers. In this sense, the culture is the curriculum.

Students may, it is true, ultimately reject the implications of the culture they are imbibing. Some of us who grew up in the curriculum and culture of public schooling in the 60s and 70s have seen it for what it was and have rejected it. Yet how much was lost or damaged along the way? What opportunities were missed because the culture we had assumed to reflect reality steered us in certain directions? And how much of the culture created by that curriculum has persisted in shaping our way of looking at the world without us even knowing it?

Christian schools must consider these things to be sure that the underlying message of the curriculum and culture is what they want. Christian parents also ought to take all this seriously into consideration when thinking about the training of their children in the "fear and admonition of the Lord." What culture is being transferred to students in the school? What is being said—explicitly and implicitly—about what is the right way to live, about how to treat others, about how to think about God and the things of God?

The stated curriculum influences the culture of a school and in many ways the culture itself makes up a vital part of a school's curriculum. What is taught and how, and with what assumptions about the world and our place in it, are what schools are about. And just as a curriculum varies from place to place, so will the school culture—and so will the eternal lessons students take into their souls and with them into their lives.

ACCS Accredited Members

Ad Fontes Academy
Centreville, Virginia
May 2002

Berean Academy
Tampa, Florida
April 2005

Cary Christian School
Cary, North Carolina
May 2002

Foundations Academy
St. Ambrose Christian High School
Boise, ID
May 2006

Logos School
Moscow, Idaho
January 2000

Mars Hill Academy
Mason, Ohio
October 2005

Providence Classical Christian School
Lynnwood, Washington
June 2004

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April 2006

Regents School of Austin
Austin, Texas
April 2002

Rockbridge Academy
Millersville, Maryland
January 2004

Schaeffer Academy
Rochester, Minnesota
June 2006

The Oaks:
A Classical Christian Academy
Spokane, Washington
January 2007

Veritas Academy
Leola, Pennsylvania
December 2002

Veritas School
Newberg, Oregon
October 2007

Westminster Academy
Memphis, Tennessee
April 2002

Students and School Culture

Toward a Christ-Centered Student Community

By Ryan Evans

If you had to take a quick pulse of the student culture at your school, where would you start? Here are several questions for a quick assessment: Do students act a certain way in class, and carry themselves completely differently in the hallways and at recess? During field trips do observers see your students as paragons of politeness and respect? Do older students know the names of the younger students (do they even see each other during the day)? Do your athletic teams routinely win sportsmanship awards? Are new students warmly embraced? Does a sense of godly joy pervade student interactions?

Academic excellence ought to be central to our mission in classical Christian schools, but it is only part of the manifestation of Christ-like character.

Functional Communities

Stephen Vryhof writes about healthy school cultures in his book, *Between Memory and Vision: The Case for Faith-Based Schooling*. The ideal culture, says Vryhof, is rooted in what he calls "functional community," that is, "a shared understanding of what the world is about, what is important, and how the group should live…"[1] A prerequisite to a Christ-like student culture is an environment where a common vision is shared by parents, faculty, staff, and board.

Perhaps the single most important contributor to the student culture is the school's admission policy. Is your school mission to educate and disciple students solely from Christian families, or does it include evangelizing those outside of the faith? Either can be a faithful mission, but will have radical effects on student culture. In a functional community students are taught a common language, and they more easily adapt to school standards rooted in God's Word. Unbelieving students in a school with an evangelistic mission may outwardly still follow the rules, but the effects on the "hidden curriculum" can be drastic (Galatians 5:7-9).

In Pursuit of Character: Toward a Christ-Centered Student Culture

Are academics and college placement the top priority, or does the school communicate that character and virtue are equally important to G.P.A.? What does your typical graduate look like? Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education." Academic excellence ought to be central to our mission in classical Christian schools, but it is only part of the manifestation of Christ-like character.

In *Reclaiming the Future of Christian Education*, Al Greene writes, "A love that is able to empathize with another's problem or pain, a compassion that recoils from the temptation to make cutting or belittling remarks, a willingness to help those in need—these are the qualities that make up true community."[2] Because it's easy for students at rigorous schools to tacitly assume that grades trump character, we must work to promote and actively recognize virtue in our students.

A list of programs is no recipe for an organic godly student culture. Certainly grace, repentance, and forgiveness must permeate our hallways, for we all fall short of perfection. Yet despite our fallen natures, below are some ideas to help move away from a self-serving, hypocritical student culture toward one that is Christ centered and stewardship-oriented.

The Older Shall Serve the Younger

The goal in a K-12 setting should be harmonious interaction between the little ones and the older ones. When older students greet younger ones in the morning with a warm smile and a hug, it's a sign of a healthy student culture. Some ideas:

•A reading buddies program not only enhances reading skills

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Students and School Culture

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for younger students, but offers the opportunity for some of the younger secondary students to minister to the little ones.

• Gathering together in all-school assemblies preserves a sense of solidarity, promotes fellowship across grade levels, and builds community.

• We have older students serve hot lunch to the younger ones on a weekly basis, or help carry the younger ones around in wheelbarrows during our annual jog-a-thon.

• Even facilities are important—a shared building helps students mingle and live together, allowing older students to greet the younger ones by name in the morning, to give them a hug, or just an encouraging smile (Matthew 10:42).

Acknowledge Virtue Throughout the Curriculum

Faculty and staff must promote unity and compassion, and not tolerate students treating or speaking to one another unkindly. Anytime a teacher allows disrespect he condones and encourages students to continue in it. Ideas to consider:

• Teach biblically-centered gender differences. Having girls go first in line and boys hold doors open for girls helps teach the boys to lead and serve.

• Seek opportunities to acknowledge godly character in students. A highlight at our school is the year-end awards assembly, where we emphasize character, specifically at the secondary level. The Student Character Award is solely a student-nominated award, and each student writes specific comments about their nominees to be read at the assembly. Six to eight students are commended and students' comments about their character are read to the whole school. They are called to the front amid enthusiastic applause from students and parents as we all rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15).

• When completing report cards, spend as much time on meaningful comments as you do on grades. Move beyond "Pleasure to have in class" to more meaningful, personal comments regarding a student's character strengths as observed at school.

Building a Healthy Secondary Culture

Manifestations of cultural problems tend to look worse at the secondary level, and it's important to look for ways to promote a sense of counter-cultural ethos. Ideas:

• Protocol is a great way to encourage students to learn how to act as godly young men and women, get to know each other better, and have a great time in an environment absent of a dating culture. (See Sandra Boswell's book *Protocol Matters* for more information).[3]

• A House system at the secondary level, where students are initiated into a group with traditions and student interaction across grades 7-12, allows older students to lead and serve, modeling for the younger ones appropriate, Christ-like behavior.

• Provide opportunities for students in the secondary school to meet in small, gender-specific groups to discuss with a teacher mentor various issues pertaining to godly virtue. Raising the awareness of what a healthy culture looks like helps them to pursue it.

This past year our volleyball coach was unable to host the end-of-season team party. No worries. Without being asked, our two seniors on the team took the role of setting up the party, giving awards, and demonstrating leadership worthy of true stewards. They did this not to attract attention, but to serve Christ by loving others. As one author writes, "The sublime premise of a classical education asserts that right thinking will lead to right, if not righteous, acting."[4] May the culture of students at our schools adequately reflect this noble and biblical pursuit.

ENDNOTES

[1]Stephen Vryhof, *Between Memory and Vision: The Case for Faith-Based Schooling*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004).

[2]Albert Greene, *Reclaiming the Future of Christian Education*. (Colorado Springs: Purposeful Design Publications, 2003).

[3]Sandra Boswell, *Protocol Matters: Cultivating Social Graces in Christian Homes and Schools* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2006).

[4]David V. Hicks, *Norms and Nobility: A Treatise on Education*. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999).

2008 Regional Teacher Training Events

November 7-8
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Classical Christian Educators Conference

Phoenix Coalition of Classical Christian Schools

Do You Like What You See?

By Thomas R. Garfield

True confessions: as with too many things, it took us (Logos School), a lot of years to discover that there was more going on at our school than academic rigor and emphasizing biblical patterns of behavior. It slowly dawned on us that we needed to re-think everything we do and present to the students in light of truth, goodness, and particularly **beauty**. What we came to realize was that the very culture of the school was being shaped, not by us, but by whatever was currently hip in American culture. It was sort of like, after putting up with the foul smell and look of your backyard for years, you actually investigate and discover that your neighbor is using your property as his personal land fill! Gross. That's actually not a bad allegory.

In short, we determined that we had a lot of clean-up work to do. Then we needed to decide, how did we want our "backyard" to look anyway?

Your school WILL have a culture. The only choices you have are: who will set the culture and how will it look? By "culture" I mean all the elements that affect the lives of the kids while at school, e.g., the look of the halls and rooms, the music they learn and hear, the way they and the staff dress, the kinds of programs the school has —their content and point, etc. Will truth, goodness, and beauty be unchangeable principles? Where do we start in setting priorities?

Delight in students—a welcoming aroma

Not to be crass, but kids are a lot like horses—they know who's in the saddle and they know whether or not that person is in control or not. They also know if the rider is relaxed, confident, and enjoying the ride. Do you really delight in the kids, or have you allowed a government school attitude of "us vs. them" to creep in? One litmus test is the kind of talk that teachers exchange about certain kids in the staff room or after school. Yes, we all have knuckle-headed boys and clueless girls at times. We can and should recognize their issues, but do we seek their best interests or just get upset with them or even mock them behind their backs? Believe the Word: you can't have fresh and salt water coming out of the same faucet (your mouth) very well. The kids know in the halls, in the classrooms, on the playground, even in Macy's after school, which teachers really love them and which don't. Love expressed well permeates the school like the aroma of newly baked bread fills a home.

Love the students and practice practical beauty in all you do and your school will begin to develop a culture that honors Christ.

A clear purpose for all things, tied to philosophy—no anomalies

Your school's philosophy should be so well constructed that literally every single thing you do and have in your school can be traced easily, with no twists or breaks, back to one of your philosophical statements. This means you don't have programs just because every other school does them, you don't have rules that don't tie to scriptural principles, you don't even have classrooms decorated arbitrarily. An anomaly, by the way, is anything (e.g. a program, tradition) floating out there, unattached to any written purpose.

For example, speaking of room decor, we've done some radical rethinking since we began. When we first moved into our own place, I was of the mind set that literally everything in the rooms—walls and even ceilings— should teach/remind the students. What this really led to was a profusion of clutter and distractions. We were sending conflicting signals to the kids: "We want you to pay attention to the teacher, but there are lots of really neat things hanging around to look at if you want." In addition, the vast majority of purchased display materials, particularly for the younger set, are done up in blaring primary colors (red, yellow, blue), with a great emphasis on the cute factor. Don't get me wrong, I am a fan of teddy bears (considering their origin), but let's leave them at home.

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Do You Like What You See?...

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Instead, how about decorating a room to feel more like a pleasant study area? Use muted neutral tones (vs frosty white) on the walls along with a few, framed art prints (I strongly suggest N.C. Wyeth, Vermeer, Rembrandt, Monet, etc.); as much natural light as you can get; quality carpeting, and attractive (albeit functional) furniture. We determined to remove the ugliest furniture in the high school classrooms, i.e. the metal desks, and replace them with stained oak tables and chairs. Yes, they are much more expensive and easy to vandalize. However, the message the students get speaks volumes: we want them to be surrounded by beauty and we trust them to care for their school's furniture properly.

No apologies - men and women are different, delightfully!

Delighting in and loving the students and having them show consideration for each other in the details of living, highlights the God-ordained differences in men and women. Do not accept, at any level, the lie our culture tells us that men and women are essentially the same and should be treated accordingly. Delight in and honor the differences! That's why girls' football teams or guys' baby care classes are so repulsive.

A great practical example of promoting these differences through a program is dancing. Dance in your school! Every student should learn to waltz—what a great way to illustrate men's leading and consideration, and women's respect in following a good man. Younger students learn various dance steps (Virginia Reel, polkas, etc.) during elementary and junior high PE classes. Balls are held by older students for younger ones as fund-raisers. Dancing is an important and greatly anticipated part of what we call our Knights' Festival during the winter—three days of celebrating, feasting, giving thanks, speeches, chess, baking, sword fights (guys), archery (girls), and singing.

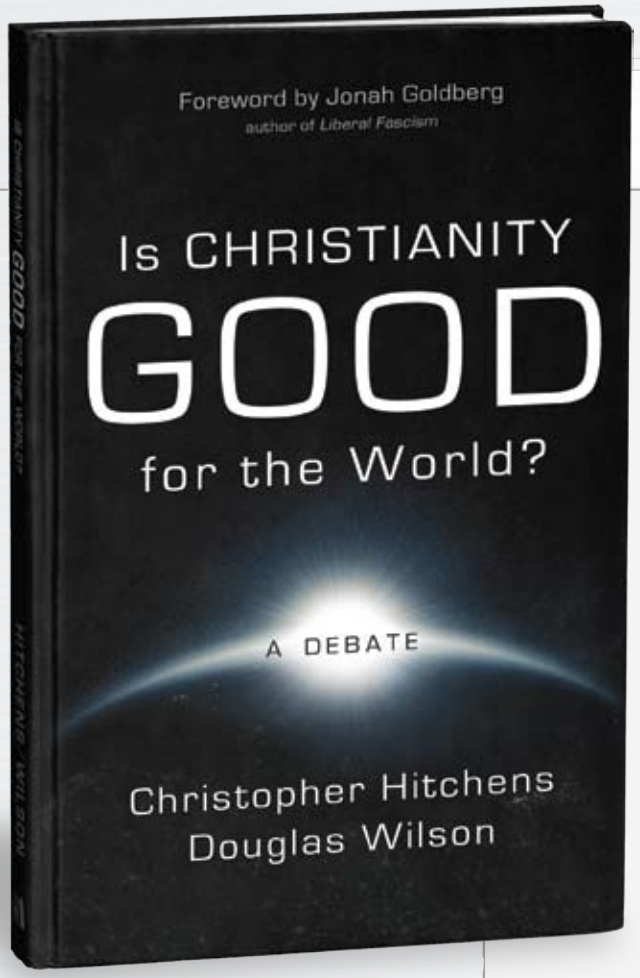
Not just "no", but "yes" to edifying, beautiful alternatives

This idea of dancing in school, under adult guidance and instruction, is also a great way to say "yes" to a wonderful alternative to what the world offers our kids. Christian schools have been way too quick and efficient at saying "no" to many things. Often that is the correct response to the modern culture. But our Father seldom says "no," without saying "yes" to something better. We need to imitate Him in that.

For instance, as with many Christian schools we say "no" to all that goes on in a typical prom setting (run the mental video tape). Instead we say "yes" to an evening we call Protocol night. The high school students are given special times of instruction (during several class periods) in everything from how to use the right fork to dressing well, to the right way to escort a young lady, or to be escorted. Then they are released from school early on the big day, they go home, put on tuxes and formals, gather for parental photo times, then head off to the big city for a tasty and tasteful meal at a fancy restaurant, followed by attending a musical production or play. Even our elementary kids look forward to the time when they can go on Protocol nights. There are many other examples, but you need to be creative in how to say yes, while explaining an appropriate no.

Love the students and practice practical beauty in all you do and your school will begin to develop a culture that honors Christ.

Apologetics in Action.



What do you say?

Just about all of us have run into someone who wants to question us about the problem of evil, the paradox of hypocritical Christians, the seeming "absurdity" of faith. And usually we don't get to say all we wanted or intended to. But one of the best ways to learn is by observation. So we'd like to suggest this short read—it's fun and witty, but more than that, it's apologetics in motion; it's watching the faith defended with the opportunity to take notes in the margins. It's another chance to prepare.

Christopher HITCHENS vs. **Douglas WILSON**

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Book Reviews: *Checking for Understanding* and *The Art and Science of Teaching*

Reviewed by Bryan Lynch

Those of us in classical Christian schools are sometimes wary of the latest education guru touting the method of the day that will save education. We're not alone. In my first twenty years of teaching, spent in a public high school, many of the teachers I taught with had become quite cynical as they saw old ideas recycled and the pendulum of educational emphasis swing back and forth over the course of their careers. Sometimes good ideas were just not doable given available resources. Some ideas were just plain bad. But while a healthy skepticism toward the established education system may be justified, it would be a mistake to ignore everything that comes our way from it. After all, some good *can* come from Nazareth. Such is the case with *Checking for Understanding* and *The Art and Science of Teaching*, two recent publications from the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development. These books provide a wealth of good ideas that all teachers, new or experienced, classical or otherwise, would profit from incorporating into their approach to their classrooms.

In *Checking for Understanding,* authors Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey provide a summary of the differences between formative and summative assessment, and then go on to detail practical ways in which teachers can be sure that their students are indeed learning what the teacher thinks is being taught. This emphasis on formative (or "informative," "on-going") assessment in this book is meant to help teachers avoid the too-frequent and puzzling situation where a group of students did not perform well on a test or assignment, even though the teacher spent a lot of time *apparently* teaching the subject. Formative assessments are meant to provide teachers with constant feedback on student understanding so that they can, if needed, modify instruction (e.g., reteaching, differentiating, etc.). In addition, well-designed formative assessment lets students know how they are doing so that they can be more self-conscious and self-regulating in their learning.

Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom

by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development,
Alexandria, VA, 2007,
pp 158, $26.95

In a recent teacher training day at our school this book was at the center of our morning. Teachers divided up into teams to become "experts" on one of the three dozen techniques discussed by the authors, and then presented their strategy to the rest of group, having the teachers practice that strategy. Because many of the techniques in the book can be done in a few minutes, even seconds, they were easily learned and taught to others. For example, response cards, value line-ups, and whip arounds provide teachers (and students) with a very quick check on student ideas or learning. Other strategies, such as "read-write-pair-share" can be adapted to be more thorough, in-depth assessments. Experienced teachers will recognize many of these strategies as old friends. The great service the authors have done all teachers is to put these into one place and into the context of the very important step of formative assessment.

The Art and Science of Teaching is well organized, with chapter headings in the form of questions: "What will I do to help students effectively interact with new knowledge?" and "What will I do to help students practice and deepen their understanding of new knowledge?" Some of these topics are not as useful, perhaps, to very experienced teachers: "What will I do to recognize and acknowledge adherence and lack of adherence to classroom rules and procedures?". One of the more interesting aspects of reading the research and theory summaries in each chapter,

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Book Reviews...

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and the steps meant to be based on that research is that, in all likelihood, it was all there in the works of John Milton Gregory, or Quintilian, or some other of the older writers on education. What good research tends to confirm is what good teachers already knew to be the case. (I once did a comparison for the teachers at my school of a best-selling book on brain research and Gregory's *Seven Laws of Teaching*. What was remarkable—though not surprising—was how much agreement there was between the implications of cutting-edge research and the understanding of a keen observer of children.) This does not render the research useless, of course, but rather sound research confirms reality. And it tends to be persuasive when we can point to Comenius and contemporary science for why we teach what we do.

The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction

by Robert Marzano

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA, 2007, pp 221, $26.95

What Marzano provides is not a radical approach to education, but very practical methods that are made readily available to teachers. In the chapter "What will I do to help students effectively interact with new knowledge?" research and theory are briefly discussed, and then a variety of classroom strategies are summarized, and "action steps" provided. The practical methods are very concrete actions that teachers can implement to work toward solving the question raised in the chapter. For example, the action step on "providing opportunities for students to practice skills, strategies, and processes" suggests a number of characteristics: initially provide structured practice sessions spaced close together, then provide practice sessions that are gradually less structured and more varied, and eventually provide practice sessions that help develop fluency. The chapter on engaging students discusses several techniques, from academic games (Jeopardy, Name That Category, etc.) to managing question responses through wait time, response cards, choral response, response chaining, and more. With several action steps and sub-steps for each of the ten chapters, the book has numerous helpful suggestions and something new for probably everyone.

Some strategies are less helpful than they might be. And sometimes old methods are just dressed up with a new label, as in "concept attainment" which seems to be the process of comparing and contrasting; "reciprocal teaching," which means small group discussion; and, one of my favorites, "elaborative interrogation," which is much the same as asking the students "why?" As with anything, use discretion in application.

This is a book that packs a lot of solid, practical information in a few well-organized chapters. New teachers (and their administrators) will particularly find this book useful, but it can be read by very experienced teachers with good results as well. The many classroom "action steps" will include ideas that all teachers can apply right away. Marzano's emphasis on the importance of the art of teaching, the individual application of principles, is one that I found valuable. Here is an extended quotation from the book's Afterword: "In this book, I have promoted the notion that effective teaching is part art and part science. The science part of effective teaching is founded on decades of research that has provided guidance for the general categories of behaviors that constitute effective teaching and for the specific techniques that can be employed within those general categories. The art part of teaching is founded on the dual realizations that research cannot provide answers for every student in every situation and that the same behaviors can be employed in a different order and fashion by two different teachers with equally beneficial results. I hope that I have succeeded in providing the necessary research base and practical suggestions to equip new and experienced teachers alike with the tools to enhance the art and science of effective teaching."

These two publications offer all teachers an important opportunity to reflect on what they are doing, and provide support for those teachers who desire to accept a high degree of responsibility for

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Book Reviews...

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the learning that happens—or doesn't—in their classrooms. As R.C. Sproul says, if the student hasn't learned, the teacher hasn't taught. Too often teachers in classical schools may be tempted to view their task as one of presenting data, or telling information, with the complimentary task of the student to receive the telling and to give it back when required. With our ambitious curriculum there is much to learn, lots of information to digest, rigorous preparation for college success to be done. Those students for whom this comes naturally will thrive, get high SAT scores, go to good colleges. We may then congratulate ourselves on the wonderful job we're doing in our school. But for those students for whom learning this way does not come easily, we rarely have an answer, or if we do it's sometimes not very encouraging: they need to work harder, or longer, or get tutoring, or stop being lazy. It may not occur to us that perhaps our teaching is at fault; what these students need is for their teachers to have more tools in their tool box, more tricks in their bag. Teachers in classical Christian schools may need to become more flexible, more adaptable in their practice if they are to teach more than the top of the heap in their schools. This is not a call for dumbing down the curriculum but for wising up the teaching. The more we as teachers learn about our craft the better we will be at teaching all of the students in our classes, and not just those who learn most easily the way we like to teach.

While these books may not rise to the level of Gregory's *Seven Laws of Teaching* in terms of its comprehensive discussion of the teaching process, and are not as interesting to the classical educator, perhaps, as Comenius's *The Great Didactic* or even Gilbert Highet's *The Art of Teaching*, they do have the advantage of being useful in solving immediate classroom problems and offering strategies teachers can, with wisdom, begin using the next day. *Checking for Understanding* and *The Art and Science of Teaching* are two excellent resources for educators who want to grow in their understanding of the teaching and learning process.

Book Review: *Culture Making:*

Recovering Our Creative Calling

Reviewed by David John Seel, Jr.

John Seel's review of Andy Couch's book, *Culture Making,* continues this discussion on culture and follows closely with the theme of "Recovering Truth, Beauty, and Goodness," (the theme of the 2008 ACCS national conference). Space constraints prevent us from reprinting the entire article, but we commend it to you. Please visit the Ransom Fellowship website at http://www.ransomfellowship.org/featurearticles.asp to read John's entire article. His review is titled, "Material Boy: On Artifacts, Discernment, and Elites".

Excerpt from "Material Boy: On Artifacts, Discernment and Elites

Andy Crouch's *Culture Making*, is an important book written by an insightful writer. It warrants wide discussion. It is also strangely troubling. Perhaps this is by design: the sting of Socrates' gadfly. It got me irritated enough to get on a train and go visit the author in person. This review benefits greatly from our three-hour conversation.

Crouch is the editorial director of the Christian Vision Project at *Christianity Today* and sits on the editorial board of *Books & Culture*. He is a major voice in the future of the church.

David John Seel, Jr.
John Seel is a cultural renewal entrepreneur, film producer, and educational reformer. He is a Senior Fellow at the Work Research Foundation and adjunct professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Kathryn, live in Cohasset, Massachusetts. He can be reached at djsjr@earthlink.net.

Classical Education

What Constitutes Classical for ACCS?

ACCS Board

Approved June 27, 2001

Classical

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. The Poll-parrot stage in which young children like to memorize and chant various bits of information coincides with the grammar stage of the Trivium. As children grow into their pre- and early teens, they become more argumentative and questioning; this is called the Pert stage, and coincides with the dialectic aspect of the Trivium. In their mid to late teens, children seem to be more vocal and expressive; this is called the Poetic stage, and conforms to the area of rhetoric. 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 recognizes that there are other definitions of what constitutes "classical" education which may have their strengths. Whereas ACCS is not necessarily antagonistic to these other definitions, it does not seek to embrace all of these other schools of thought. ACCS willingly acknowledges that it has a defined understanding of what constitutes a classical education and seeks to encourage that concept without apology.

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