"SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO"

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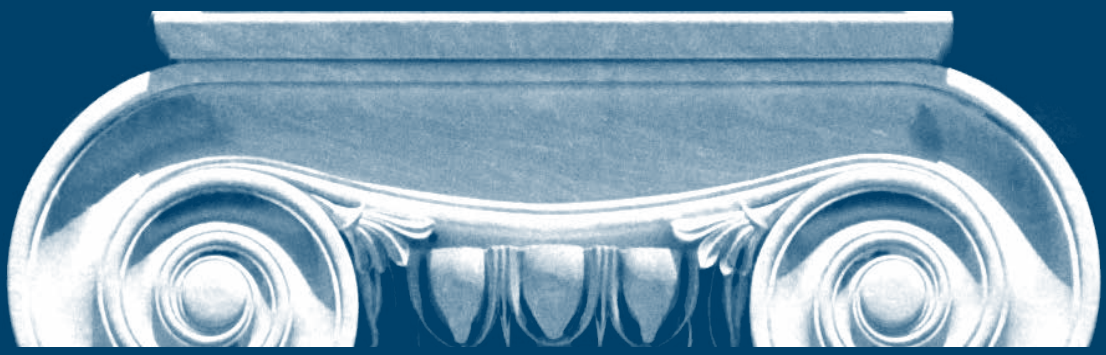

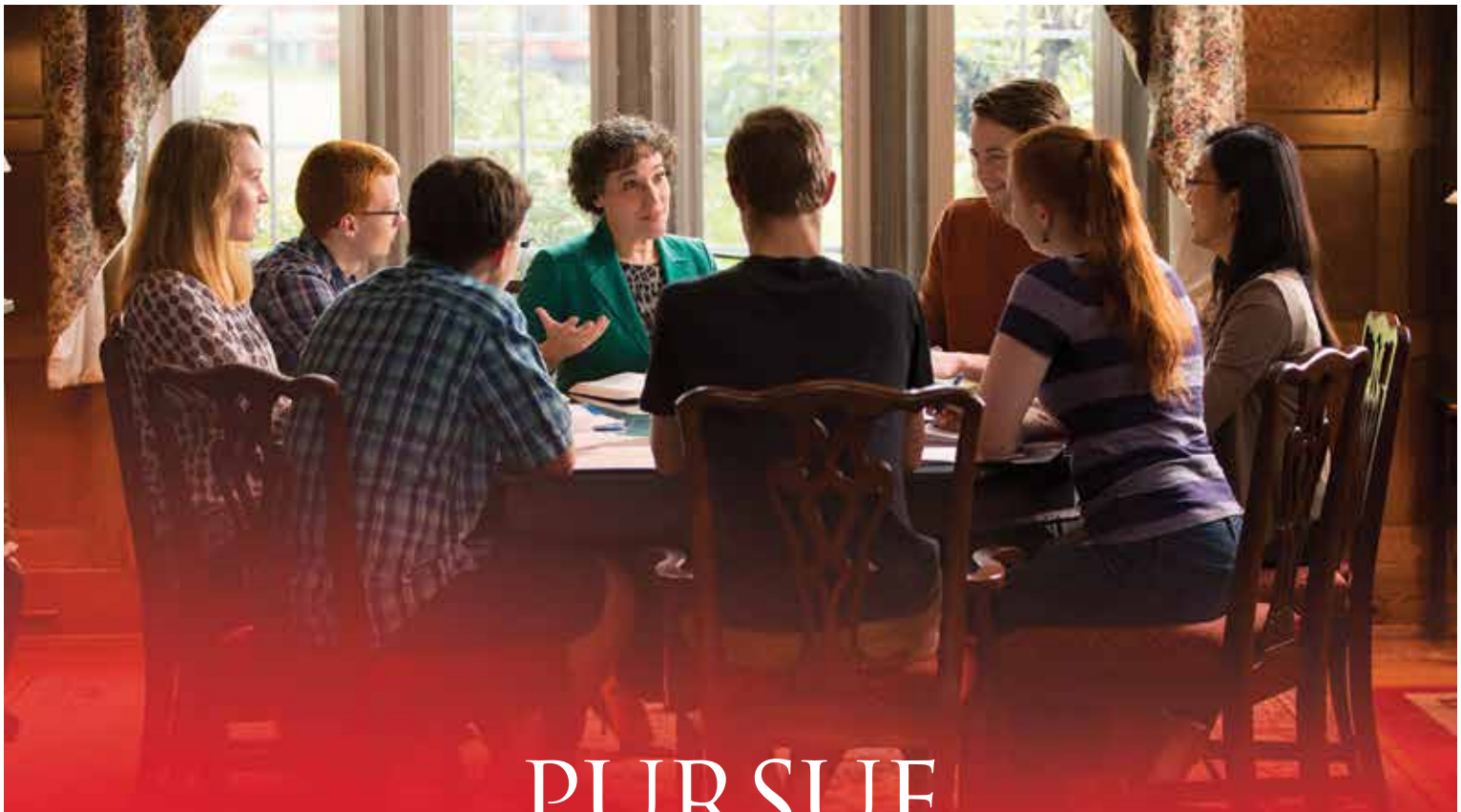

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Classical Christian Education:
A New "Old-Way"

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EXERCISES IN UNREALITY: THE DECLINE IN TEACHING WESTERN CIVILIZATION

by Anthony Esolen, Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts

There's a chilling image from my youth that I've never been able to scrub out of my mind. It might not seem at first glance to amount to much. It was a blue spiral spray-painted on our street, a sort of insect with enormous eyes, with a caption suggesting LSD. In those days, the newspapers were filled with war and rumors of worse than war—of the wholesale collapse of the social order. It was when the Students for a Democratic Society engaged in their violent demonstration against that inoffensive, old-fashioned liberal Hubert Humphrey at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. "Off the pigs," cried the Black Panthers, whose tongues were not in their cheeks when they said it; rather their thumbs were ready to cock their pistols if any "pig" of a policeman were to get in their way.

I don't know that it was very heaven to be young in those days, wallowing naked and hungry and snuffling in the rain and mud at Woodstock, but to be a child was like being perched at a high window of a riverside house, watching the waters rise and lap at a bridge beginning to tilt and crack. Perhaps those of my generation who were nine or ten years older than I can indulge themselves in rosy memories of it all, if they were not dragooned into the fever swamps of Indochina: of porn flicks suddenly advertised in the newspapers as cutting-edge, hip, hot from Sweden; of Christians chucking their prayer books into a bonfire of pieties; of the suddenly prominent evils of divorce and child murder; of music made by drug-addled geniuses, the music of loneliness, lust, rage, foolish hope, and wickedness. My family was strong and my backcountry coal town was not entirely insane. Still, my memories are not rosy.

I had no idea then that the college classroom was its own sewage spillway, overflowing into the quads—or perhaps the sewage flowed in the other direction. It hardly matters. At age nine I could see through the stupidities of the New Math: set theory for children, rather like teaching toddlers how to talk by drawing blueprints of the oral cavity, or how to walk by naming the bones and muscles in their legs. Long before I read Orwell I could perceive that most new things were empty and that the higher the diction that people used to name them and describe them, the emptier or more sinister they were. Call it Esolen's Law of the Distributive Property of Stultification over Tradition.

What I could not see was that the stupidity came from on high, and that college education lay in the balance. My parents graduated near the top of their classes in high school. Like most Americans, they considered college education as something of a dream—college was a place of intelligence, profound learning, some risible pride, and

Dr. Anthony Esolen, *PhD, is a professor and writer-in-residence at the Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts. His books include* Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child *(ISI Books),* The Politically Incorrect Guide to Western Civilization*, and* Life Under Compulsion *(ISI Books).* *This article first appeared in the Summer 2016 issue of the* Modern Age *published by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute and is reprinted by permission.*

The material I teach in the first year of DWC spans four millennia, from ancient Babylon to the end of the Renaissance. This year's entries were originally written in Babylonian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, old French, Italian, German, Spanish, and English. We are in Jerusalem with David, on the coast of half-Christian England with the poet of Beowulf, in Rome with Cicero, in Madrid with Calderón, in exile with the Florentine Dante, and in London with Shakespeare. We have studied the Parthenon and Saint Peter's, Giotto and the stained glass windows of Chartres, Arthurian romance and the poetic philosophizing of Lucretius. It is utterly preposterous to say that we are anything but multicultural. We study cultures, and there are a lot of them, and they diverge far from ours and from one another. A Viking chieftain is not a Roman senator or a Christian friar. Xerxes is not Francis Xavier.

venerable tradition. *Gaudeamus igitur!* My mother could not have known that she was more likely to study Latin in her little town than were the college students at Berkeley.

None of us knew who John Dewey was. But there was a nice line to be drawn between that man and the people, both professors and students, who went down to the bridges in rafts to help the floodwaters do their work. Dewey was classically trained but would have none of it for the ordinary democratic masses. He had no use for the useless things—that is, the best and noblest things: no use for poetry, flights of imagination, beauty, religion, and tradition. He was a hidebound innovator. His children and grandchildren in the 1960s had been well trained in his democratic scorn. Out with the notion that the academy is not a place for political recruitment, precisely because it is to be devoted to the truth. "What is truth?" said the serious Dewey, and he could not wait to give us all his answer: truth was only what could be ascertained by empirical observation and measurement. That meant that only the hard sciences could rest upon their foundations. Every other building could be commandeered by the politicians, or blown to bits.

And that is what the young politicians did. They began to turn arts and letters into instruments of politics, or to blow them to bits. Thus the demand that literature be "relevant." Homer is relevant to me because Homer is relevant to man. But once you deny that there are stable truths to be learned about man by studying his history, his philosophy, and his art, what is left for Homer but to be adopted by a few curious souls who happen to like him, or to be drafted into the New Model Army? And there are nearer ways to go to burn down buildings than by struggling over Homeric verbs. So in a few short years, centuries of learning were merely tossed aside. The central pier cracked, the bridge buckled, and the waters came crashing through.

* * *

At Brown University, an ambitious student and political player named Ira Magaziner positioned himself as the only person who could negotiate between the black students, who were demanding change, and a feckless administration. That administration essentially allowed Mr. Magaziner to rewrite the whole curriculum. Since those who know little—and we are talking here about a very young man—are more adept at suggesting grand vagaries than delving into the specifics of a learning they have not mastered, the result was predictable. Brown University dumped its curriculum overboard. Forget the classics. There is nothing that the university considers necessary for an educated person to know. It is all a cafeteria. This, that, the other: what difference does it make? Magaziner would go on to meddle in national politics, writing up the national health insurance plan with which Hillary Clinton, in her incarnation as copresident, crashed and burned.

It would be pleasant to learn that there was a lot of determined resistance to the new 'n' improved curricula, those that replaced "All Gaul is divided into three parts" with rap sessions and *The Prophet*. In particular, it would warm my Roman Catholic heart with gratitude to find that her prelates and principals and college presidents saw through the chaos and said, "We at least will preserve the humane learning that these self-professed humanists have discarded." But the pressure of the new proved too great, so that Catholic schools now find themselves in the odd position of having to recover their religious identity *by first recovering their human identity*. The old protesters knew who Tennyson was and were perfectly willing to pelt the old prude with mockery. My students now have never even heard the name of Tennyson. The old protesters knew who Milton was and were perfectly willing to enlist his Satan in the ranks of their heroes. My students have heard a little bit about Satan, and nothing about Milton.

* * *

At least in one place, though, there was resistance. It requires a little bit of history to explain why it came about, because in a way that history is repeating itself now.

During the terrible potato famine in Ireland, many families pooled their shillings, which were few enough, to send one likely lad alone on a boat to America to find a better life, perhaps to make enough of a living so that eventually his brothers and sisters might join him. That is what a family named Harkins did, sending one Patrick Harkins alone on a ship to America with nothing in his pockets.

When the Irish arrived here, they found that they were no more welcome than if they had landed in Liverpool; but they did find work. Some of them hacked away at the mountains where I was born, digging up the glossy black diamonds, chunks of high-quality anthracite coal. Others went to the cities, where they slaved in foundries and mills by day and often got blind drunk by night. Patrick Harkins went to the factories of Boston. In 1845 he and his wife had a son, Matthew Harkins, whom they sent to the public Boston Latin School, which still exists, and which still teaches Latin, though not with quite the old passion and intensity. The young Harkins pursued his studies at the College of the Holy Cross and then went abroad to complete his doctorate in divinity, at the English college in Douai, France. He was ordained a priest at Saint-Sulpice. He had added French and Italian to his linguistic repertoire, so that when he returned to New England, he was in good position to minister to French-Canadian, Italian, and Portuguese immigrants.

In 1887 Pope Leo XIII appointed him bishop of Providence, where he exerted his considerable powers until his death in 1921. He tripled the number of parishes in the diocese, especially building churches for particular ethnic groups. The church my family attends now, Sacred Heart, in West Warwick, is an Italian church a hundred yards away from Saint Joseph's, the Irish church, and a mile away from Saint Jean-Baptiste, the French church, and Saint Anthony's, the Portuguese church. Harkins did not encourage separatism. That was not the point. He valued each ethnic group, and he understood that families speaking the same language would better be able to support one another in the faith. Meanwhile, he founded dozens of social and charitable institutions: schools, hospitals, homes for the care of poor women, orphanages, and, in 1917, the school where I now teach, Providence College, run by the Dominican order.

In those days there was little chance that the son of an illiterate Italian stonemason or of an Irish longshoreman would ever be admitted to high-minded Brown University. From the first, Providence College was a school for every young man regardless of ethnicity or social class. The curriculum was heavily weighted with Thomist philosophy and theology, because those were the days when Catholic thinkers were engaged in the fight against the regnant reductions of philosophy to linguistic analysis, of natural science to positivist empiricism, of social life

to economic exchanges, and of politics to class struggles and Machiavellian pursuit of power. As late as 1970, all the young men at Providence College were required to take six courses in philosophy and six courses in theology. When G. K. Chesterton toured America a few years before his death, he visited Providence College and spoke to the assembled students from a small balcony set over the facade of Harkins Hall, which in the beginning was the entirety of the college. The burly Chesterton got stuck while trying to squeeze through the narrow door behind his perch and had to be assisted to get back into the building.

In a way we could say that Chesterton was always present at Providence College. It was natural for the Dominican priests to welcome the author of *The Dumb Ox*, the brilliant biography of Saint Thomas Aquinas. But Chesterton was also a man of letters, and that affinity for poetry and for the beauties of Christendom also characterized the college. In the late 1950s a learned Episcopalian priest and English professor, the Reverend Paul van K. Thomson, organized a small Honors Program at Providence College for about fifteen young men in each entering class. These students would spend two years—four courses, one course per semester, meeting five hours a week—studying the history, art, literature, theology, and philosophy of the West; that was how they satisfied some of their general requirements. Each course was taught by a team of two professors. It was a tremendous success.

So just when Brown University, across town, was shifting into formlessness and cultural amnesia, the priests and professors at Providence College made a courageous decision. They decided to do precisely the opposite of what Brown was doing. They would take the Honors curriculum in Western civilization, adapt it for the less brilliant students, and make it into a college-wide requirement. That was no easy task. All at once, instead of fifteen freshmen and fifteen sophomores, the program would have to serve all six hundred students from each class—and students of both sexes, since Providence College began to admit women in 1971. It involved a huge commitment from faculty in certain departments: English, history, theology, philosophy, and (sometimes) modern languages. The school was in no position to hire additional professors, so the new program made it necessary for plenty of people to teach an overload; and since the students could not have twenty credit hours of instruction simply added to their requirements, it meant that the departments that staffed the program would have to compromise and give up some of their curricular perks. The requirements for theology and philosophy, in particular, were reduced from six courses each to two.

Somehow or other, against doubts about the program's feasibility, and against long-entrenched interests, its sponsors prevailed. Professors learned how to teach in the program in the only way anyone can: by teaching in the program. They taught in four-man teams, each professor attending the lectures of the others, so that it soon became apparent, as one of my dearest colleagues jests, that they didn't know what the students were learning, but they themselves sure learned a lot. Every single student at Providence College, since 1971, has been introduced to dozens of the greatest authors, artists, thinkers, and statesmen in the West, from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* to Solzhenitsyn. That means that they all can at least begin to stutter in the same cultural language: I can allude to Saint Augustine when I am teaching *Paradise Lost*, and my students' eyes will not glaze over with incomprehension.

It must be noted here that the Development of Western Civilization (DWC) program was not supposed to be peculiar to the relevant departments, with the rest of the college left out. The original idea was that professors in the natural sciences would come up with a yearlong program, similarly taught, in the history of science, while professors in the social sciences would do likewise. But those attempts quickly failed. The natural scientists were not terribly interested in history, and the social scientists could not even agree upon what a social science was. The former had their research to worry about, and the latter were focused then, as they are now, on current political

issues. So the college gave back to them their six required credits each. And that is pretty much how things have remained ever since.

I don't know whether any strong *odium Christi* played a part in the initial fight against DWC. I am sure, however, that by the time I arrived at Providence College as an assistant professor of English in 1990, that odium was broad and bitter. It was well known that if you happily admitted to a search committee in sociology or political science that you were a Roman Catholic, they would happily oblige you by showing you the door. The odium set roots even in those departments that staffed the DWC program. When one of my colleagues in English, for many years now the head of the Honors Program, was applying for a job in our department, the chief of the opposition led a whispering campaign against him, advising another professor that this man was plainly unacceptable—"He's a Roman Catholic!" He did not know that the recipient of this dreadful information was himself a lector at his Catholic parish.

One might wonder why disdain for the Catholic Church, exercised by professors who considered this disdain to be the fit return to the Catholic institution that had hired them in the first place, would have as its particular object the DWC program. The answer is not far to seek. When my elder colleagues established the program, they aimed only to preserve, in a bad time, a time of destruction and willful oblivion, a precious heritage of humane learning. They had no idea that they were doing the work of soldiers for the Church. But just as grace perfects nature, and nature leads to the threshold of grace, so did the study of Dante and Shakespeare, and even Hume and Kant, preserve the Catholic character of Providence College during those lean decades when priests and nuns were doffing their religious habits in more senses than one, while the typical Catholic layman was too busy with his own confusions to notice. Great poetry and art and music were our natural allies. If students are encouraged to think persistently enough, they may think themselves right into a personal relationship with Truth Himself.

By 1990, too, we were hiring people who had graduated from the Browns of the world, which had abandoned their classical curricula. My own *aspera mater*, Princeton, had followed Brown in dismantling her core curriculum. That I ended up at Providence College with a broad knowledge of English, Italian, and Latin literature at least, and no small proficiency in languages and in philosophy, was partly due to my graduate school, the University of North Carolina, whose English department had preserved a markedly conservative curriculum, since demolished; partly due to my own preferences; and partly due to sheer accident. There was much I had still to learn. What I did not know at that time, and what took me a year or two to understand, was that my training was well out of the ordinary. Most young professors then and since cannot have a decent conversation about whether Calvin had misread Augustine, because they do not really know anything about those men. Not only would they have nothing to say about Aeschylus; they might not even recognize the name.

Now, it should seem a matter of course to say that if you do not know who Michael Faraday and William Harvey are you have no business setting yourself up as a judge of a course in the history of science. It is fascinating that that same ignorance does not prevent people from judging, with loud effusions of righteousness, a course in the development of Western civilization. The reason is not that they believe our course is wrongly taught. They believe it is wrong to teach it at all.

They would not say anything comparable about a course in the development of Chinese civilization or Indian civilization. Far from it; they would hail such a thing as the next Great Leap Forward in the history of our school, despite the plain fact that they would know even less about Chinese dynasties than they know about the Tudors and Stuarts, and that, forget being acquainted with Latin and Greek, most could probably not even name the holy language of ancient India, Sanskrit. That is

because they conceive of education almost wholly in terms of their own current political aims. Their horizons end in the backyard. It is not heaven over their heads, open and vast, but a political drop ceiling, the same everywhere, pocked with ephemeral headlines and reductive polls. Had they been present at the raising of Lazarus from the dead, their first question would be whether he was a Pharisee or a Sadducee.

Once in a while they would admit as much, but more often they couched their opposition in pedagogical terms. One time they enlisted a young professor, who with me had arrived in 1990, to engage in a "scientific" study to see whether the DWC program might be producing "passive" students, because the program relied heavily upon lectures. Why professors themselves spend much time and effort and other people's money attending conferences to hear lectures, and claim to come away from them much edified, they did not stop to consider; nor whether it is "passive" when you attend a riveting performance of Beethoven's *Eroica*, despite the fact that the musicians do not even pause in their performance to take questions from the audience. Nor did they entertain the possibility that if students did not speak up in their courses, it might be that the professors themselves were politically tendentious, disorganized, or dull. Nothing came of that professor's study, but we in the program responded to the criticism by trying to devote two hours a week to small seminars, rather than the usual one hour.

Sometimes we were criticized for hurrying through the subject matter and for touching upon too many topics, which required us to rely upon excerpts. When we turned toward using complete works instead, we were criticized for being too narrow in our focus. Our handling of classes was critiqued by people who never troubled themselves to sit in on a class to see how we handled it. Our critics were like people who say they detest the music of Wagner because they read about it in a review.

Meanwhile, graduate schools have been sending forth young people of narrower and narrower training, and that, coupled with perverse incentives to publish articles that no one will read, long before you have anything sensible to say, has stocked us with professors even in the DWC departments who do not want to teach in the program. If they were trained in nondramatic English poetry of the sixteenth century, they resent being asked to devote two-thirds of their teaching schedule to Plato or Homer or even French drama of the seventeenth century. "Please do not oppress me with the Sistine ceiling," says the harried young scholar, fighting for tenure. "I am too busy with pen-and-ink drawings by expatriate Welsh women in the fields of Patagonia."

* * *

And how do things stand now? In the fall of 2015, a group of students took over the president's office and met him with a long list of demands. Some of the demands were expensive, others utterly at odds with academic freedom—requiring, for example, that all departments submit their prospective hires to evaluation by a "diversity" committee. What concerns me here is that, no surprise, they went after the DWC program. We experience these periodic attacks rather as people afflicted with malaria do. It never really goes away, but sometimes you feel almost normal, and sometimes you break into fever and chills and the sweats. The students want *diversity.* That is the watchword, just as *relevance* was at Brown.

There is a Manichean mania about such political movements. If not relevance, oppression! If not diversity, *institutional racism*, as one of my colleagues in politics put it, or *genocidal racism*, according to a sociology professor who arrived at Providence College when I did, who immediately began to attack the DWC program, and who has learned nothing about it ever since.

It isn't easy to out-yell the true believers at a political rally. Nor does it serve any purpose. I learned that way back in 1992, during one of our waves of political malaria.

In an article I wrote for the student newspaper, I made an offer to students who said they were eager to learn about civilizations other than the Western ones. They and I would read, together, the medieval mystical and devotional tract *The Cloud of Unknowing* along with the *Tao Te Ching* of Lao-Tzu. That offer fell into the bottomless pit of irrelevance. For my pains I was ridiculed by a couple of scurrilous (and anonymous) letters to the editor.

This time around I wrote an article for *Crisis*, taking note of the wild array of cultures to which we introduce our students. For this is, of course, the very fat and very weak underbelly of our critics. As a matter of plain fact, the sociology professor who complains about my lack of diversity is himself the most culturally monochromatic of scholars. He teaches about cities that he can visit by riding on a train. He teaches about people whom he can call up on the telephone. He assigns books and articles written in English, about people who speak English, who watch the same television we watch, listen to the same bad music, play the same sports, and so on. I cannot take a train to ancient Athens. I cannot call Thomas Aquinas on the telephone. There are no YouTube videos of Shakespeare directing his actors.

The material I teach in the first year of DWC spans four millennia, from ancient Babylon to the end of the Renaissance. This year's entries were originally written in Babylonian, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, old French, Italian, German, Spanish, and English. We are in Jerusalem with David, on the coast of half-Christian England with the poet of *Beowulf*, in Rome with Cicero, in Madrid with Calderón, in exile with the Florentine Dante, and in London with Shakespeare. We have studied the Parthenon and Saint Peter's, Giotto and the stained glass windows of Chartres, Arthurian romance and the poetic philosophizing of Lucretius. It is utterly preposterous to say that we are anything but multicultural. We study cultures, and there are a lot of them, and they diverge far from ours and from one another. A Viking chieftain is not a Roman senator or a Christian friar. Xerxes is not Francis Xavier.

But I know that none of that really counts. One of the student protesters, abashed, has written in our newspaper that even though a Viking is admittedly "diverse" from anybody we may meet on the street now, studying the Vikings does not serve "the larger purpose" of diversity. And thus has he unwittingly given up the ballgame.

He and the students are not really interested in studying cultures other than ours. What counts for them as "diversity" is governed entirely by a monotonous and predictable list of current political concerns. If you read a short story written in English by a Latina author living up the road in Worcester, that counts as "diverse," but if you read a romance written in Spanish by a Spanish author living in Spain four hundred years ago, that does not count as "diverse." It probably does not even count as Hispanic. If you pore over the verb system of Old Icelandic so that you can stumble around in the sagas of Snorri Sturluson, that does not count, despite the fact that the sagas are utterly different from any form of literature now written. But if you collect a few editorials written by Toni Morrison, that does count, despite the fact that they are written in English and that you have read hundreds of such.

That already is unreality aplenty. But there is more, and this is hard to talk about. I have said that it is absurd to pretend that you can have anything of substance to say about a curriculum in the history of science when you don't know anything about the history of science. But what if you know hardly anything about anything at all? That is an exaggeration, but it does capture much of what I must confront as a professor of English right now, even at our school, which accepts only a small fraction of students who apply for admission. Nor, I'm afraid, does it apply only to freshmen. It applies also to professors.

I now regularly meet students who have never heard the names of most English authors who lived before 1900. That includes Milton, Chaucer, Pope, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Tennyson, and Yeats. Poetry has been largely abandoned. Their knowledge of English grammar is spotty at best and often nonexistent. That is because

grammar, as its own subject worthy of systematic study, has been abandoned. Those of my students who know some grammar took Latin in high school or were taught at home. The writing of most students is irreparable in the way that aphasia is. You cannot point to a sentence and say, simply, "Your verb here does not agree with your subject." That is not only because they do not understand the terms of the comment. It is also because many of their sentences will have no clear subject or verb to begin with. The students make grammatical errors for which there are no names. Their experience of the written language has been formed by junk fiction in school, text messages, blog posts, blather on the airwaves, and the bureaucratic sludge that they are taught for "formal" writing, and that George Orwell identified and skewered seventy years ago. The best of them are bad writers of English; the others write no language known to man.

Back in 1893, a writer for *The Century* cheered the invention of the "phonogram," the wax cylinder that could play classical music on Mr. Edison's machine. The writer foresaw a day when ordinary people could purchase for a few pennies several realizations of Wagner's *Tristan* and compare their merits. Most of my students will not have heard of Wagner or Verdi or Puccini. The world's heritage of art is at their fingertips, but most people use the Internet to look at smut instead.

How different are their professors in this regard? Can they write English, badly? I think so; I think it is still very difficult for someone to attain a doctorate in America without writing English, badly. But how likely is it that the professor of politics, or even English, who writes English, badly, will be able to express an informed opinion about English poetry, or Italian painting, or Lutheran theology?

My students a couple of weeks ago were unable to tell me what the word *timorous* meant, in a passage from Shakespeare's *Richard III*, where Queen Anne is expressing regrets for having married Richard: never since she married him has she enjoyed a quiet hour of sleep, but still was wakened by his timorous dreams. Later, Richard is trying to persuade the stubborn and suspicious widow of Edward IV to let him marry her daughter. She won't believe that he really is sorry for his many wrongdoings, and in exasperation he levels this curse upon his own head:

As I intend to prosper and repent,
So thrive I in my dangerous affairs
Of hostile arms! Myself myself confound!

None of my students understood what those words meant. I wonder how many of my professorial colleagues would understand them. Most would. But not all.

In other words, attempts by undergraduates to dictate educational terms to their professors are exercises in unreality upon unreality. They do not know what they do not know. They do not know what they cannot do: they have no idea how hard it would be for them to read the articles from that issue of *The Century* I have mentioned, let alone to write anything like them.

Meanwhile their professors are in no position either to diagnose their troubles or to recognize that they suffer any. Here is another passage from the same bound volume of *The Century*, near the conclusion of an appreciation of the poetry of Christina Rossetti: "As a religious poet of our time she has no rival but Cardinal Newman, and it could only be schismatic prejudice or absence of critical faculty which should deny her a place, as a poet, higher than that of our exquisite master of prose. To find her exact parallel it is at once her strength and her snare that we must go back to the middle of the seventeenth century. She is the sister of George Herbert; she is of the family of Crashaw, of Vaughan, of Wither." Not one professor of English in a hundred could write those sentences now. Indeed, the subtlety of taste and judgment that the sentences exhibit, and the rhetorical balance, mark them out as foreign to our age. But the trouble goes far beyond style. It is simply not the kind of claim that English professors would now care to make, or know how to begin to make. That is because English professors no longer have a clear sense

that art has to do with beauty and truth. They much prefer to discuss anything but the poetry: sexuality, Victorian politics, whatever else is easy to declaim about, requires no exercise of taste and judgment, and can be made to appear sophisticated and courageous, as they raise the banner in the vanguard of progress and march on toward tenure and political rectitude and an easy life.

And what about professors outside the English department? Is it fair to ask them to make sense of what an intelligent critic of the prose and poetry of his contemporaries had to say to a general readership of several millions, a majority of whom had not attended college? The question answers itself. I freely admit that I suffer my own gaps in knowledge, whereof I am painfully aware. But reading, not waving banners, is the cure for those.

* * *

When you have no case, the lawyers say, you had better shout. When you have no culture, you shout political slogans. It is the easiest thing in the world to do. We should expect more such political hollering in the future, not less, in proportion as our students *and their teachers at all levels* grow more ignorant, more narrowly trained, less proficient in classical and modern languages, harder of hearing the music of poetry, less able to weigh moral claims against the evidence of history and the distilled experience of human nature that the great artists give us, less chastened by the wise men of the past and by the ideals of religious faith, more apt to huddle in a timorous and insecure individualism, set upon a hair trigger of intolerance, sensitive to any perceived threat to themselves, but all too ready to threaten their opponents with destruction. You heard it here first.

MILTON'S MORALITY

by Micah Mattix, Regent University

In 2016, during the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death, the Bard was feted by dozens of books, hundreds of magazine and newspaper articles, performances of his plays, lectures, and a Shakespeare Day gala attended by Prince Charles himself. The London Tube map replaced the names of its stops with titles of Shakespeare's plays. Google, of course, did a doodle.

In 2017, it was all Jane Austen—the 200th anniversary of the novelist's death. Like Shakespeare the year before, she was everywhere, not least in the pages of the *New York Times*, which ran some 20 articles on her, musing about everything from what she might tell us about Brexit to why the alt-right loves her so much. *The Atlantic* stated unambiguously that "Jane Austen Is Everything," and it sure did feel that way. Her face now graces the U.K.'s new £10 note.

Pity poor John Milton. Last year also marked the 350th anniversary of the publication of *Paradise Lost,* the greatest epic poem in English and one of the greatest works of Western literature, and hardly a word was said about either the man or the work: just three books—William Poole's *Milton and the Making of Paradise Lost,* John Carey's *The Essential Paradise Lost*, and a collection of essays on the poet in translation—and a BBC Radio 4 documentary.

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This rather paltry celebration of a great work and writer is all the more surprising considering the poem has been growing in global popularity. The editors of the recent essay collection *Milton in Translation* note that *Paradise Lost* has been translated more frequently in the last 30 years than it was in the preceding 300, mostly into non-Western languages. The book "demonstrates that around the world people are taking real interest in Milton," Islam Issa, one of the volume's editors, told the *Guardian*. But in Milton's home country? Not so much.

How did a poem that was lauded even by Milton's enemies as not only above "all moderne attempts in verse, but equall to any of ye Ancient Poets," as Sir John

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Satan Exulting Over Eve, one of William Blake's illustrations of Milton's *Paradise Lost*

Hobart put it in 1668, and that was translated in its entirety into Latin in 1690 and used in English-speaking classrooms to teach rhetoric instead of classical texts lose so much ground to both Shakespeare and Austen, particularly in Western countries?

One reason is that *Paradise Lost* is, well, a poem, and poems are not only more difficult to read than either prose fiction or plays, they are harder to put on a screen, the reigning medium of our day. There have been dozens of television and film adaptations of both Shakespeare and Austen, but very few of *Paradise Lost*. (A TV version produced by the British actor Martin Freeman is reportedly in the works, but if it ever gets made, don't expect anything close to the original. "*Paradise Lost* is like a biblical Game of Thrones," another of the producers has said.)

The other reason is that *Paradise Lost* is an unabashedly religious work. Early readers, Poole reminds us, shared Milton's belief "in the truth of his subject"—that is, of God, angels, and demons. Like many readers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, John Wesley read the poem devotionally. He even published a religious commentary on it in 1763. Today, however, "the vast majority of readers, both those who defend and those who attack Milton's project," Poole writes, look at the work as merely a "technical masterpiece. … This is our view today, and Milton would not like it."

Milton began the poem sometime after 1652—the year he went completely blind and lost his first wife—and perhaps as late as 1658. He finished it in 1665 at the latest. While Milton's nephew, Edward, claimed that Milton dictated the more than 11,500 lines of verse in nearly perfect form in groups of 10 to 30 at a time, Jonathan Richardson argued in another early account of the poet's life that he would dictate 40 lines while still in bed in the morning and later cut them by half. However *Paradise Lost* was composed, it is a stunning piece of artistry whose scope and complexity have yet to be matched by a single work in English.

Milton's lines can be both digressive and tight, packed with allusions and neologisms. An exceptional student of Latin and a gifted linguist, Milton coined more English words than Shakespeare, many of them first appearing in *Paradise Lost* (like "terrific," "jubilant," "space" to refer to outer space, as well as "pandemonium"). John Carey writes in his introduction to *The Essential Paradise Lost* that Milton's long sentences, running over several lines of verse, often establish surprising points of comparison. Recounting his first moments of consciousness, for example, Adam notes how both his "heart" and creation "smil'd . . . with joy":

By quick instinctive motion up I sprung As thitherward endevoring, and upright Stood on my feet; about me round I saw Hill, Dale, and shadie Woods, and sunnie Plaines, And liquid Lapse of murmuring Streams; by these, Creatures that livd, and movd, and walk'd, or flew, Birds on the branches warbling; all things smil'd, With fragrance and with joy my heart oreflow'd.

Carey argues that it is "impossible to say whether all things smiled with fragrance and joy, or whether Adam's heart overflowed with fragrance and joy . . . . What the subtle merging of meaning shows is that Adam is at one with nature. He does not . . . distinguish between what is happening in nature and what is happening in his own heart." Over 1,000 lines later, Adam feels a "falt'ring measure" within himself. He goes to find Eve and sees her returning from the Tree of Knowledge with "A bough of fairest fruit that downy smiled" in her hand. The pulling of the branch from the tree evidently ruptured Adam's heart even before he tastes its fruit.

Key words are also repeated but change in meaning as the narrative progresses. Carey remarks, for example, that when "lapse" is first used it refers to the innocent movement of streams. After the fall, however, it "comes to signify original sin, and the loss of man's freedom that goes with it."

"Maze," "error," "serpent" and "wandering" are other words that fall. When, at the creation, God separates land and water, the rivers, "with serpent error wandering" are innocent, so are the brooks in Paradise that run "With mazy error under pendant shades." But once sin has entered the world these words are overtaken by evil. The devils in hell debate philosophy, "in wandering mazes lost."

We see this use of doubling in the structure of the poem, as well. The first 10 books of the poem, as David Quint has observed, mirror each other in meaningful ways. Beginning *in medias res*, shortly after God has cast Satan out of heaven, the poem follows the Devil's "rise" as chief enemy of God in the first three books, culminating in his provocative offers to "save" his fellow demons, as well as his daughter, Sin, and his son, Death, by bringing destruction to God's creation. This "rise" is mirrored in Adam and Eve's fall in books 8 to 10. Book 4 offers Eve's account of creation; book 7 offers Adam's. The middle books—5 and 6—recount the war in heaven. Thus, we have a sort of circle, moving from Satan's expulsion from heaven in book 1 to Adam and Eve's removal from Eden in book 11, with the war in heaven at the core. It seems fitting, too, that the final two books of the poem—11 and 12—address the future judgment and redemption.

The point of all this mirroring is to show how closely evil resembles good. Poole writes in *Milton and the Making of Paradise Lost* that Milton "regards evil as disarmingly close in appearance to the good," and it is only by careful moral reasoning that the two can be separated. Shortly after Milton returned from Italy in 1639, where he met Galileo and spent several months participating in various Florentine literary salons, he wrote in his commonplace book, "In moral evil much good may be mixed, and that with singular craft."

Notwithstanding Milton's famous promise in the opening section of the poem to "assert eternal providence / And justify the ways of God to men," it is Satan's poem from beginning to end. He is the first character to speak, and he is eloquent, bold, full of feeling for others. His first words are ones of consolation for his fellow fallen angel Beelzebub:

O how fall'n! how changed
From him who in the happy realms of light
Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine
Myriads, though bright!

He follows this with a word of encouragement:

All is not lost: th'unconquerable will
And study of revenge, immortal hate
And courage never to submit or yield—
And what is else not to be overcome?

He promises the other demons that he will never yield to God's tyranny and tells Sin, with whom he had relations after she burst from his head Athena-like, that he will set her and her son free from "this dark and dismal house of pain" and, like a loving husband and father (at least until the mask slips), provide a home where "ye shall be fed and filled / Immeasurably: all things shall be your prey!"

The poet Percy Bysshe Shelley praised Milton's Satan as "a moral being . . . far superior to his God . . . who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture." The problem is that Satan's "excellent" purpose is the destruction of "harmless innocence" for personal and political ends. This makes him, Carey writes, "English literature's first terrorist."

In short, Satan says all the rightly compassionate things only to the "right" people, who are, of course, *his* people, and only when his own interests are at stake. He is unflappable only in front of a crowd, courageous only when it is personally advantageous. He acts like a good leader, father, and husband—and even argues with *nearly* perfect reasoning that he is more morally upright than God himself—all while serving only himself. He is a god of *unchecked* liberty, and, therefore, in Milton's view, a god of chaos and destruction.

What is particularly chilling about the character of Satan is the extent to which he believes all his actions, no matter how violent, are not only justified but morally right. As C. S. Lewis put it, "we see in Satan . . . the horrible co-existence of a subtle and incessant intellectual activity with an incapacity to understand anything," particularly his own selfish motivations. Satan wants the freedom to do as he pleases, but it is a freedom that always comes at the expense of others' liberty.

Milton, of course, was something of an individualist himself. He wrote in defense of the freedom of the press and divorce and was one of the few supporters of the abolition of the monarchy in favor of executing Charles I. He served as secretary for foreign tongues to the council of state in Cromwell's Protectorate. It's strange, then, that Satan often sounds like a republican. In book 1, he speaks out against monarchical tyranny and he democratically offers his fellow demons a chance to travel to Eden to destroy God's creation.

But like everything else that Satan does, the offer is a façade. Unsurprisingly, no one volunteers after Satan's bleak description of the "perilous attempt" and he quickly chooses to do it himself, thus showing himself of "highest worth" and solidifying his authority over his peers. In book 12, after the archangel Michael tells Adam about the Tower of Babel, Adam laments that his progeny, following Satan's example, will desire to raise themselves above their peers and assume "Authority usurped from God not giv'n." Michael responds that political tyranny is the direct result of men neglecting to rule their own liberty with reason and using that liberty instead to pursue "upstart passions":

Reason in man obscured or not obeyed
Immediately inordinate desires
And upstart passions catch the government
From reason and to servitude reduce
Man till then free.

Today we prefer a simpler moral reasoning. We are taught to trust our feelings and to believe that bad people are obviously bad and good people are obviously good. Avoiding evil is merely the result of staying informed not discernment, of "raising awareness" on social media or with a Friday-night protest.

Paradise Lost shows otherwise.

REGENTS SCHOOL OF AUSTIN
PEER DEVELOPMENT FORM

by Regents School of Austin

Guidelines:

- All observations need to be scheduled 48 hours in advance.
- Leave a copy of the form with the teacher and turn in a copy to Dr. Peterson.
- If a particular content area is not observed, write n/a in the space provided.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Teacher being observed: _____ Grade/subject: _____

Notes:

What elements did you notice about the classroom environment that you found appealing?

What type of classroom management strategies did the teacher use?

How did the teacher incorporate classical methodology or biblical integration?

Are there any "nuggets" that you will be able to carry back to your own classroom and utilize?

Did you find this process valuable to the professional development process? Yes ____
No_____
Suggestions and comments (please use back if necessary):

PLAGUES AND CLASSICAL LITERATURE

by William Isley, Cair Paravel Latin School

During this coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown, it occurred to me to read a few of the descriptions of plagues in some classic texts of Western civilization. In times like these, which are unprecedented for almost all of us, it is good to get some historical perspective by reflecting upon man's previous experiences of epidemics.

In this essay I will examine the infamous Plague of Athens (430–426 B.C.) and its description in the *History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides and by Lucretius in his philosophical poem *On the Nature of Things*. These two writings reveal some common characteristics of an epidemic: the devastating consequences, the virtues and vices of humanity, the important role that an individual's and a culture's worldview plays in handling the epidemic, and, easily overlooked, the author's purpose in writing about the plague. By meditating upon their lessons for us, we should be better equipped to handle the challenges of the current pandemic, alleviate any excessive fears that we have, and help others navigate these troubled, but not uncharted, waters.

THUCYDIDES AND THE PLAGUE OF ATHENS

While engaged in a life and death struggle for power with Sparta, Athens was struck by a deadly epidemic (430 B.C.) that returned again in 429 B.C. and during the winter of 427–426 B.C. Carrying away up to 100,000 members of its populace, the disease was clearly an important factor in the eventual defeat of Athens by Sparta and its allies, a defeat which is sometimes credited with the ultimate demise of Athenian democracy but most certainly resulted in the demise of Athens as an imperial power.

Our source for the plague is Book 2, chapters 47–54 of the *History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides (c. 455–400 B.C.), a contemporary who served as a general of the Athenian forces and is justly considered one the greatest ancient historians.[1] Because of the vast superiority of their naval forces, the Athenians, following the advice of their leader Pericles, had abandoned the countryside, leaving it to Sparta, and crowded into Athens. The strategy would probably have worked had it not been for entrance of a plague via the Athenian port of Piraeus. Thucydides wrote that plague, which affected other areas, but none so badly

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as Athens, seemed to have originated in Ethiopia in upper Egypt. Given the war, it is not surprising that some thought that the Peloponnesians had poisoned the reservoirs that the Athenians depended upon for their water supply.

Thucydides, who himself suffered from the plague, stated that the plague "did more harm and destroyed more life than almost any other single factor" in the war (I:23). He carefully describes the terrible symptoms—fever, redness and inflammation of the eyes, sore throats leading to bleeding and "unnatural and unpleasant breath" (II:49). This was followed by sneezing and hoarseness, then coughing, and painful vomiting. Finally, the body developed pustules and ulcers. In addition, victims experienced an internal burning sensation and a thirst that led some to plunge into the water tanks for relief, a relief that sadly did not come. Death usually followed within seven or eight days. Unfortunately, even those who survived often perished from an "uncontrollable diarrhoea" (II.49). Survivors might suffer from the loss of the use of fingers, toes, and genitals, and even the complete loss of memory of who they were and what had happened to them. On the other hand, those who did not succumb to the first onslaught of the disease were generally able to avoid a second fatal attack. Birds and animals either did not touch the many unburied corpses or died after eating the flesh.

Doctors had no idea how to treat the disease and often died from their contact with the afflicted. Strong and weak alike suffered and die. Treatments that worked for some did not work for others, which probably meant that the treatments had nothing to do with curing the disease.

Thucydides' account pays close attention not only to the physical symptoms but also to the religious, psychological, and social consequences of the plague. The failure of traditional religious practices is noted. "As for the gods, it seemed to be the same thing whether one worshipped them or not" (II:53) Prayers in the temple brought no relief, so that "in the end people were so overcome by their sufferings that they paid no further attention to such things" (II:47).

The psychological effects were devastating. "The most terrible thing of all was the despair into which people fell when they realized that they caught the plague; for they would immediately adopt an attitude of utter hopelessness" (II:51). The fear of catching the plague meant that people would not care for the sick and those who "made it a point of honour to act properly" often fell victim to the disease (II:51). Such hopelessness led to grave social consequences as well.

Thucydides notes the uncertainty over their future led people to become "indifferent to every rule of religion or of law" (II:52). Since it was doubtful that "one would survive to enjoy the name for it," the important Greek value of honor was not followed (II:53). Another reaction to what appeared to be the inevitability of death was that people agreed that "the pleasure of the moment and everything that might contribute to that pleasure" was the most valuable (II:53). In addition to a profligate lifestyle, people no longer feared to break the law since they did not expect to survive long enough to be tried and punished.

Why did Thucydides write his history with its details and careful analysis of the events and persons involved? In Book 1 he eschews the idea that it was written merely to satisfy "the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last for ever" (I:22). This long-term perspective is shown in his reason for his extensive account of the plague, stating that he "described its symptoms," the "knowledge of which will enable it to be recognized, if it should ever break out again" (II:48). Unfortunately, in spite of Thucydides' detailed description of the symptoms, the fact is that scholars have never been able to demonstrate convincingly what the disease was. Among the many proposals, the most likely candidates are typhoid fever, smallpox or measles, a combination of diseases or even that the disease no longer exists.

Beyond seeking to help future ages that might encounter the disease by providing a detailed description of its symptoms, Thucydides saw the great war as a laboratory for the analysis of human behavior. He claims that he will

be satisfied, "if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events that happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future" (I:22). Given the uniformity of human nature, psychological and social consequences of the plague will likely be similar, unless other factors enter in to alleviate the suffering.

LUCRETIUS AND THE PLAGUE OF ATHENS

While Thucydides focused on the religious, psychological, and social consequences of the plague, in his poem "On the Nature of Things," the Roman Lucretius (90s B.C.–50s B.C.?) uses it to argue for Epicurean philosophy. Epicurus (341–270 B.C.) was a Greek philosopher who believed that reality consisted solely of indivisible units called atoms and the void in which they existed. The movements, collisions, and combinations of atoms explain empirical phenomena. As Lucretius writes, "Or call them primal atoms, since from them, / Those first beginnings, everything is formed" (I.60–61). Humans have sensation and their actions are guided by reason, which is capable of judging which actions can avoid physical pain and mental distress. Such a philosophy allows people to live a life of reasoned pleasure in which they do not fear death because, while they are alive, they are not dead and, when they die, they no longer exist. Armed thus by Epicurean philosophy man can enjoy tranquility, his highest good.

Lucretius's justly famous philosophical poem is one of the most influential anti-religious poems in the history of Western literature.[2] In addition to accusing religion of being the cause of "deeds both impious and criminal" (I:83), he condemns it as oppressing mankind. Epicurus is praised as the first to take a stand against religion "When human life lay foul for all to see / Upon the earth, crushed by the burden of religion" (I:62-63). It should come as no surprise, then, that Lucretius, writing nearly three hundred years later, would use the famous Athenian plague to combat religious faith.

His attack on religion is three-pronged: a vivid description of the horrific symptoms of the plague, a declamation of the failures of religious practice, and a rationalistic explanation of human phenomena.

Lucretius, who depends upon Thucydides's narrative, employs all his considerable rhetorical skills to describe the physical symptoms of the plague.[3] In order to feel the impact of his poetry, his descriptions are worth quoting extensively.

First were their heads inflamed with burning heat
And the two eyes all glowing red and bloodshot.
Then throats turned black inside sweated with blood,
And swelling ulcers blocked the voice's path,
And then the tongue, the mind's interpreter,
Weakened by pain oozed blood, and scarce could move,
Lying heavy within the mouth and rough to touch.
Next, when the disease passed down through the throat
And filled the chest, and poured its flood of ill
Right to the victim's sorrowing heart, why then,
Then truly all the barriers of life
Collapsed. The breath rolled out a noisome stench
Like that of rotting corpses lying unburied; (VI:1145–1155)

Many who survived the initial onslaught of the plague faced its debilitating consequences to their internal organs and their functions.

If a man chanced to escape the ruin of death
Yet later from foul ulcers and black flux
From the bowels, a lingering death awaited him.
Or else a copious stream of putrid blood
With violent headache flowed out through the nostrils,
And all his body's strength flowed into it.
And if a man survived this savage flux
Of noisome blood, yet into his limbs and sinews

And even the genital parts the plague went on (VI: 1199–1207).

Lucretius transforms the more dispassionate and scientific prose of Thucydides into lurid images that are meant to shock the reader into a recognition of the horrors the sufferers of the Athenian plague underwent. In doing so, he prepares the way for his more direct attack on religion.

The ineffectiveness of religious piety is portrayed by his depiction of the plague-devastated temples.

And all the holy temples of the gods
Death filled with lifeless bodies, and everywhere
The shrines of the celestials, which the priests
Had filled with guests, stood loaded high with corpses
For reverence now and worship of the gods
Counted for little, present grief was all (VI:1267-1272).

In some ways this is not very different from what Thucydides reported, but it needs to be understood in the context of the whole of Lucretius's poem and its thesis.

Lucretius wants to deny any role of the gods and their wrath in the plague because he believes that the religious interpretation of the plague's origins creates emotional turmoil.

And all those other things in earth and sky
Which men observe, and tremble, wondering,
Their hearts laid low through fear of gods, oppressed,
Crushed down to earth, because their ignorance
Of causes makes them yield to power divine
Kingdom and Empire over all that is (VI:54-59).

It may come as somewhat of a surprise, then, to discover that Lucretius and the Epicureans did not deny the existence of the gods. In their view the gods are ideal beings that "live free from care" (VI:62). They are "those quiet beings" who exist "in untroubled peace" (VI:77). They are not affected by external events; therefore, they "are not tossed by violent waves of wrath" (VI:78). Thus, fear of the gods is the result of a false understanding of the gods and creates an irrational distress that unnecessarily upsets the tranquility promoted by the Epicureans as man's good.

If the gods do not cause plagues, then what does? Not surprisingly, Lucretius return to his general atomistic theory.

First, I have shown above that there are atoms
Of many things needful to support our life,
And, in contrast, many must fly around
That bring disease and death . . . (VI:1093–1095).

He then continues with his specific explanation of the cause of plagues by atoms.

. . . When these some chance
Has massed together, and the atmosphere
Has been disordered by them, the air becomes diseased.
And all this power of pestilence and plague
Either comes in from without, or down from above,
Like clouds and mists, or often forms and springs
From the earth itself, when damp has made it rot,
Struck by unseasonable rains and sun. (VI:1095–1102).

In his atomistic explanation it is important to notice that Lucretius states that plagues happen "by chance." Plagues are events that just happen randomly. They have no deep moral explanation. The only non-random moral factor involved is how humans respond to them. With a rational explanation and the awareness that there is nothing to fear from the gods or death one can endure them with tranquility, even if one finally succumbs to them.

THUCYDIDES AND LUCRETIUS COMPARED

Before discussing directly the relevance of the Athenian

plague and its literary treatments by Thucydides and Lucretius, I want to compare the two authors. Four general categories will be employed: genre, nature, religion and reason, and finally the consequences of the plague along with the human response to them.

The discussion of the **genre** or the kind or category to which a piece of literature corresponds helps us understand not only the style but also the purpose of an author. In the case being examined in this essay, Thucydides is writing an historical account, whereas Lucretius has composed a philosophical poem. The importance of this difference becomes immediately apparent.

The prose of Thucydides is literal and analytical, even restrained. His stance is what traditionally has been called objective, and he has rightly been hailed as a great and model historian. This does mean that he is not arguing a point. As we shall see, to be persuasive as an historian he needs to present his case with close attention to the facts, use literal language, and keep his emotions under control. The reader is asked to stand back and critically examine the events and their causes and consequences. If Thucydides appeared to be more personally involved in the narrative, the reader would be suspicious of the reliability of his account.

As a piece of philosophical poetry, *On the Nature of Things* is an apologetic for Epicurean philosophy and a polemic against religion in particular. This explains its organization and style. Lucretius states this view forcefully and explicitly at the beginning. He does not seek to keep his personal investment in the issues under wraps. While not changing the facts that Thucydides left for him, he radically changes his presentation of them. The symptoms of the plague are described in graphic poetical language, using metaphors intended to sweep the reader along emotionally. By doing so Lucretius makes the reader feel the force of his position and the centrality of these arguments not only to Lucretius but also to the life of the reader, indeed to mankind as a whole.

Both authors adhere to the idea of the constancy of **nature**. Thucydides is concerned with the nature of man in the social and political realm. As quoted previously, Thucydides asserts that human nature does not change and so his work can serve as a guide not only for understanding the Peloponnesian War but also for future conflicts. History has supported him. His masterpiece is still being mined as a guide to how unchanging human nature, its beliefs and behavior, affect society generally and even geopolitics.[4] Lucretius treats of man as part of the cosmos, the realm of atoms and the void. The chance collisions and combinations of atoms are what always explain natural phenomena. Man is a part of this reality and must learn to deal with it in whatever time or place he finds himself. Thus, the constancy of nature is the basis for the appeal of both writers to all times. Indeed, it is difficult to see how any writing for the distant past could be relevant to us if this were not so.

Both writers are concerned with the relationship of **religion and reason**, and, although it may not appear to be true at the first glance, both offer a critique of religion from the viewpoint of the truths of reason. In considering their respective critiques it is crucial to remember what they mean by religion. Both writers, the Greek Thucydides and the Roman Lucretius, have in mind the popular polytheism of their day in which the quite fickle gods intervene in human affairs, and their devotees seek to win their favor or placate their anger by offering sacrifices.

As has been shown, Lucretius rejects this theology. The gods are perfect models of Epicurean tranquility. Thus, they do not intervene in human affairs, which would disturb their tranquility, and, thus, sacrifices to them have no effect. This religion or any religion, such as Christianity, that believes that the gods or God is active in human history is false and creates a model for the human life that does not have as its end tranquility. As we shall see, according to Lucretius, it is positively destructive to it.

Thucydides, the dispassionate historian, is more subtle. His approach is to ignore the theological apparatus of the traditional Homeric myths and to seek to discover

whatever actual historical events are hidden in the conflict between Greece and Troy. He famously discredits the purported prophecies concerning the plague as being merely twisted to have them refer to the plague and posits that their interpreters will twist them in a new way to find a fulfillment in some future events (II:54). His conclusion is that in the face of the unrelenting calamity of the plague, the failure of prayers in the temple and the unreliability of divine oracles were shown to be "equally useless" with result that people "paid no further attention to such things" (II:47). Although not explicitly rejecting the popular religion of his day, with his dismissive "such things" Thucydides reflects the growing religious skepticism of the educated Athenian elite of his day.

The plague's grave **consequences and the human response** to it are clearly described by both authors. Thucydides describes the despair that people felt before the seemingly inexplicable and invincible plague. Such hopelessness led to the abandonment of traditional religious institutions, adherence to the law, and the code of honor. It also revealed the cracks in Athenian democracy. Thucydides was neither a democratic nor an antidemocratic ideologue. However, he did recognize that the populace needed strong and wise rulers who were men of integrity serving the good of the people and not their own selfish interests. In Pericles they had such a ruler, and Athens probably would have succeeded in the war with Sparta in spite of the plague. Unfortunately, the second wave of the plague took Pericles with it, and the rulers that followed were not strong, wise, or unselfish. Thus, the plague was a crucial element in the end of Athens golden age, its empire, and permanently damaged its democracy. At the same time, Thucydides is hopeful that his description of the plague and of the war will enable future generations to avoid the errors of his time and find more reasonable and effective solutions.

While following Thucydides in his description of the disastrous social consequences of the plague, Lucretius focuses on its effect on the individual psyche. The fear and despair ultimately are not due to the plague but to the individual's worldview or philosophy of life. Religion, as understood by Lucretius, creates this despair because it both distresses humans by placing them under the hand of wrathful gods but, paradoxically, also gives a false hope that the reality of the plague can be overturned by prayers and sacrifices. According to the Epicurean worldview, the plague occurs by the random movements of invisible atoms, as does all reality, and is beyond the capacity of humans to control it. The reasonable response is to accept this reality and avoid the mental distress that comes with false beliefs and the fear of death.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I want to utilize the four general categories from the previous section so that we can benefit from the insights of these two ancient authors in the midst of the contemporary COVID-19 pandemic. For easy reference, I will express these concluding thoughts in the form of bullet points under each category.

The seemingly academic category of literary **genre** can help us in some very practical ways.

1. Examine the style of the written and oral descriptions of COVOD-19. Do they employ literal or metaphorical language? Are they more analytical or emotive?
2. What is the purpose of the writer or speaker? Is it explicitly stated or left unspoken? Even if he or she is essentially relaying information, realize that there is a purpose to it.
3. Does the type of language reflect the purpose? For example, a strongly emotive presentation is unlikely to have a merely or even primarily informative purpose.

The question of the worldview of a speaker or writer touches upon the question of **nature**—both human and of reality in general.

1. Is the problem of COVID-19 understood solely or primarily in terms of biology and chemistry? While these are essential, this is a reductionist view of the human person, leaving out entirely essential aspects of human nature.
2. When the problem is seen as primarily or solely biological, the solutions will be too. Once again, the coronavirus is a biological problem. Nevertheless, any solution that ignores the rest of human nature will not resolve the problem and will potentially create additional ones.
3. Exclusive focus on the biological treatment of the disease could result in a draconian implementation of social distancing and sheltering that ignores man's social nature.

The question of nature leads directly to the issue of the relationship between **religion and reason**. I shall be writing from the viewpoint of a convinced Christian.

1. A purely materialistic view of reality leaves God out and thus prevents people from a key solution to the pandemic—prayer to the God who reigns in heaven and on earth.
2. Specifically, the philosophy of Epicurus does not allow for the view that human moral behavior affects the natural world. In other words, there is no point in self-examination that leads to repentance, whether individual or national, to ward off the evil of a plague.
3. On the other hand, the Christian faith believes reason is a gift of God and encourages the efforts of science to discover the biological causes of COVID-19 and to develop a cure.
4. Christianity's support of reason and thus of science also rejects irrational or anti-rational responses to the pandemic. The idea that one can ignore or flaunt the laws of nature in the name of faith in God, perverts the biblical meaning of faith and makes a mockery of faith in the eyes of reasonable people.

The last category is consequences and the **human response.**

1. Expect medical experts not to know what to do and even to disagree among themselves when faced with a new disease that has reached the level of an epidemic.
2. 2,000 plus years of medical advances should enable us to get the upper hand on the pandemic before it results in the widespread despair and breakdown of society that occurred in classical Athens.
3. Expect governments not to react quickly enough to a crisis caused by an unexpected and previously unknown disease.
4. Plagues return, since the causes remain, and claim new victims when there is no known cure or vaccine. Be suspicious of those who deny this.
5. Be on the lookout for national and international changes. Plagues cause significant changes in the political realms, both domestic and international.
6. Beware of those who claim to know the cause of the problem and have an agenda extraneous to the treatment of the disease, such as economic profit or garnering votes.
7. Epidemics confront us, as do all mortal threats, with ultimate questions about the meaning of life and challenge us to consider or even formulate a worldview as we seek to respond to them. We should reflect upon our beliefs and values, especially at this time.

The careful examination of the writings and ideas of Thucydides and Lucretius from over two millennia ago on the Plague of Athens has shown some striking parallels to our contemporary struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic. It is hoped that the parallels and the reflections of these brilliant minds and capable authors both will help us manage successfully the challenge of our day and also lead us to begin a lifelong habit of consulting classical writings in order to avoid being trapped by the limited perspectives of our own time.

ENDNOTES:

1. I am using the translation by Rex Warner for the Penguin Classics edition of 1954.

2. I am using the Oxford World Classics 1997

translation by Ronald Melville.

3. His description of the plague is found in VI:1090–1286.

4. This can be seen in the discussions about the so-called Thucydides Trap in which war almost always results when one great power challenges and threatens to displace another. The name derives from the thesis of Thucydides, "What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta" (I:23).

BOOK REVIEW: *THE LIBERAL ARTS TRADITION: A PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN CLASSICAL EDUCATION*

Reviewed by: Alex Markos, Geneva School of Boerne

With classical Christian schools on the rise across the country, many educators inside and outside of the movement are asking the same question: what exactly *is* classical Christian education? Many scholars and educators alike have offered glimpses of the movement's history, philosophy, and curriculum, but there seem to be few authors who can give us the total picture. Dorothy Sayers's essay "The Lost Tools of Learning" gave us an introduction to the Trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) as the foundation of classical education. Her essay inspired modern educators like Douglas Wilson (*Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*) and Evans and Littlejohn (*Wisdom and Eloquence*) to explore the specifics of a Christian education in the classical tradition of the liberal arts. Yet even these insightful books lacked a full-bodied treatment of the movement's rich history and failed to address the integration of subjects like music, P.E., math, and science. This is why Clark and Jain's revised and expanded edition of *The Liberal Arts Tradition* is such a welcome addition to the scholarship on this topic.

For many years, Kevin Clark and Ravi Jain taught together at the Geneva School in Winter Park, Florida, and draw on fifteen years of teaching experience, discussions with key leaders in the movement, and a lifetime of reading old and new books. They write specifically for those already invested in the movement—teachers, administrators, and parents—who are hungry for more information and deeper insight on this kind of education. Clark and Jain's purpose for this book is to faithfully lay out the history, philosophy, and development of classical Christian education and to provide educators involved and interested in this educational paradigm with "resources that will inform and inspire their teaching" (xii). In this, they happily and largely succeed.

KEVIN CLARK AND RAVI SCOTT JAIN,
THE LIBERAL ARTS TRADITION: A PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN CLASSICAL EDUCATION, REV. ED.
(CAMP HILL, PA: CLASSICAL ACADEMIC PRESS, 2019), 352 PAGES, $21.95.

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THE PGMAPT PARADIGM

What sets this book apart is that it gives a clear and total picture of the components of classical Christian education, drawing on a vast knowledge of primary and secondary sources, supplemented with copious footnotes and references. Indeed, the most helpful aspects of their book are its extensive bibliography, its glossary of key terms, and its detailed chart outlining all seven liberal arts. These provide quick reference guides for busy and curious teachers and administrators. The first edition of Clark and Jain's book came out in 2013 and was successful enough to deserve a revised and expanded edition that will please those who found their first edition too short. They offer again their six curricular categories of piety, gymnastic, music, arts (liberal arts), philosophy, and theology, reflected by the acronym PGMAPT. Included in this edition are greatly expanded sections on natural and moral philosophy, new essays on reading, classical languages, and natural philosophy, examples of student work, and longer quoted passages in the text and footnotes.

A strength of their work in this book is that they note where scholarship on the movement's history has already begun—in books like Evans and Littlejohn's *Wisdom and Eloquence* and Sayers's essay "The Lost Tools of Learning"—while also challenging and correcting common misconceptions. They engage with both ancient and contemporary voices with a view to the movement's future, indicating areas of development and growth.

Clark and Jain do not offer a simple summary of the liberal arts tradition, nor do they call for a return to the Middle Ages ("turn back the clock"), as many of the movement's chief critics claim, but outline how schools today can embody the principles and carry out the mission of classical Christian education. For example, in their discussion of music (the M in their PGMAPT model), they show that the songs, chants, games, etc. used in the early years of grammar school are not meant to teach students the "grammar of" multiple subjects, nor do they represent the "elements" of the liberal arts. Instead, their teachers are actually "engaged in the truly classical enterprise of music education" (34). The purpose of grammar school is not to teach grammar but to cultivate students' affections and sense of wonder through stories, songs, and poetry.

WONDER AND WISDOM

Their treatment of the seven liberal arts also warrants close attention, particularly the quadrivium, which has always been a sticking point for classical educators. According to Clark and Jain, the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music) "ought to strike a balance between wonder, work, wisdom, and worship" (69). In this section, they are not shy about recommending "countercultural" changes to the typical vision of math and science. Most notable is their call to resist our culture's utilitarian view and recover the perspective of the ancient mathematicians, who "treated numbers not just as a practical tool, but as a locus of wonder and mystery" (71). They also make an appeal to return to the foundational elements of mathematics and to "recover the lost distinction between continuous magnitude and discrete number" (79). They recommend that in light of this distinction, geometry should precede algebra, not the other way around as in most public schools.

In the expanded section on moral philosophy, they give a wide overview of the history of the social sciences, particularly economics, politics, and government, that should prove beneficial to the teachers of these subjects. They also do a good job of situating these subjects in their historical context and of demonstrating the role of the church in their origin, development, and recovery. They admit that their purpose for the lengthy section on moral philosophy is to explore "how Christianity

has influenced the origins and development on the social sciences" (192). While the discussion does chase some rabbit trails, such as the relationship of church and state, it should help readers understand the role and responsibility of classical Christian educators to make use of the opportunities afforded them in a private school setting.

Clark and Jain also frequently remind readers of the failures of public schools to cover these subjects properly—which, according to them, cannot be taught effectively outside of a Christian classroom where Scripture holds the central place of truth. Pointing back to Lewis's insightful book *The Abolition of Man*, they expose the inherent weaknesses in a natural or social science curriculum that is divorced from any grounding in man's true, fallen nature. Such studies are not simply doomed to failure; they are destructive of civilization. This is why grounding all subjects in theology is vital to the total success of classical Christian education.

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

Although this new and expanded edition warrants praise, the sheer quantity of added material unfortunately creates some difficulties for the reader. The long quotes (sometimes taking up more than a page) from major scholars of the ancient (Plato and Aristotle), medieval (Augustine and Aquinas), and modern world (Christopher Dawson and Charles Taylor), slows down the pace and can be a bit overwhelming for readers unfamiliar with the works and authors. At times, the quotes threaten to drown out Clark and Jain's voices altogether. However, it is evident that they are knowledgeable and passionate about their subject and have taken great pains to collect and present their research in a manner that will be accessible to a wide audience.

While all parts of the book are thoroughly researched and footnoted, the parts of the book feel unbalanced, with natural and moral philosophy receiving a total of almost 90 pages, while all seven liberal arts combined, only 60, and the early stages of education, barely 25. This stark disparity in length is not as detrimental as might be supposed. Clark and Jain frequently mention how the later years of philosophy and the liberal arts build on and reinforce what was learned in the early years of piety and gymnastic. Still, their huge focus on philosophy makes this book more useful to upper-school teachers who want to gain a broader perspective on their subjects and to see how their work is designed to build on what was accomplished in the lower school.

Finally, the section on theology rounds out their full view of classical Christian education, maintaining that theology unifies the whole curriculum. Theology, however, is not merely a subject to be studied; it is something that undergirds everything that the school does, from the liberal arts to gymnastics to school culture to the fellowship among the faculty. Their challenging call to Christian teachers to pass on the entire culture of the Church (*paideia* of the Lord) is both daunting and inspiring. For them, the essentials are "wisdom and virtue pursued within the context of piety born of the grace of Christ through union with him" (230). It is a welcome reminder that as Christian educators, we are not called to "just educate smart pagans," but to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

WHEN FOUNDATIONS ARE UNDERMINED

by George Grant, Parish Presbyterian Church and Franklin Classical School

This is a transcription of Dr. Grant's plenary address given June 18, 2020 during the Repairing the Ruins Telecast Conference

The old church of St. Peter in Rome was thronged with the faithful. Erected originally by Constantine the Great some six centuries earlier, the vast, decrepit basilica would not be revitalized by Michelangelo's artistry until five centuries later. But those who crowded into it that day would not have expected the creaking timbers and the worn stones around them to have any need to endure that long span of all of those years. Weeping and wailing, they had gathered to await the end of the world. Just before midnight, the grand liturgical procession began to make its way slowly along the shadowy aisles as the tormented cries of the people hung in the air thick like incense. Every sight, sound, texture, and aroma bore the manifest taint of judgment. Grievous, they were observing a wake for the world. The Holy Seers had all foretold this dreadful day indeed—most had expected it for quite some time.

Almost from the beginning of history, men began to anticipate the end of history. But here, at the end of the millennium, the signs seemed unmistakable. Pope Gregory, just before his death earlier that year, had assured the faithful that the wars and rumors of wars, the kingdoms rising against kingdoms, the famines, the pestilences, the earthquakes in diverse places were clear portents of the consummation of the ages. His successor, with the concurrence of each of the venerable patriarchs of the East, confirmed that time had run out for this the terminal generation. Some of those who gathered at the Vatican that evening had rid themselves of all of their earthly possessions as one final act of contrition. Some gave their lands, their homes, their money to the poor. Others simply left their fields, their shops, their villages vacant. Little or no preparation was made for the future because, of course, there was no future.

Now it was New Year's Eve, 999. At long last the hour arrived. A hush fell across the whole congregation as bells began to toll slowly—at the end of the year, the end of the century, the end of the millennium, the end of the

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world. And then, nothing happened. Nothing at all. The silence was deafening. Everyone looked around at one another in astonished relief. The terror was passed—and that is when all the trouble began. Preparing for the end is not nearly so difficult as preparing for what comes after the end.

T.S. Eliot once said, "The historical sense involves a perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence." Both the pastness of the past and the looming presence of it teach us that it is in times of uncertainty and adversity that character and leadership emerge. It's when there seems to be no hope at all, when the whole culture seems to be coming apart at the seams, when the foundations are undermined, it's then that real opportunity emerges. It's then that leadership and character are made manifest. The counterculture of grace, the coming into a worldview of biblical hope are most distinctive in those seasons of distress—when the foundations give way.

There may be no better example of this truth than the life and career of the seventeenth-century Reformer Jan Amos Comenius. Herman Bavinck called him the greatest figure of the second generation of Reformers. Andrew Bonar said that he was the truest heir of Hus, the chief inspiration of Chalmers, and the first model for Carey. J. Hudson Taylor said that he was the single greatest innovator of missions, education, and literature during the Protestant Reformation. Abraham Kuyper said that he was the father of modern Christian education, and yet most of us have never even heard of him. Or, if we've heard of him at all, it is certainly not in the same way that we've heard of all of these others who sang his praises.

Comenius was astonishingly diverse in all of his interests and endeavors. Comenius helped to shape the educational systems of Holland, Sweden, Prussia, Scotland, and Puritan New England. He launched missionary outreaches to the Jews, the Turks, and the Gypsies. He initiated projects to create a comprehensive Christian encyclopedia and a Turkoman translation of the Scriptures. He wrote and published a veritable library of books of inspiration, of educational theory, cultural criticism, history, practical devotion, exposition, and theology. He was asked to lead both King's College in Cambridge and Harvard College in Boston. He served the Swedish king as a chaplain. He developed innovative plans for a Christian university program. And, he was able to do all of this despite the fact that he suffered a whole series of personal tragedies and faced adversity at every turn in his life, living most of it in uncertain exile. As his contemporary Cotton Mather argued, he was "a man of extraordinary accomplishments amidst inordinate adversity."

Comenius was born in eastern Moravia, an heir of the rich Czech Protestant legacy that traced its roots to the reforming work of John Milic, and his disciples Jan Hus and Jerome of Prague. He was catechized in that rich tradition that traced it origins back to nearly a hundred years before Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the Wittenberg church door. Alas, at the age of 12, a wave of the Bubonic Plague swept through his little village and his entire family was lost. His neighbors, seeing the promise of this prodigiously gifted young man, sought to see him educated. So, they sent him off to Heidelberg, where he would be trained and ordained in the Hussite Reformed Church. When he returned, he served a small congregation in his home village of Falnek, where he married his childhood sweetheart and began his family. But shortly afterward, a second tragedy struck.

The final decisive battle of the first wave of the Thirty Year's War was fought at White Mountain, just outside of Prague. The Hapsburg Imperial armies overwhelmed the Protestant Czech forces, and a fierce new persecution was imposed on the Reformed community throughout the land. in the melee Comenius escaped a slaughter at Falnek that claimed the lives of his beloved wife and their two young children. And, he was forced into

hiding. This was just the beginning of a life marked by suffering, sadness, and exile.

Comenius gathered a contingent of Protestant refugees and led them across the mountains and into southern Poland in order to try to rebuild their lives, their families, and their churches. It was then that Comenius began writing. He wrote *The Labyrinth of This World*, a beautiful allegory of the Christian life, written half a century before Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.* He wrote *Man of Sorrows*, a classic meditation on the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross. He also began to travel to the other Protestant lands to advocate the cause of his Moravian brethren uprooted from their homeland, impoverished and harried.

The genius of Comenius was soon recognized, not only by the grateful community of Reformed exiles huddled together in the mountain villages of southern Poland, but also by the wider church. In the years that followed he entertained invitations to teach and live in the cities of London, Boston, Stockholm, Paris, Amsterdam, Wittenberg, and Geneva. He was called on to devise universal Christian curricula to reform educational systems, to administer colleges, to oversee theological projects, and to supervise publishing efforts. He corresponded with Cardinal Richelieu, Oliver Cromwell, Charles X of Sweden, and Cotton Mather. He befriended the philosopher Rene Descartes. The great industrialist Louis De Geer was enamored of his gifts and became a patron and a sponsor. He had become one of the most influential men of his day, which is why Rembrandt sought the opportunity to paint his portrait. But the pastoral responsibility for his little beleaguered flock always remained the first and the foremost of his concerns. Comenius attempted to utilize every opportunity and every contact for their sake.

Meanwhile, despite the insecurity of living in exile on very limited resources, his Kingdom vision for a missionary and educational reform never dimmed. Always the optimist, he continued to devise new plans, hammer out new strategies, and formulate new projects. But then, in 1656, after a lifetime of hardship and opportunities deferred, tragedy struck Comenius again. Polish troops burned and looted the Moravian refugee camps, a harrowing experience which forced the survivors across the border. They had lost everything, again. Comenius lost nearly a dozen manuscripts that were then in preparation. He and the other refugees scattered throughout the German and Dutch provinces. There they would live out their remaining days as strangers in yet another strange land.

But Comenius, as energetic as always, continued to set his hand to a host of new projects. Though he had lost his unpublished manuscripts, his printing press, and all of his worldly goods, he was unshaken in his confidence in the gospel to change the course of both men and nations. He had set his ultimate hope on the day that Christ would make manifest the new heavens and the earth. But, he was also steadfast in the certainty that a deposit of that future glory would be made in the tired domains of the old heavens and the old earth. He never gave up. He never settled back to await the end of the world. He never allowed himself to fall into despair. He believed in God's providence, and he pressed forward in the midst of all of his troubles, to achieve God's calling for his life. To his dying day he lived in accordance with the notion that God's purposes would be fulfilled. He began planning for the evangelization of Muslims and Gypsies, and refining his vision for what he called a "Pansophic Collegium" (the first modern integrated classical Christian curriculum). When he died at the age of seventy-eight, he left behind a glorious legacy—a legacy not of this world, but one that would inspire the likes of Whitfield, Wesley, Zinzendorf, Chalmers, Bavinck, and Kuyper.

His legacy would also provide a powerful reminder that success in the Kingdom rarely looks like success in the world. He never had a campus. He never had certainty. He never had an endowment. He never

had any of the opportunities that we would think of as essential for the work of changing the world, of reforming the educational system. What he had was undying, unflinching faith. Faith that the gospel is true. Faith that because the gospel is true, God has come with his incarnational hope, infusing all things with the certainty that Jesus himself has come to make his blessings flow as far as the curse is found.

Lessons from the life of Comenius abound for us, particularly in these difficult days of great uncertainty. I was introduced to apocalypticism a long time ago—in the 1970s with the publication of Hal Lindsey's blockbuster *The Late Great Planet Earth* and its 1972 sequel, *The Terminal Generation*. I learned then that the world was coming to an end—probably within the next ten years. It seemed entirely plausible as the Vietnam War continued to rage, the Middle East was wracked with wars, invasions, and terrorism. Environmentalists had begun to warn that the planet had been irreversibly poisoned. The Cold War threatened nuclear annihilation. Africa and Asia were gripped by revolutions, plagues, and famines. American politics seemed to be paralyzed by scandal, corruption, and assassinations. Our urban centers were ablaze with protests and riots. Surely the world could not survive this for very long. It seemed that all the experts agreed. The Club of Rome established their Doomsday Clock and set the time to a minute before midnight.

The foundations had been undermined and shaken. What do the righteous do in time like these? In 1981, the famed science writer Isaac Asimov wrote his classic *A Choice of Catastrophes*, claiming that if nuclear war, environmental disaster, overpopulation, or a collapse of the food supply did not do us all in, then surely falling meteors would. In 1989, the UN Environmental Council warned that the world would see entire nations wiped off the face of the earth by rising sea levels if global warming was not reversed by the year 2000. Do you remember Y2K? A computer glitch was going to shutter modern civilization as we know it. Remember Al Gore's Oscar winning film *An Inconvenient Truth*? In it, he warned that within 10 years, the planet would face the point of no return. That was in 2006. We have faced one catastrophe after another. Many doomsayers and many Christians have assumed that we were done for.

Comenius, facing more adversity and more uncertainty than any of us could have ever imagined, changed the world. He did this by remembering a few basic principles:

First, he understood that our first job—our only job—is just to do the next right thing. People would oftentimes ask him, "How do you keep your perspective? How do you maintain hope?" His response was simply, "I keep myself in the way of grace. I remember the truth of the gospel, and then I just put one foot in front of the other." What do we do in days like this? Days of profound uncertainty? We do the next right thing. We can't fix everything. But what we can do is the next right thing. That's our first calling.

Second, Comenius understood that he was working for a day that he would not see. To be sure, he was also working for those that he lived with, in his own day. He was committed to them in covenant community. He sacrificed all he was and all he had for them. But he understood that in the end he really was working for another day. He was laying foundations for his grandchildren, his great-grandchildren, and their children after them by keeping his eyes fixed on the long-distance goal, as well as the immediate needs of those around him. He was thus, able to persevere.

Third, Comenius understood that, in order to do persevere like that, he would have to undertake work with enduring excellence. Comenius wrote classics—classics that are still read 300 years later, shaping an educational philosophy that is now being digitally broadcast around the world. It was Comenius who imagined what it is that we're doing right now in classical Christian schools. It was Comenius who

understood that beauty, goodness, and truth needed to be grounded on the foundations of a comprehensive biblical worldview. It was Comenius who understood the importance of working for real reformation, starting with the little ones, starting with the discipleship of our children, starting with covenantal succession.

Fourth, Comenius understood that in order to now portray the gospel before the world it is vital that he live every moment in the joy of hope. People were constantly amazed by the joy that Comenius manifested, at every turn. He had suffered so much and yet he was filled with an overwhelming sense of certainty that God's purposes were perfect—and that He gives joy.

These are the principles enabled him to accomplish more than anyone would have ever imagined when he was first sent into exile with a bedraggled group of refugees. It really is astonishing, isn't it? The modern missions movement was really launched by Moravian refugees (disciples of Comenius) who found that shelter on the estate of Count Zinzendorf? It was those refugees who brought the gospel to Whitfield and Wesley. They were the ones who inspired Thomas Chalmers to lay the groundwork for the foreign missions movement from Scotland that eventually transformed the world. These are the fruits of Comenius' legacy across the ages.

T.S. Eliot in his wonderful choruses from The Rock said,

In the vacant places
We will build with new bricks . . .
Where the bricks are fallen
We will build with new stone
Where the beams are rotten,
We will build with new timbers
Where the word is unspoken,
We will build with new speech
There is work together,
A Church for all
And a job for each
Every man to his work.

Those of us who have tasted the beauty, goodness, and truth of the gospel and seen it made manifest in classrooms with little ones and the moments of our teenagers as they begin to grasp the riches of this world-changing vision, we are the ones who, in moments like this, must seize the opportunity. When the foundations are shaken, when the foundations are undermined, that is when we have our greatest opportunity. That is when leadership and character emerge.

We were made for this moment. We were called to this moment.

Remember how rough the recession of 2008 was? Remember the good old days back before COVID-19 and the death of George Floyd? That was just a little while ago! The opportunities that are now before us may be the greatest in our lifetime. And so, my prayer is that in your school, in your community, in your land, God would raise up a host of new Jan Amos Comeniuses. I pray that you would understand that your first job, your only job, is to do the next right thing. I pray that you would realize that it is important for you to work just as diligently for the day that you will not see as for the day that is just before you—and that you will work with enduring excellence.

It's striking to me that Augustine finished the *City of God* when the Vandals were at the gates of Hippo! It's striking to me that Gerhard Groote planted his Brethren of Common Life schools when the Hundred Years War was raging, when the Bubonic Plague was sending wave after wave of hysteria across Europe, when the Babylonian Captivity of the Church and the Hanseatic League had given the people of Europe no sense of hope that the future could possibly bode well for them.

These are the moments when real reformation can take hold. I believe this is the great day of beginnings to live every moment in the joy of hope.

God bless you.

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