"SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO"

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THE CASSIODORUS NECESSITY: KEEPING THE FAITH ALIVE THROUGH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

by Richard Hughes Gibson, Wheaton College

We are sustained by the saints and trail our thoughts behind the truths of others.

—Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*

In these books, I commend not my own teaching but the words of the ancients, which are rightly praised and gloriously proclaimed to future generations.

—Cassiodorus, *Institutiones Divinarum et Saecularium Litterarum*

There has been much talk in the last few years about the "options" before Christian communities amidst the changing cultural and political landscape of the West. The instigator of these discussions is, of course, Rod Dreher, promulgator of the Benedict Option. The BenOp urges traditionalist Christians to make a "strategic withdrawal" from mainstream society in order to preserve their distinctive way of life—in a manner analogous, Dreher contends, to Saint Benedict's establishment of the monastery at Monte Cassino as the Western Roman Empire collapsed in the early sixth century. In response to Dreher's proposal, numerous commentators have offered options of their own, including a Dominican Option; a Francis Option, the title a nod to both the medieval saint and the current pontiff; two Gregory Options, one modeled after the fifth-century bishop of Rome, Gregory the Great, the other after the archbishop of Constantinople a century earlier, Gregory of Nazianzus; and two options named for Protestant heroes—the English reformer William Wilberforce and the Dutch neo-Calvinist statesman and theologian Abraham Kuyper. Shifting the terms slightly, James K. A. Smith has countered Dreher's option with an Augustinian Call to "stay in the mix of things."

My title might seem like an attempt to outmaneuver all of these proposals. But the "necessity" of which I write is not another entry in this debate. Rather, it is the intellectual culture that promotes the kind of thinking that the debate involves. Notice that all the schemes hinge on a common assumption: that finding a way forward in our times should begin by recalling the examples of the saints, be they ancient or modern.

All of these programs display what Robert Louis Wilken, in his superb 2003 book *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, argues is "one of the most distinctive features of Christian intellectual life": "a kind of quiet confidence in the faithfulness and integrity of those who have gone before." As Wilken further observes, "memory is essential for Christian thinking," for Christian thinking begins with memory—"with what has been received." The

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deposit begins with Scripture, of course, but it doesn't end there. Our inheritance also includes teachings of "those who have gone before" about "how to use such words as *God, Spirit, hope, grace, sin, forgiveness*." Each of the options discussed above is just such an effort to sift the church's history for guidance. If Wilken is right about how Christians think, as I believe he is, then we can say that the option-makers are doing what Christians have always done when they would think deeply about a problem—"beginning with what has been received."

Before "what has been received" can be pondered, though, it must first come into our hands. That is, it must be written down, drawn up, passed around, and taken to heart. This is what I'm calling the "Cassiodorus Necessity," the equally vital labors of custodians to transmit Christian intellectual culture and those of the rising generation to receive it. Transmission is rarely glamorous work. It's often conducted in quiet corners by a lone novice reading a book, writing an essay, or translating a passage. It happens when a librarian catalogues a collection. It occurs when a teacher gathers with students around a table for conversation. It's easy to take for granted.

Yet in periods of crisis like our own, our intellectual supply lines become visible. We are reminded that they are fragile like us, and that their maintenance demands investment—of money certainly, but equally importantly of space and time, the space and time of learning. *In The Year of Our Lord 1943*, Alan Jacobs reminds us that in the midst of World War II a number of leading Christian intellectuals—Jacques Maritain, T. S. Eliot, C. S. Lewis, W. H. Auden, and Simone Weil—dedicated themselves to the task of imagining education's future. They wondered: What kind of schooling will the citizens of postwar Western societies require? What role might the Christian tradition play in their education? They, too, were asking how "what has been received" might be passed on to the rising generation. The pandemic has made this question a pressing one once again, given its massive disruption of the business of education, Christian or otherwise.

Whether the mildest or bleakest of the recent financial forecasts prove true, our charge remains the same—passing down the resources of Christian thinking. This is an ideal moment to use our memories as Christians to consider how past generations have handled this vital work. Now is a time to remember our roots.

Cassiodorus, a contemporary of Benedict's, was there at the beginning. He was among the first to recognize that Christianity had developed an intellectual culture worthy of transmission. He perceived the vital importance of study to the Christian life. He saw, moreover, that to engage with sacred texts, to pursue the knowledge of God, Christians must dedicate themselves to a panoply of arts and sciences. Writing in a period of turmoil even greater than our own, he cast a vision for education that has had a quiet influence down through the centuries.

Claude Monet, *The Pointe of Heve* (Public domain)

Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator was born around AD 485, a time of palace intrigues, half-hearted alliances, a child emperor, scheming foreign powers, and upstart Germanic kings—in short, the last gasp of the Western Roman Empire. His father had risen to the highest ranks of the recently established Ostrogothic court, and Cassiodorus would follow him into civil service. On the strength of his rhetorical skills, he would hold a series of high offices, making him, in one scholar's apt phrasing, "the chief administrator, public relations officer, and minister of culture" for three Ostrogothic kings.

With the collapse of that kingdom in the late 530s,

Cassiodorus retired from public life and dedicated himself to *conversio*, meaning a deliberate turning toward God through prayer and study. In the mid to late 550s, Cassiodorus returned to his ancestral property at Squillace, in the toe of the Italian boot, and founded a monastic community. He named it the Vivarium—meaning "place for a living thing"– after the fishpond nearby.

Founding a monastery was not an unusual behavior for elites at this point. What made the Vivarium special was that Cassiodorus consciously designed it as a seat of Christian intellectual culture. Walking its grounds was a bit like touring a Christian liberal arts college—over here was the classical library, over here the copy center, over here the enormous biblical commentaries, over here someone was annotating a book, over here someone was doing math homework. One recent writer has dubbed it "a monastic research foundation." For good measure, Cassiodorus also assembled a team of skilled book binders so that he could "clothe the loveliness of the Sacred Letters" with suitable "outer grace."

Our knowledge of the Vivarium derives from the two-volume work that Cassiodorus wrote on the enterprise, the *Institutiones Divinarum et Saecularium Litterarum* (meaning, roughly, an "Introduction to Divine and Secular Literature"). The work is sometimes referred to as an "annotated bibliography," which is accurate insofar as it contains the author's detailed notes on a host of titles from an impressive range of subjects, including orthography, rhetoric, astronomy, mathematics, and, above all, Scripture.

That description, however, sells short what Cassiodorus attempted to do, both in the document and in the community it was meant to guide after its patron's death. In his 1979 biography of Cassiodorus, the classicist James O'Donnell well explains the distinctiveness of the project: "Cassiodorus was not merely preparing convenient handbooks, for he was in his own eyes saving, preserving, expanding, and exalting his idea of Christian intellectual culture. Moreover, his enterprise was comprehensive, in the sense that it sought to provide a complete, well-rounded education for the Christian scholar, concerning itself with all the details of the educational advancement of everyone in the monastery, down to the least literate."

In the *Institutiones*, the reader watches Cassiodorus plot out a life's reading—not only the texts but also the order in which they ought to be consumed and to what end. The work is best understood as a curriculum, a course of study, which the reader is invited to run with fellow community members in the corporate pursuit of the knowledge of God.

Given the turbulence of his times, one might assume that Cassiodorus envisioned the Vivarium primarily as a storehouse for high-priority cultural goods threatened by the proverbial barbarians at the gates. And the project has indeed often been portrayed as just such an effort to tuck away a bit of civilization as the Dark Ages descended. The trouble with this view is that Cassiodorus doesn't seem to have shared it. The only mention of political disorder that we get in the *Institutiones* appears at the beginning when the author explains that the "continual wars and raging battles in the Kingdom of Italy" thwarted an earlier initiative to found "Christian schools" in Rome. The motivation for that endeavor, now extended to the Vivarium, is explained in the *Institutiones*' opening sentence: "When I became aware of the fervent desire for secular learning, through which a great multitude hope to obtain worldly wisdom, I was deeply grieved, I must confess; for while secular authors without a doubt have a powerful and widespread tradition, the Holy Scripture wanted for public teachers."

The Vivarium's catalyst thus wasn't looming barbarism but the educational establishment—the tried-and-true ways of Roman schooling. This was the tradition of liberal learning that reached back centuries and whose textbooks conveyed the teachings of Cicero, Quintilian, and Aristotle, among other giants of the Greco-Roman past. Above these, Cassiodorus placed Scripture, which he describes repeatedly in the *Institutiones* and other writings as the highest source of truth. In this regard, he was echoing the patristic writers whose volumes lined his shelves. Early

Christian thinkers "turn always to the Bible as the source of their ideas. No matter how rigorous or abstruse their thinking," Wilken writes, "Christian thinkers always began with specific biblical texts."

This program may have the look of a sixth-century edition of the culture wars. But in fact the sort of learned pagan rivals whom Augustine addressed more than a hundred years earlier in the *City of God Against the Pagans* had long since died out. Cassiodorus lived in a Christianized Italy. That fact explains his mission: seeing the endurance of the pagan tradition of learning, he lamented Christians' neglect of their own. In the Vivarium, Cassiodorus expressed his conviction that Christianity had developed a distinctive intellectual culture. The community was an argument that this intellectual tradition could provide the basis for education. He wasn't simply laying up intellectual goods for the future; the Vivarium was his attempt to widen their circulation.

The first book of the *Institutiones* begins to chart the course of this sacred education through traditional Christian writings. Cassiodorus makes clear that Scripture is the *sine qua non* of this education, but it is far from the lone material in the curriculum. On Cassiodorus's account, Scripture should be the gravitational center of Christian education—but not its limit. To read Scripture well, the teacher counsels the study of its greatest commentators, a line-up that includes Augustine, Ambrose, Athanasius, and Jerome. (On the latter's authority, he even makes room for the good bits of Origen.) But Scripture study demanded more than just help navigating its themes, images, allusions, and theologically and linguistically difficult passages. One also needed to study geography. One needed to learn church history. Copying Scripture—one of the Vivarium's routine tasks—demanded that monks gain a thorough knowledge of orthography. Editing the Bible required learning from figures like Jerome and Eastern scholars about its original languages as well as the methods of textual criticism. Across the *Institutiones*, Cassiodorus sets one book after another in orbit around the sacred writings, resulting in a sprawling solar system of texts.

The orbitals were not exclusively Christian, however, and in this regard Cassiodorus was an innovator. The second book of the *Institutiones* promotes the material advertised in the second half of its full title: "Secular Letters," that is, the old pagan teaching on subjects like rhetoric and logic. This inheritance had often been a matter of ambivalence—and in some cases outright worry—among early Christian thinkers, who were themselves trained in it and whose rhetorically sophisticated writings benefit from its influence. Cassiodorus was a product of this tradition too, and as we have seen he had his concerns about the old "secular" learning as an institution separate from sacred study. But he saw more clearly than many of his predecessors that the ancient liberal arts tradition could serve the project of Christian learning.

The *Institutiones* is thus peppered with sentences like this: "These subjects are certainly useful to know, and (as our fathers believed) they should not be rejected since these subjects appear in the Sacred Letters, the origin, as it were, of universal and complete wisdom." In another section, he speaks of calling "back to the service of truth" the insights that the pagan writers "attained from the exercise of their cunning," the sentence containing a clever play on the Latin words for truth, *veritas*, and cunning, *versutia*. Cassiodorus makes the case that liberal arts are "useful" (a keyword in this text) on their own—astronomy, for example, in reckoning the "right time for sailing, for plowing, the dog-star of summer, and the dangerous rains of autumn." Yet his strongest pitch for them lies in their potential as an aid to sacred study.

The application may seem obvious in the case of the trivium—the ancient language arts, if you will—of grammar, rhetoric, and logic (also known as dialectic), since Cassiodorus's educational program places such emphasis on the reading of a complex core book. Scripture, he points out repeatedly, is full of rhetorical effects, as are the writings of its commentators; one needs to be a skilled reader to get the most out of the tradition. But what

about the quadrivium—arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy? Cassiodorus presents these studies as a kind of higher learning: "Our holy Fathers properly persuaded men of a scholarly disposition to read these sciences since they turn our appetite from carnal things and make us desire what with the Lord's aid we can see with the heart alone."

Cassiodorus is sometimes chided by modern scholars for not sufficiently valuing the liberal arts in their own right, given his stated wish to enlist them in the work of grappling with Scripture. That critique seems to miss the mark in multiple respects, but it is especially problematic in regard to the quadrivium. In his discussion of these disciplines, Cassiodorus channels the ancient belief that studying mathematics, music, and the stars elevated the mind. Through these studies one doesn't just gain useful knowledge; one contemplates the deep order of the cosmos, which in the Christian understanding was instituted by God.

Fittingly, as Book II ends, the language of wonder and awe becomes increasingly pronounced. Having ascended to the stars, the author's last challenge to the student is to exercise the mental powers gained through liberal learning to contemplate God: "let us consider, with great admiration and awe, as far the human mind can stretch, how the holy Trinity, distinct in persons but inseparably connected and consubstantial in nature, operates within the universe its creation and is everywhere entire."

One writer has argued that the underlying rationale for this program is found in Psalm 19, which opens with the famous declaration that "the heavens declare the glory of God." The argument is a compelling one, as Cassiodorus was steeped in the Psalms, and the book enjoys pride of place in his curriculum. Yet Cassiodorus's pitch for the liberal arts seems to show more strongly the influence of Matthew 22:37: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Cultivating the mind, on Cassiodorus's account, should fuel the desire for God. For those capable of "advanced" study, the path winds through Scripture and the liberal arts. For those capable of only rudimentary reading, Scripture is sufficient. Illiterate brothers, meanwhile, are to be trained in the basics of the faith. The "necessity" of sacred and secular learning is not, as Cassiodorus presents it, merely to salvage intellectual culture. The work of the study has a far more important objective: it is to draw the scholar closer to the living God.

The Cassiodorus Necessity is not only the intergenerational work of transmitting Christian intellectual culture. Cassiodorus's program shows that that work isn't limited to preserving Scripture and the writings of a few august theologians and church historians. It's not just the work of passing down a canon. What Cassiodorus realized was that studying Scripture and pursuing the knowledge of God required the best intellectual equipment available—whether taken from Christian or secular sources. Thus, it was necessary to transmit Cassiodorus's libraries of both Christian classics and the pagan classics. It was necessary to be trained in how to read Scripture and trace the movements of the stars. Christian intellectual culture, on Cassiodorus's telling, is a grand investigation of the Christian God, occurring through multiple channels, and resting only when that God is finally and blissfully beheld face-to-face.

What does that look like in practice now? One response is to attempt as direct a translation of Cassiodorus's curriculum as possible. The classical Christian school movement is Cassiodorus's descendant in this regard, its practitioners maintaining strong ties to disciplines of the ancient liberal arts tradition that he helped to preserve. Yet the *Institutiones* doesn't just present a structure; it also models an adventurous spirit.

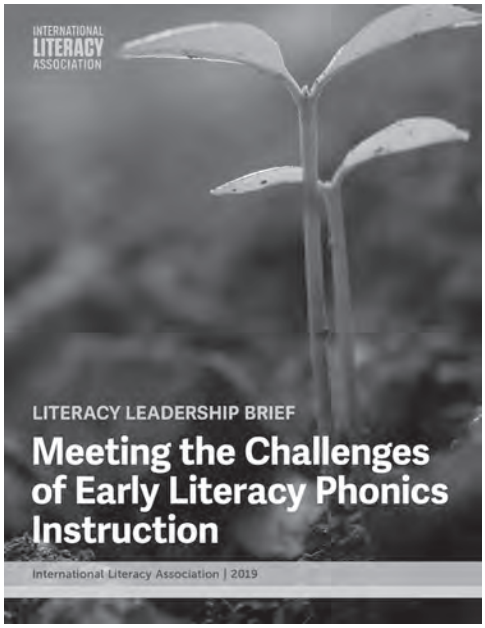
This ancient Roman was participating in the creation of a new thing. He was putting pieces—even traditions—together in a fresh way. Cassiodorus recognized the utility of such a well-rounded liberal arts education. His own career provided ready evidence of the heights to which such an education could take a person with connections.

But the goal of the learning conducted near that fishpond in southern Italy was not worldly success. It was, in the Christian mind at least, something far better. Cassiodorus urges us to immerse ourselves in our studies, to dedicate ourselves to "what we have received," and to range across and ascend ever higher within the disciplines—sacred and secular—because through these efforts we increase the avenues through which to seek the face of God. On this model, our task in the years ahead is not simply to deliver a cargo to future generations; it is to keep the wide-ranging investigations open. We should preserve our long-running practices. Yet we should also look for new lines of inquiry. For as Cassiodorus taught his monks at the Vivarium, God's lurking places are manifold.

No one knows how the landscape of Christian education, from primary schooling to graduate study, will change in the coming years. But it is not at all difficult to imagine that economic pressures on students and schools will create a new calculus for evaluating the worth—and measuring the success—of majors, departments, divisions, even educational visions. The kinds of study that Cassiodorus advocates in both books of the *Institutiones* may begin to look like risky investments. They are slow. They require much attention. Their results are hard to quantify. The fulfillment of the Cassiodorus Necessity may demand that quite a few patrons like Cassiodorus step forward to support institutions invested in distinctly Christian learning. Our present circumstances already demand fresh thinking about how to do the essential work of preserving, transmitting, and joining the Christian intellectual tradition. Now is a time to return to the sources. As we do, we should consider not just what the next generation needs to learn but what the point of Christian education really is.

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF EARLY LITERACY PHONICS INSTRUCTION

by Wiley Blevins, Literacy Research Panel 2018–2019, International Literacy Association



Learning to read can, at times, seem almost magical. A child sits in front of a book and transforms those squiggles and lines into sounds, puts those sounds together to make words, and puts those words together to make meaning.

But it's not magical.

English is an alphabetic language. We have 26 letters. These letters, in various combinations, represent the 44 sounds in our language. Teaching students the basic letter–sound combinations gives them access to sounding out approximately 84% of the words in English print. Of course, equal amounts of time need to be spent on teaching the meanings of these words, but the learning of these basic phonics skills is essential to becoming a fluent reader.

Research has shown the power of this early instruction in phonics for young students' reading and writing development. Government-funded documents have shown that phonics instruction is helpful for all students, harmful for none, and crucial for some. A recent brain research study out of Stanford explained how beginning readers who focus on letter–sound relationships, or phonics, instead of trying to learn whole words, increase activity in the area of the brain best wired for reading. And the meta-analysis work has detailed the significant effect size of phonics instruction on students' early reading growth.

So why is there a debate when the research evidence has been consistent for decades? It's because how we translate that research into instructional practice varies widely, resulting in practices that are sometimes ineffective or unbalanced and instructional materials that too often have serious instructional design flaws.

Founded as the International Reading Association (IRA), the ***International Literacy Association*** *(ILA) has worked to enhance literacy instruction through research and professional development for more than 60 years. This article was originally posted at https://literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/ila-meeting-challenges-early-literacy-phonics-instruction.pdf and is reprinted by permission.*

Some phonics instruction is random, incomplete, and implicit. Other instruction is overdone and isolated, devoid of the extensive application to authentic reading and writing needed for mastery. Neither is as effective as it needs to be.

EXPLICIT AND SYSTEMATIC PHONICS INSTRUCTION

The question of whether to include phonics instruction has been resolved. The answer is *yes*. The discussion now should be how to include phonics instruction as part of an overall literacy plan that is efficient, effective, and timely for all students. What does that instruction look like? And how do we overcome the common obstacles teachers often face in delivering that instruction?

Although phonics can be taught in different ways, research supports instruction that is explicit and systematic. *Explicit* means that the initial introduction of a letter–sound relationship, or phonics skill, is directly stated to students. For example, we tell students that the /s/ sound is represented by the letter **s**. This is more effective than the discovery method because it does not rely on prerequisite skills that some students might not have.

Being explicit, however, does not mean that students cannot play with letters and sounds during the instructional cycle. In fact, word awareness activities like word building and word sorts allow students to become flexible in their knowledge of sound-spellings and solidifies that learning.

Being *systematic* means that we follow a continuum from easy to more complex skills, slowly introducing each new skill. Systematic instruction includes a review and repetition cycle to achieve mastery and goes from the known to the new in a way that makes the new learning more obvious and easier for students to grasp. For example, after students learn to read simple short-vowel CVC words like *run, cat,* and *hop*, they are often introduced to the skill final *-e* as in the words *hate* and *hope*. This is a conceptual leap for young students where, often for the first time, they learn that two letters can work together to make a sound and these letters are not even beside each other in the word. Not easy!

In systematic instruction, teachers display a known word and compare it to the new to highlight this new concept, as in *hop–hope* or *hat–hate*. This side-by-side minimal contrast makes the learning of the new concept more obvious and easier to grasp. The discussion that teachers can have with students about the two words increases students' word awareness and understanding of how words work. This exemplifies strong phonics instruction: active, engaging, and thought provoking.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE PHONICS INSTRUCTION

In addition to being explicit and systematic, strong phonics instruction has the following seven key characteristics.

READINESS SKILLS

The two best predictors of early reading success are alphabet recognition and phonemic awareness. These skills open the gate for reading. Alphabet recognition involves learning the names, shapes, and sounds of the letters of the alphabet with fluency. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are made up of a series of discrete sounds, called phonemes. A range of subskills is taught to develop phonemic awareness, with oral blending and oral segmentation having the most positive impact on reading and writing development in kindergarten and grade 1 and phonemic manipulation tasks playing a crucial role up to grade three.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

A strong scope and sequence builds from the simple to the complex in a way that takes advantage of previous learning. The sequence allows for many words to be formed as early as possible and focuses on teaching high-utility skills. Although there is no "right" scope and sequence, programs that strive to connect concepts and move through a series of skills in a stair-step way offer the best chance at student success.

BLENDING

This is the main strategy for teaching students how to sound out words and must be frequently modeled and applied. It is simply the stringing together of letter-sounds to read a word. It is the focus of early phonics instruction but still plays a role when transitioning students from reading monosyllablic to multisyllabic words.

DICTATION

To best transfer students' growing phonics skills to writing, dictation (i.e., guided spelling with teacher think-alouds) is critical and begins in kindergarten. Although not a spelling test, this activity can accelerate students' spelling abilities and understanding of common English spelling patterns and assist students in using these phonics skills in writing. Used in combination with word building and structured and unstructured writing experiences in phonics instruction, students have increased opportunities to "try out" their developing skills to express ideas in written form.

WORD AWARENESS

Word building and word sorts are key activities to increase students' word awareness. In word building, students are given a set of letter cards and asked to create a series of words in a specific sequence. This increases students' ability to work with letter-sounds flexibly and fully analyze words for their component sounds and spellings. In word sorts, students look for common spelling patterns, engage in discussions about what they learn about words from this examination, and increase their ability to notice larger chunks in words (an important skill as students transition from monosyllabic to multisyllabic words).

HIGH-FREQUENCY WORDS

High-frequency words are the most common words in English. Some are irregular; that is, they do not follow common English sound-spellings. Others are regular and needed by students during reading before they have the phonics skills to sound them out. The top 250–300 words are generally taught in grades K–2. Past grade 2, when the majority of the key high-frequency words have been introduced, students need to be continually assessed on their mastery of these words, as a lack of fluency can impede comprehension. Some words are more difficult to master (*e.g.*, reversals like *no/on* and *was/saw, of/for/from*, and words that begin with *wh* or *th*). More instructional time and assessment needs to be given around these words.

READING CONNECTED TEXT

The goal of phonics instruction is to develop students' ability to read connected text independently. Controlled, decodable text (also known as accountable text) at the beginning level of reading instruction helps students develop a sense of comfort in and control over their reading growth and should be a key learning tool in early phonics instruction. The tight connection between what students learn in phonics and what they read is essential for building a faster foundation in

early reading. This is especially critical when students encounter less-controlled leveled readers during small-group lessons. These accountable (phonics-based) texts need to be reread to build fluency, discussed to develop comprehension, and written about to provide opportunities for students to apply their growing phonics skills in writing.

The success of these key characteristics of phonics instruction rests both on the shoulders of highly trained teachers with a background in phonics routines and linguistics and in instructional materials that aid teachers in meeting a wide range of students' phonics needs

COMMON CAUSES OF PHONICS INSTRUCTIONAL FAILURE

The reality is that the hard work of teaching phonics begins after all these characteristics are in place. Why? Common obstacles related to instruction and instructional materials too often stand in the way of maximizing students' learning of basic phonics skills. These range from a lack of application to authentic reading and writing experiences (where the learning "sticks") to a lack of review and repetition resulting in decayed learning. The following are the 10 most common phonics instructional obstacles or pitfalls, all of which teachers have some degree of control over.

INADEQUATE OR NONEXISTENT REVIEW AND REPETITION CYCLE

We underestimate the amount of time it takes young learners to master phonics skills. When a new skill is introduced, it should be systematically and purposefully reviewed for at least the next 4–6 weeks. The goal must be to teach to mastery rather than just exposure. Only then can students transfer the skill to all reading situations. With the fast pacing of most curricula, a more substantial review and repetition cycle often must be added. This can be achieved through increased opportunities to practice previous skills in blending work, dictation, and the repeated readings of previously read accountable texts.

LACK OF APPLICATION TO REAL READING AND WRITING EXPERIENCES

Students progress at a much faster rate in phonics when the bulk of instructional time is spent on applying the skills to authentic reading and writing experiences, rather than isolated skill-and-drill work. At least half of a phonics lesson should be devoted to application exercises. For students who are below level, the amount of reading during phonics instruction must be even greater.

INAPPROPRIATE READING MATERIALS TO PRACTICE SKILLS

The connection between what we teach and what we have young learners read has a powerful effect on their word reading strategies and their phonics and spelling skills. It also affects students' motivation to read. Having accountable texts as part of the daily phonics lessons provides more substantial decoding practice and helps to scaffold the leap from most phonics lessons to the reading of leveled texts, which are far less controlled for phonics skills. The amount of control (e.g., decodability) and the amount of time needed in this type of text varies on the basis of student needs. Adherence to a specific percentage of decodability is problematic.

INEFFECTIVE USE OF THE GRADUAL RELEASE MODEL

Some teachers of struggling readers spend too much instructional time doing the "heavy lifting," such as

overmodeling and having students simply repeat (e.g., "parrot" activities). Whoever does the thinking in a lesson does the learning. Students might struggle, but they must do the work and the teacher's role is to provide timely corrective feedback and support.

TOO MUCH TIME LOST DURING TRANSITIONS

Phonics lessons often require a lot of manipulatives and materials. Transitional times when materials are distributed or collected should be viewed as valuable instructional moments in which review skills can be addressed (e.g., sing the ABC song, do a phonemic awareness task, review letter–sound action rhymes to focus students' attention on an instructional goal). Every minute of a phonics lesson must be instructive. Planning these transitions is critical for their effectiveness.

LIMITED TEACHER KNOWLEDGE OF RESEARCH-BASED PHONICS ROUTINES AND LINGUISTICS

Teachers with a background in phonics or linguistics are better equipped to make meaningful instructional decisions, analyze student errors, and improve the language and delivery of instruction. Also, teacher attitudes toward phonics instructional materials (e.g., decodable text) and routines (e.g., sorts, word building, blending) matter.

INAPPROPRIATE PACING OF LESSONS

Some teachers spend too much time on activities they enjoy or are easier for students and less time on the more challenging or substantive activities that increase learning. Lessons should be fast paced and rigorous. They should focus on those activities that more quickly move the needle in terms of student learning, such as blending practice, dictation, word awareness activities, and reading and writing about accountable texts.

NO COMPREHENSIVE OR CUMULATIVE MASTERY ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Assessment of phonics skills must be done over an extended period of time to ensure mastery. Weekly assessments focusing on one skill often give "false positives." That is, they show movement toward learning but not mastery. If the skill is not worked on for subsequent weeks, learning can decay. Cumulative assessments help teachers determine which skills truly have been mastered. They are a critical phonics instructional tool.

TRANSITIONING TO MULTISYLLABIC WORDS TOO LATE

Most curricula focus on monosyllablic words in grade 2, yet the stories students read at that grade are filled with more challenging, multisyllabic words. More emphasis needs to be given to transitioning to longer words at this grade (e.g., going from known to new words like *can/candle* and teaching the six major syllable types). This work can begin at the end of grade 1 to provide a closer alignment between phonics instruction and reading demands.

OVERDOING IT (ESPECIALLY ISOLATED SKILL WORK)

Some curricula overemphasize phonics (especially the isolated skill-and-drill type of work) while ignoring other key aspects of early reading needs (e.g., vocabulary and background knowledge building) that are essential to long-term reading progress. Modifying reading time to provide a better balance is important, because all these skills plant the seeds of comprehension as students encounter increasingly more complex texts.

Phonics instruction is an essential part of early

reading and writing instruction. Students need to learn how to efficiently decode words to increase their word recognition skills. The more words students recognize automatically, the better their reading fluency, which has a powerful effect on their comprehension of text. And that's the point. Phonics instruction is designed to increase students' ability to read and make meaning from text. However, it needs to be done in a way that is most effective and efficient. It is paramount that teachers and creators of curriculum materials take an objective and thorough look at how we improve that instruction to maximize student learning.

MOVING FORWARD

- Embrace early phonics instruction as integral to elementary literacy plan.
- Incorporate explicit and systematic phonics instruction that directly addresses skills, follows a continuum of skill complexity, and includes a review and repetition cycle that leads to eventual skill mastery.
- Assess phonics instruction to ensure key characteristics are in place, including blending, dictation, word awareness, and high-frequency words.

See the ILA website, https://literacyworldwide.org/, for additional resources and a bibligraphy.

HEAD OF SCHOOL EVALUATION POLICY

by Coram Deo Academy, Carmel, Indiana

PRINCIPLE:

The board of trustees must exercise due diligence by providing a head of school evaluation. The primary purpose of this process is to improve the school, and while it focuses upon one individual, its goal is to strengthen the institution. The impact from the head's actions, decisions, priorities, and leadership go a long way toward determining the character and quality of the school. An evaluation approach that makes this individual better—or, if necessary, determines there has been no improvement in the desired areas—advances the school.

The evaluation process is a definitive way for the strategic board to stay connected with the present while also implementing the school's strategic plan.

The evaluation process should be viewed by all parties as predictable, supportive, and constructive rather than as judgment or criticism.

Coram Deo Academy is an ACCS-member school located in Carmel, Indiana.

PROCESS:

1. The Head Support & Evaluation Committee (HSEC) is the primary responsible party for providing evaluation and support to the head of school.
2. At the first meeting of the HSEC in the fall of the school year, the following will be agreed upon by the HSEC committee and the head of school:
   a. Ten to twelve essential expectations that are professional standards for the school's primary leader
   b. Three to four major objectives derived from the annual administrative agenda, including items from the board's strategic plan, strategic financial plan, and the school's operations-level items. Each objective will have:
      - Current data to illustrate the present situation
      - The expected data points that would determine success
      - Any resources needed for completion of the objectives
      - The necessary actions to take, and
      - A timeline for completion of each objective
   c. One to two professional growth and renewal objectives regarding leadership, well-being and/or professional development
3. The following quarterly meetings of the HSEC will determine and discuss the progress on each objective, barriers to completion, additional adjustments or resources needed, and adherence to the essential expectations.
4. In the Spring meeting of the school year, the HSEC chair provides a summary report from the committee to the board chair at a meeting of the entire HSEC, including the head. The HSEC chair:
   a. attaches a self evaluation completed by the head of school;
   b. reports on pass or fail for essential expectations;
   c. details whether objectives are completed, progressing on target, not on target, or removed; and
   d. recommends continued employment.
5. In a subsequent meeting, the board chair and HSEC chair, without the head present, report the findings to the entire board of trustees and request approval for the head's next contract, or extension of the current contract.

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE SCHOOL V. MORRISSEY-BERRU

by Oyez

FACTS OF THE CASE

Agnes Deirdre Morrissey-Berru was a teacher at Our Lady of Guadalupe School and brought a claim against the school under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). The district court granted summary judgment in favor of the school on the basis that Morrissey-Berru was a "minister." In Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & School v. EEOC, the Supreme Court first recognized a ministerial exception, which exempts religious institutions from anti-discrimination laws in hiring employees deemed "ministers."

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit reversed the lower court, finding that Morrissey-Berru was not a "minister"; she had taken one course on the history of the Catholic church but otherwise did not have any religious credential, training, or ministerial background. Given that she did not hold herself out to the public as a religious leader or minister, the court declined to classify her as a minister for the purposes of the ministerial exception.

QUESTION

Do the First Amendment's religion clauses prevent civil courts from adjudicating employment-discrimination claims brought by an employee against her religious employer, when the employee carried out important religious functions but was not otherwise a "minister"?

CONCLUSION

7–2 decision for Our Lady of Guadalupe School
majority opinion by Samuel A. Alito, Jr.

The First Amendment's Religion Clauses foreclose the adjudication of the employment-discrimination claims of Catholic school teachers Morrissey-Berru and Biel.

The "ministerial exception," which derives from the religion clauses of the First Amendment, prevents civil courts from adjudicating the former employee's discrimination claims in this case, and in the consolidated case, *St. James School v. Biel*, against the religious schools that employed them. Justice Samuel Alito authored the 7-2 majority opinion.

Oyez (pronounced OH-yay)—a free law project from Cornell's Legal Information Institute (LII), Justia, and Chicago-Kent College of Law—is a multimedia archive devoted to making the Supreme Court of the United States accessible to everyone. The description of Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru is provided by Oyez, a free law project by Justia and the Legal Information Institute of Cornell Law School. This was originally published at www.oyez.org/cases/2019/19-267#!. Accessed 1 Dec. 2020.

Courts generally try to stay out of matters involving employment decisions regarding those holding certain important positions with churches and other religious institutions, and the Court formally first recognized this principle, known as the "ministerial exception," in *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & School v. EEOC*. In that case, the Court considered four factors before reaching its conclusion that the employee was a "minister" for purposes of an exception to generally applicable anti-discrimination laws. However, the Court expressly declined "to adopt a rigid formula for deciding when an employee qualifies as a minister." The factors relied upon in *Hosanna-Tabor* were specific to that case, and courts may consider different factors to decide whether another employee is a "minister" in another context. The key inquiry is what the employee does. Educating young people in their faith, which was the responsibility of the plaintiffs in these two cases, is at the very core of a private religious school's mission, and as such, Morrissey-Berru and Biel qualify for the exception recognized in *Hosanna-Tabor*.

Justice Clarence Thomas authored a concurring opinion, in which Justice Neil Gorsuch joined, arguing that courts should "defer to religious organizations' good-faith claims that a certain employee's position is 'ministerial.' "

Justice Sonia Sotomayor authored a dissenting opinion, in which Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg joined, arguing that the Court incorrectly classified the teachers as "ministers," given that the teachers taught primarily secular subjects, lacked substantial religious titles and training, and were not even required to be Catholic. Moreover, Justice Sotomayor argued, the majority's approach "has no basis in law and strips thousands of schoolteachers of their legal protections."

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE SCHOOL V. MORRISSEY-BERRU, 591 U.S. ___ (2020)

by Justice Samuel Alito, Opinion of the Court

Note: This is only a part of the majority opinion.

. . . In determining whether a particular position falls within the Hosanna-Tabor exception, a variety of factors may be important.[10] The circumstances that informed our decision in *Hosanna-Tabor* were relevant because of their relationship to Perich's "role in conveying the Church's message and carrying out its mission," *id*., at 192, but the other noted circumstances also shed light on that connection. In a denomination that uses the term "minister," conferring that title naturally suggests that the recipient has been given an important position of trust. In Perich's case, the title that she was awarded and used demanded satisfaction of significant academic requirements and was conferred only after a formal approval process, *id*., at 191, and those circumstances also evidenced the importance attached to her role, *ibid*. But our recognition of the significance of those factors in Perich's case did not mean that they must be met—or even that they are necessarily important—in all other cases.

Take the question of the title "minister." Simply giving an employee the title of "minister" is not enough to justify the exception. And by the same token, since many religious traditions do not use the title "minister," it cannot be a necessary requirement. Requiring the use of the title would constitute impermissible discrimination, and this problem cannot be solved simply by including positions that are thought to be the counterparts of a "minister," such as priests, nuns, rabbis, and imams. See Brief for Respondents 21. Nuns are not the same as Protestant ministers. A brief submitted by Jewish organizations makes the point that "Judaism has many 'ministers,' " that is, "the term 'minister' encompasses an extensive breadth of religious functionaries in Judaism."[11] For Muslims, "an inquiry into whether imams or other leaders bear a title equivalent to 'minister' can present a troubling choice between denying a central pillar of Islam—*i.e.*, the equality of all believers—and risking loss of ministerial exception protections."[12]

If titles were all-important, courts would have to decide which titles count and which do not, and it is hard to see how that could be done without looking behind the titles to what the positions actually entail. Moreover, attaching too much significance to titles would risk privileging religious traditions with formal organizational structures over those that are less formal.

For related reasons, the academic requirements of a position may show that the church in question regards the position as having an important responsibility in elucidating or teaching the tenets of the faith. Presumably the purpose of such requirements is to make sure that the person holding the position understands the faith and can explain it accurately and effectively. But

For the entire decision, visit https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/19pdf/19-267_1an2.pdf.

insisting in every case on rigid academic requirements could have a distorting effect. This is certainly true with respect to teachers. Teaching children in an elementary school does not demand the same formal religious education as teaching theology to divinity students. Elementary school teachers often teach secular subjects in which they have little if any special training. In addition, religious traditions may differ in the degree of formal religious training thought to be needed in order to teach. See, *e.g.*, Brief for Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention et al. as *Amici Curiae* 12 ("many Protestant groups have historically rejected any requirement of formal theological training"). In short, these circumstances, while instructive in *Hosanna-Tabor*, are not inflexible requirements and may have far less significance in some cases.

What matters, at bottom, is what an employee does. And implicit in our decision in *Hosanna-Tabor* was a recognition that educating young people in their faith, inculcating its teachings, and training them to live their faith are responsibilities that lie at the very core of the mission of a private religious school. As we put it, Perich had been entrusted with the responsibility of "transmitting the Lutheran faith to the next generation." 565 U. S., at 192. One of the concurrences made the same point, concluding that the exception should include "any 'employee' who leads a religious organization, conducts worship services or important religious ceremonies or rituals, or serves as a messenger or *teacher of its faith*." Id., at 199 (opinion of Alito, J.) (emphasis added).

Religious education is vital to many faiths practiced in the United States. This point is stressed by briefs filed in support of OLG and St. James by groups affiliated with a wide array of faith traditions. In the Catholic tradition, religious education is " 'intimately bound up with the whole of the Church's life.' " Catechism of the Catholic Church 8 (2d ed. 2016). Under canon law, local bishops must satisfy themselves that "those who are designated teachers of religious instruction in schools . . . are outstanding in correct doctrine, the witness of a Christian life, and teaching skill." Code of Canon Law, Canon 804, §2 (Eng. transl. 1998).

Similarly, Protestant churches, from the earliest settlements in this country, viewed education as a religious obligation. A core belief of the Puritans was that education was essential to thwart the "chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures."[13] Thus, in 1647, the Massachusetts General Court passed what has been called the Old Deluder Satan Act requiring every sizable town to establish a school.[14] Most of the oldest educational institutions in this country were originally established by or affiliated with churches, and in recent years, non-denominational Christian schools have proliferated with the aim of inculcating Biblical values in their students.[15] Many such schools expressly set themselves apart from public schools that they believe do not reflect their values.[16]

Religious education is a matter of central importance in Judaism. As explained in briefs submitted by Jewish organizations, the Torah is understood to require Jewish parents to ensure that their children are instructed in the faith.[17] One brief quotes Maimonides's statement that religious instruction "is an obligation of the highest order, entrusted only to a schoolteacher possessing 'fear of Heaven.' "[18] "The contemporary American Jewish community continues to place the education of children in its faith and rites at the center of its communal efforts."[19]

Religious education is also important in Islam. "[T]he acquisition of at least rudimentary knowledge of religion and its duties [is] mandatory for the Muslim individual."[20] This precept is traced to the Prophet Muhammad, who proclaimed that " '[t]he pursuit of knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim.' "[21] "[T]he development of independent private Islamic schools ha[s] become an important part of the picture of Muslim

education in America."[22]

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a long tradition of religious education, with roots in revelations given to Joseph Smith. See Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints §93:36 (2013). "The Church Board of Education has established elementary, middle, or secondary schools in which both secular and religious instruction is offered."[23]

Seventh-day Adventists "trace the importance of education back to the Garden of Eden."[24] Seventh-day Adventist formation "restore[s] human beings into the image of God as revealed by the life of Jesus Christ" and focuses on the development of "knowledge, skills, and understandings to serve God and humanity."[25]

This brief survey does not do justice to the rich diversity of religious education in this country, but it shows the close connection that religious institutions draw between their central purpose and educating the young in the faith.

ENDNOTES

10. In considering the circumstances of any given case, courts must take care to avoid "resolving underlying controversies over religious doctrine." *Presbyterian Church in U. S. v. Mary Elizabeth Blue Hull Memorial Presbyterian Church*, 393 U.S. 440, 449 (1969); ibid. (" First Amendment values are plainly jeopardized when . . . litigation is made to turn on the resolution by civil courts of controversies over religious doctrine and practice"); see also *Serbian Eastern Orthodox Diocese for United States and Canada v. Milivojevich*, 426 U.S. 696, 715, n. 8 (1976) (" 'It is not to be supposed that the judges of the civil courts can be as competent in the ecclesiastical law and religious faith of all these bodies as the ablest men in each are in reference to their own' " (quoting *Watson v. Jones*, 13 Wall. 679, 729 (1872))); cf. *Thomas v. Review Bd. of Ind. Employment Security Div.*, 450 U.S. 707, 714–716 (1981).

11. Brief for Colpa et al. as *Amici Curiae i*, 3 (quotation modified).

12. Brief for Asma T. Uddin as *Amicus Curiae* 2.

13. Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647, in The Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts 47 (M. Farrand ed. 1929).

14. *Ibid*.

15. See P. Parsons, Inside America's Christian Schools (1987); see also Association of Christian Schools International, Why Christian Schooling?, https://www.acsi.org/membership/why-christian-schooling; Association of Classical Christian Schools, What is CCE?, https://classicalchristian.org/what-is-cce/?v=a44707111a05.

16. R. Dreher, The Benedict Option 146, 155, 160 (2017); see, *e.g.*, J. Ekeland & B. Walton, Discover Christian Schools: Ten Differences, https : / / discoverchristianschools.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/DCS_TenDifferences.pdf.

17. See Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19.

18 Brief for General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists et al. as *Amici Curiae* 7–8 (quoting Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Hilkhot Talmud Torah 1:2; 2:1, 3).

19. Brief for Church of God in Christ, Inc., et al. as *Amici Curiae* 15.

20. Afsaruddin, Muslim Views on Education: Parameters, Purview, and Possibilities, 44 J. Cath. Legal Studies 143, 143–144 (2005).

21. *Id*., at 143.

22. Haddad & Smith, Introduction: The Challenge of Islamic Education in North America, in Educating the Muslims of America 3, 6, 11 (Y. Haddad, F. Senzai, & J. Smith eds. 2009).

23. Berrett, Church Educational System (CES) in 1 Encyclopedia of Mormonism 274, 275 (D. Ludlow ed. 1992).

24. Brief for General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists et al. as Amici Curiae 9.

25. Seventh-day Adventist Church, About Us, https://adventisteducation.org/abt.html.

Delaware Valley
CLASSICAL SCHOOL

903 E. Basin Road, New Castle, DE 19702
(302) 455-8740
www.dvclassical.org
CEEB Code: XXXXXX
Accredited member of the Association of Classical and Christian Schools

HIGH SCHOOL TRANSCRIPT

Date prepared:

Name:	DOB:	Sex:	Expected Graduation Date:
Parents:	Ethnicity:		Weighted GPA (Grades 9-12, 4.0 scale):
Address:			Unweighted GPA:
Phone:			Due to small class sizes, class rank is not reported.

Course	Level	Gr	Cr	Course	Level	Gr	Cr	Course	Level	Gr	Cr	Course	Level	Q1	Q2
Grade 8 (High School Level courses only)				**Grade 10**				**Grade 11**				**Grade 12**			
Latin II	TO		1	Systematic Theol.	TO		1	Aesthetics	TO		.5	Apologetics	D		
Logic	TO		1	Personal Finance	TO		0	Hermeneutics	TO		.5	Natural Theology	H		
Algebra I	TO		1	Art	TO		0	Rhetoric I	TO		1	Physics	H		
				Spanish II	TO		1	Pre-Calculus	TO		1	Calculus	D		
				US History	TO		1	Art			0	Art	NSE		
NT Biblical Theology	TO		1	American Literature	TO		1	Spanish III	TO		1	Music	STD		
Art	TO		0	Algebra II	TO		1	Civics	TO		.5		NSE		
Music	TO		.5	Music	TO		1	British Literature	TO		1	Advanced Lit.	D		
Spanish I	TO		1	Biology w/ Lab	TO		1	Music	TO		1	Phys. Ed.	NSE		
Western Civ. II	TO		1					College Preparation	TO		0	Greek	D		
Classical Literature	TO		1					Chemistry w/Lab	TO		1				
Debate	TO		1						TO		0				
Geometry	TO		1												
Physical Science	TO		1												
			1												
	GPA:				GPA:				GPA:						

Level Codes: D: Honors level course eligible for dual enrollment credit with Cairn University (weighted); **H:** Honors level course (weighted); **STD**: Unweighted course; **NSE**: Non-standard grade; **T**: Transfer credit (Not included in GPA); **TO**: Transfer credit from Tall Oaks Classical School (included in GPA); **TO-D**: Tall Oaks Dual Enrollment; **TO-UD** – Tall Oaks Unweighted dual enrollment; **TO-H**: Tall Oaks Unweighted Honors.

Transcript is not official unless signed by a school official.

Signature: _____

TRIAL COURT HOLDS THAT TITLE VII'S RELIGIOUS EMPLOYER EXEMPTION DOES NOT BAR A SEXUAL ORIENTATION DISCRIMINATION CLAIM

by Stuart Lark, John Melcon, & John Wylie, Sherman and Howard

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS ADVISORY

In what appears to be the first case directly addressing the issue, a U.S. District Court judge recently ruled that Title VII's exemption for religious employers does not bar a claim of employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. In Starkey v. Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis, No. 1:19-cv-03153 (S.D. Ind. October 21, 2020),[1] a guidance counselor sued her employer, a Roman Catholic high school, alleging the school declined to renew her contract after learning she was in a civil union with another woman. The school required its employees to respect the Catholic Church's religious beliefs on human sexuality by refraining from conduct at odds with the church's teachings, but it did not require the guidance counselor to be Catholic or to agree with such teachings.

The school asked the court to dismiss the counselor's lawsuit, arguing that Title VII permits a religious employer to require its employees to act in accordance with its religious beliefs. Specifically, Title VII's religious employer exemption states that Title VII "shall not apply" to a religious organization "with respect to the employment of individuals of a particular religion. . . . "

The court rejected the school's position, holding instead that the exemption applies only to employment actions that discriminate solely on the basis of religion, not to actions that discriminate both on the basis of religion and another category protected under Title VII. The court then held that the facts asserted (but not yet proven) by the guidance counselor would support a plausible claim of discrimination based on sexual orientation, which the U.S. Supreme Court recently held to be part of the protected category of "sex" under Title VII, *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 140 S. Ct. 1731 (2020).

This case will likely be the first of many to consider the extent to which Title VII's religious employer exemption protects employment actions related to religious beliefs about human sexuality and marriage. Indeed, this court's interpretation of the religious employer exemption could be reversed on appeal, as the holding seems to ignore the actual religious exemption language in Title VII and then presumes the intent of Congress based on the rest of the language (and perhaps

the court's own policy preference), without relying upon any other authority.

We recently presented a webinar for the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability that discusses in some detail practical responses religious employers should consider in light of these general legal developments, which you can watch here[2] (registration required). This particular case highlights two points:

A SHARED BELIEF STANDARD MAY BE MORE PROTECTED UNDER TITLE VII.

If the school in this case had required the guidance counselor to share its beliefs about human sexuality and marriage, then the school's employment action may more clearly have been tied not to the employee's sexual orientation but instead to the employee's lack of shared religious beliefs. Although many religious employers may not require all of their employees to share all of their beliefs, they should carefully consider exactly which beliefs they do require employees to share. They might even consider requiring a shared belief that individuals should abide by the distinct religious standards of the employer's faith community while serving within that community (perhaps relying upon Bible passages such as I Corinthians 9:19-23).

THERE MAY BE BROADER CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS.

In another recent decision, *Our Lady of Guadalupe School v. Morrissey-Berru*, 140 S. Ct. 2049, 2066 (2020), the U.S. Supreme Court held that employment discrimination laws like Title VII do not apply at all to employees who play "a vital part in carrying out the mission of the [religious employer]." The Court further noted that "[a] religious institution's explanation of the role of [its] employees in the lifeof the religion in question is important." *Id*. Religious employers should accept the Court's invitation and proactively define how their employees play a vital part in carrying out their missions.

QUESTIONS

Please contact us if you would like to discuss how your organization can implement these steps. ©2020 Sherman & Howard L.L.C. has prepared this newsletter to provide general information on recent legal developments that may be of interest. This advisory does not provide legal advice for any specific situation and does not create an attorney-client relationship between any reader and the firm. Click HERE to receive S&H Advisories and invitations to events.

NOTES:

1. See http://media.ibj.com/Lawyer/websites/opinions/index.php?pdf=2020/october/starkey.pdf

2. See https://www.ecfa.org/ProductDownload.aspx?ProductID=317

EDUCATION AS SOULCARE: TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

by: Steven Wedgeworth, St. Augustine School

Christian education defines us. It is what we aim to accomplish and it establishes the kind of community of learning we are. Our philosophy of education, the content of our curriculum, and the method and administration of our teaching are all means towards the end of providing an education in wisdom and virtue. As Christians, we believe that the only completely true education is a Christian education, one which acknowledges and explains all of God's truth precisely as God's truth, examining what that truth teaches about all other truths, about ourselves, and, ultimately, about God Himself. So just what does a Christian education look like? What defines it?

The Bible clearly sets forth the task of educating children in religious truth. The two most well-known passages are Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and Ephesians 6:4:

> *And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deut. 6:6–9).*

> *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).*

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses instructs the people of Israel to constantly teach the words of God to their children. They are to teach them in all places and at all times, marking both their bodies and their homes as places that are dedicated to studying the teachings of God. The Ephesians passage actually employs two specific Greek words to further explain this sort of instruction. The first word which we translate as "training" is actually paideia, from which we get our word "pedagogy," and it means the training of both the body and the soul. The term which we translate as "admonition" is from a word that refers to the formation of the will, of one's ethical character. Thus Paul is saying that parents must education their children in a way that addresses the whole person, including moral and spiritual matters. Both Deuteronomy and Ephesians are clear that this teaching must be "in the Lord."

Neither of these passages primarily commands the creation of a formal Christian school, but they do command that Christian people educate their children.

Rev. Steven Wedgeworth *(M.Div., Reformed Theological Seminary) is associate pastor of Faith Reformed Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, and a founding board member of the Davenant Institute. Steven has published essays on politics, theology, and history, and he is also the co-founder and editor of The Calvinist International. This article was originally posted by St. Augustine'School at http://www.augustinems.com/christian-education-2 and is reprinted by permisison.*

This in an intentional and consistent manner. Whatever mode of education a Christian chooses for his child, the quality of that education must be obedient to these passages from God's word. This means that Christians must provide a Christian education for their children, and so the Christian school is a tool to help them do that in an efficient and concentrated manner.

MORE THAN PROOF TEXTS

But what exactly makes something a Christian education? There are many Christian schools and Christian curriculum publishers who present "conservative" or "family values" material with various Bible verses attached. Others assume that prayer and chapel make the school "Christian." While the ethical content is important, and the presence or prayer ought to be constant in the life of a Christian, the mere addition of these elements to the more-or-less traditional American school is not what we believe the Bible means by "the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

In Deuteronomy, the education of our children is described as being both organic and holistic: inside and out, evening and morning, hands and mind. In Ephesians, the terms used speak to the whole person: to the mind, soul, and will. We are not only imparting information but also forming identities, and to do this "in the Lord," we must make sure that everything we do points the student towards Christ in every way. This means that in whatever it is that we are learning, we seek to discover what that truth teaches us about God and what God has said about that truth, whether explicitly in the Scriptures or implicitly through what we know of God's character and creation. Thus the content is always religious.

Learning doesn't only come about through content, though. It also comes through context, both intellectual and social, and so a truly Christian education must take place in Christian community and as a Christian culture. The entire learning environment must exude a Christian aroma, and this means an aroma of Scripture, an aroma of holiness, and an aroma of grace. This means that everyone involved in the education must be working together towards the shared mission, and they must do so as Christians at all times.

Having said all of this, a Christian school does not require "Christian versions" of every subject or textbook. Since truth is objective, Christian education is looking for what Francis Schaeffer called "true truth," wherever it may be found. Some disciplines will obviously differ in form in a Christian education than in a non-Christian or secular one. The humanities, for instance, whether literature, history, or the various social sciences, are wholly dependent upon what it means to be human, and for Christians that must always direct us to God in whose image all men are created. More formal disciplines, like logic and mathematics, will hardly differ at all, though a Christian education always intentionally relates those disciplines to the larger universe of knowledge, knowing that their foundation is the one God and his unchanging order. What makes the Christian education unique is that all learning is done in gratitude and that all truth leads our minds above to the God of all truth.

SOULCARE

Perhaps most of all, what makes a Christian education unique is its ultimate goal. Christian education is not primarily concerned with preparing students for college or a career, though it does do this too. The ultimate goal is not even the acquisition of information or the learning of skills, though again, a good Christian education ought to provide those things. The chief end of Christian education is to teach the soul, to train the student to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Education as soulcare means that learning is a good in itself. The activity of mastering a subject is itself a discipline of the mind, training it towards its goal. This

also means that learning is service towards God. As the Apostle instructs us:

> *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1–2).*

The Christian transformation occurs by the renewal of the mind, and this is an act of Christian worship. In fact, the Greek word for "service" there means "worship." At St. Augustine School, each subject will be treated with its own integrity, and each subject's own respective disciplines will be learned. Yet every discipline is itself a part of the larger task of Christian discipleship, and thus the entire school is offered to the Lord. This means that it all matters. The curriculum, the fellowship, the decorum, the dress, the attitudes—these must all be understood as components of the educational liturgy, as part of our reasonable service to God.

A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

All of the biblical passages listed have been directed to parents. This is because the parents are the most basic teachers of their children. They have the primary jurisdiction, and it is parents to whom the responsibility of education has first been given. But as Jethro instructed Moses, good leaders know when and how to delegate responsibility. The Christian school is a way for parents to combine their resources to hire experts in various subjects and to provide a communal environment for their children to learn with others.

Schools play a rich role in our Christian heritage. The disciples were students of Jesus himself, and the apostle Paul was formally trained by the famous rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Christians began creating schools in the early Middle Ages, and at the time of the Reformation there was a massive increase in the founding of Christian schools and academies. In fact, the Heidelberg Catechism promotes the creation and maintenance of religious schools as a means of keeping the fourth commandment: "Question 103. What does God require in the fourth commandment? Answer: First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained…" One of the authors of that catechism explained, "The maintenance of schools may be embraced under this part of the honor which is due to the ministry; for unless the arts and sciences be taught, men can neither become properly qualified to teach, nor can the purity of doctrine be preserved and defended…"

So at St. Augustine we are seeking to provide a Christian education. This has to be a true education, the effective imparting of knowledge. It also has to be truly Christian, honoring the Lord with all of our heart, mind, strength, and soul. We have outlined the basic principles of the Christian character of our education in this essay, and we will explain the other aspects of our educational philosophy, curriculum, and structure in our essays explaining classical education and the university model.

BODYING FORTH THE CLASSICS: A MANIFESTO

by Jessica Hooten Wilson, University of Dallas

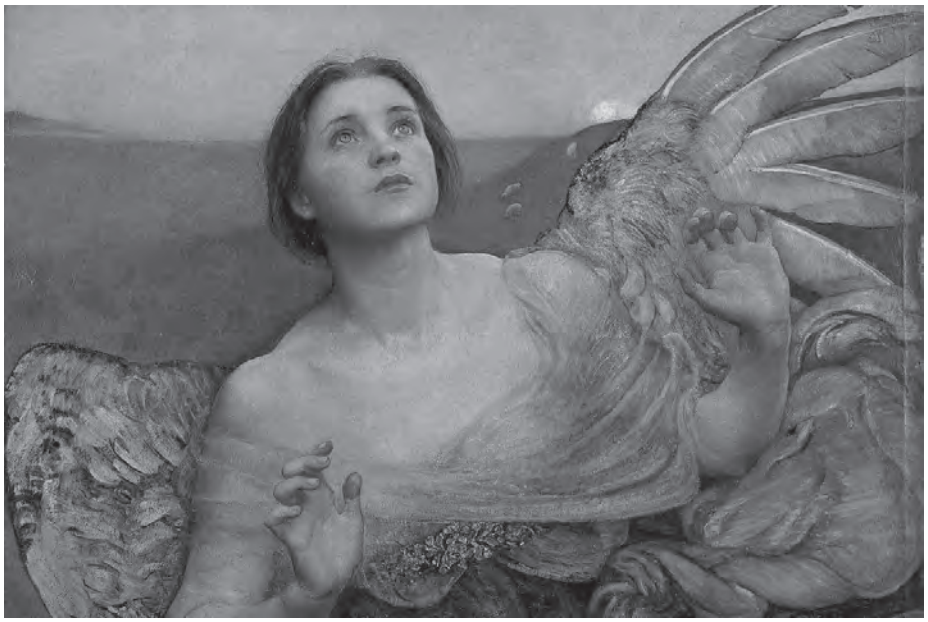
This spring I read Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* solely because the blurb on the back of the book said: "Determined to instill in [her students] independence, passion, and ambition, Miss Brodie advises her girls, 'Safety does not come first. Goodness, Truth, and Beauty come first. Follow me.' " I hoped that Miss Brodie could be a teacher to inspire me during the quarantine to keep teaching well. I probably should have streamed *Dead Poets Society* or *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*.

Instead of inspiring her students to contemplate goodness, truth, and beauty, as she professes, Miss Brodie tells them scandalous stories about her romance with men who have since died in the War. She binds her students together in a pact against the authority of the school and attempts to image herself in them. Ms. Brodie asks students to parrot her preferences, rather than imitate her loves. When a student answers that Leonardo Da Vinci is the greatest Italian painter, Miss Brodie corrects her, "That is incorrect. The answer is Giotto, he is my favorite." Miss Brodie is an example of a teacher who tries to make disciples of herself for herself.

The acclaimed Catholic novelist Flannery O'Connor attended a progressive high school apparently modelled on Miss Brodie's methods. Her school motto was, unironically, "The Good, the True, the Beautiful," but that merely shows how any organization can co-opt the language for nefarious purposes. Miss Jean Brodie surely did. She describes her progressive high school disdainfully in her letters: "Total non-retention has kept my education from being a burden to me." And elsewhere, she repeats the same, "I'm blessed with Total Non-Retention, which means I have not been harmed by a sorry education."

O'Connor's high school taught no classes, only offered "activities." In chemistry, for example, the teacher let students choose what they wanted to study. The girls chose photography and cosmetics. Flannery quips that the teachers "would as soon have given us arsenic in the drinking fountains as let us study Greek. I know no history whatsoever." Such a school flagrantly dismisses the idea of tradition, paideia,[1] authorities, and models. They allow each student what they assume is freedom. In actuality, they have burdened the uneducated with a compassless existence.

Jessica Hooten Wilson *is Louise Cowan Scholar in Residence at the University of Dallas in the Classical Education and Humanities Graduate Program. She is the author of three books:* Giving the Devil his Due: Flannery O'Connor and The Brothers Karamazov*, which received a 2018* Christianity Today *book of the year award;* Walker Percy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and the Search for Influence*; and* Reading Walker Percy's Novels*. She can be reached through her website (https://jessicahootenwilson.com/) for book, article, lecture, interview, and podcast requests. Please include in the byline that this article was originally featured in https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/bodying-forth-the-classics/.*



They replace knowledge with opinion.

When I train teachers during professional development weeks, I encounter both of the aforementioned fallacies: either you create idolatry or you let students become self-governing authorities. In reality, we need teachers who model a love for first things. For a model teacher, I look to Socrates. In his dialogue with Phaedrus, Socrates dissuades the young man from overly praising Lysias, who is offering to teach the young man in exchange for sexual favors.

Already, Socrates rises above the status quo for ancient educators by not asking Phaedrus for such an exchange. Rather than attempting to win something from Phaedrus, Socrates begins his instruction of the youth by pointing him towards Eros, the god of love. When teachers, such as Socrates, do not envision themselves as the goal of imitation, but rather they acknowledge they are imitating another,[2] then they become right models towards wisdom.

Teachers must model by living well. As much as we want our students to remember every lesson that we taught, in reality, they will remember a few encounters with us, a handful of insights from what they read, but they will remember most how to seek truth, pursue goodness, and cultivate beauty in how they observe their teachers practice these realities.

If you ever had the pleasure of reading C.S. Lewis's autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, you know it is primarily about his education. He exalts one teacher, Smewgy, who taught him nothing but Latin and Greek, yet showed him how to "taste" the classics. "He first taught me the right sensuality of poetry, how it should be savored and mouthed in solitude," Lewis reminisces. The words of his teacher still ring in his ears: "Never let us live with *amousia*," without the Muses.

Of course, other teachers may also need to demonstrate why jumping off a cliff without a parachute is less fun than it sounds. My favorite moment in Lewis's story is his introduction to "The Great Knock." I always perform this dialogue with a hesitant student who reads Lewis's lines. The tall, lanky tutor who looks eerily like Emperor Franz Joseph corrects the teenage Jack from his error of posing an uneducated opinion.

While Lewis thought he was simply engaging in small talk, he soon discovered that Kirk never permitted substanceless discourse. All claims must be based on evidence, all terms used with precision. Lewis exclaims that this education "was red beef and strong beer": "Here was talk that was really about something." The Old Knock trains him in how to sift through pedantry for

purpose. Lewis was learning how to love Latin or Greek or logic by observing how these teachers approached what they taught.

Teachers have formed me, as I expect they have formed others. At Baylor University, I was a graduate student and enrolled in David Lyle Jeffrey's "Bible and Literary Criticism" course. Every week, Jeffrey assigned Bible reading along with the pages from Origen, Dante, TS Eliot, usually amounting to 200 pages a week. I was also enrolled in three other heavy courses, so I often skipped the Bible assignment. One week, Dr. Jeffrey called me on it. Imagine sitting before him, your rolling chair pulled up to the plastic white table, as he reclines before you, a figure with the height and belt-buckle of John Wayne but with a Scottish-Canadian accent and bright silver hair.

When he asked about whether I had read the assigned passage, I shrugged, "I've read it before." With a sparkle in his eye and a hardy laugh, he responded, "Yes, the Bible was meant to be only read once." I have never forgotten the humiliation of that moment and its serious lesson about the Bible's priority in my study. This past spring, I taught the Bible and Western Culture with required passages assigned daily. I copied my master teacher.

I also had the great privilege of learning from Professor Louise Cowan. When I enrolled at the University of Dallas in the Masters of English program, I knew nothing of her. I was 22 and teaching at a classical school. It had a waiting list, but somehow, I fought my way into her seminar on Faulkner, followed by another on Russian Literature, and later visited her apartment to discuss my dissertation on Dostoevsky and Flannery O'Connor.

She was 88 when I met her and 92 the last time I saw her. Yet, she addressed my engagement with great books as though hearing them fresh. When she passed away a few years later, her son was reading Dante's *The Divine Comedy* at her bedside. While I can still hear her voice in my mind, I cannot remember all the notes I took in her classes. But she showed me that the books she assigned were not fodder for the mind. Dr. Cowan loved the works she taught as beautiful gifts meant to draw out the best in us.

At the end of the day, learning should not be a matter of collecting information. We assess the truth of whether the permanent things matter by how they can be lived, how we see them lived in the lives of our teachers. Cowan writes, in the introductory remarks to her book *Invitation to the Classics,*

> *It is not enough for [classics] to be known about; they need to be truly known in the fullness of their intimacy. Taken in and savored, they become a way of understanding oneself in relation to larger power of the human soul.*

Cowan shares, in this essay, that she re-read the *Iliad, Oedipus Rex, Hamlet, The Divine Comedy*, and other classics every year. What we repeat, we memorize; what we memorize, we truly know. While I used to be spellbound by teachers who could call up passages of texts whenever they needed them, as a teacher, I now know the repetition is what creates that knowledge.

If you assign *The Divine Comedy* every year, you will be reading *The Divine Comedy* annually; you will begin to know it by heart. It will become as much a part of you as the food you eat. Cowan writes,

> *[The Classics] have no life except in their readers; in them, they are living presences that come to be known from inside—with the heart as well as the head.*

If teachers become what they teach, then they never have to fear about creating their own disciples. Rather, students will follow what they are taught—the Bible, Homer, Dante, Dostoevsky.

When I imagine what this process looks like, it is a

lot like the final scene of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. All the details of this futuristic novel have not stayed with me, but I will never forget the ending. As the city burns to little more than a heap of white powder in the distance, a group of outcasts travel along railroad tracks. The main character, a former book-burner named Montag, on the run from the law, joins the exiles and introduces himself. In turn, they respond:

> *"I am Plato's Republic[3] . . . I want you to meet Jonathan Swift, the author of that evil political book, Gulliver's Travels![4] And this other fellow is Charles Darwin, and this one is Schopenhauer, and this one is Einstein, and this one here at my elbow is Mr. Albert Schweitzer, a very kind philosopher indeed. Here we all are, Montag. Aristophanes and Mahatma Gandhi and Gautama Buddha and Confucius and Thomas Love Peacock and Thomas Jefferson and Mr. Lincoln, if you please. We are also Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."*

In a world that burned books, a group of castaways has memorized the classics and is bodying them forth. They are the living tradition, pilgrims memorizing the great stories, philosophy, poetry and passing it on, knowing that, in spite of all of the violence and ignorance of the world, what they are remembering will endure.

Students need models who show them how to love what is worth loving. Every semester, students knock on my door concerned because Plato said this but Aristotle said that; Kant said this but Nietzsche said that, and so on. I advise them to look not only at the arguments but more so at the lives: who do they want to be like? You might think Ivan Karamazov has the best argument against the goodness of God, but, at the end of my life, I would rather body forth Zosima's story to tell. What we are all asking is the age-old question, how shall we live? And, the strongest test of the worth of what we teach is in how our students become what they have learned.

On 31 March 2020 I resigned my position as an associate professor of humanities at John Brown University, where I have taught for seven years. Before this role, I had taught at other schools for nearly ten years. I love teaching, but I am finding that the changing academy means I must change how I consider my calling and who my students are. As I have learned so much from books, articles, lectures, interviews, and podcasts, I hope to be able to teach through those media going forward. So, do not hesitate to contact me with your suggestions and proposals.

NOTES

1. https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/education-should-aim-at-god-not-the-job-market/

2. https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/imitating-saint-augustines-imitation/

3. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h.htm

4. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/829/829-h/829-h.htm

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Stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it. – Jeremiah 6:16

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