"SINE DOCTRINA VITA EST QUASI MORTIS IMAGO"

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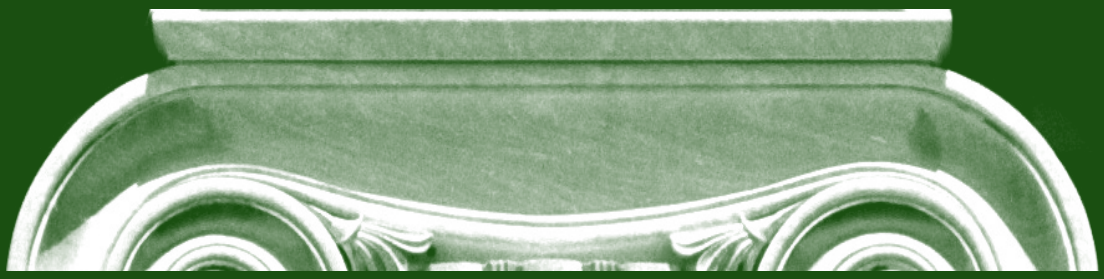

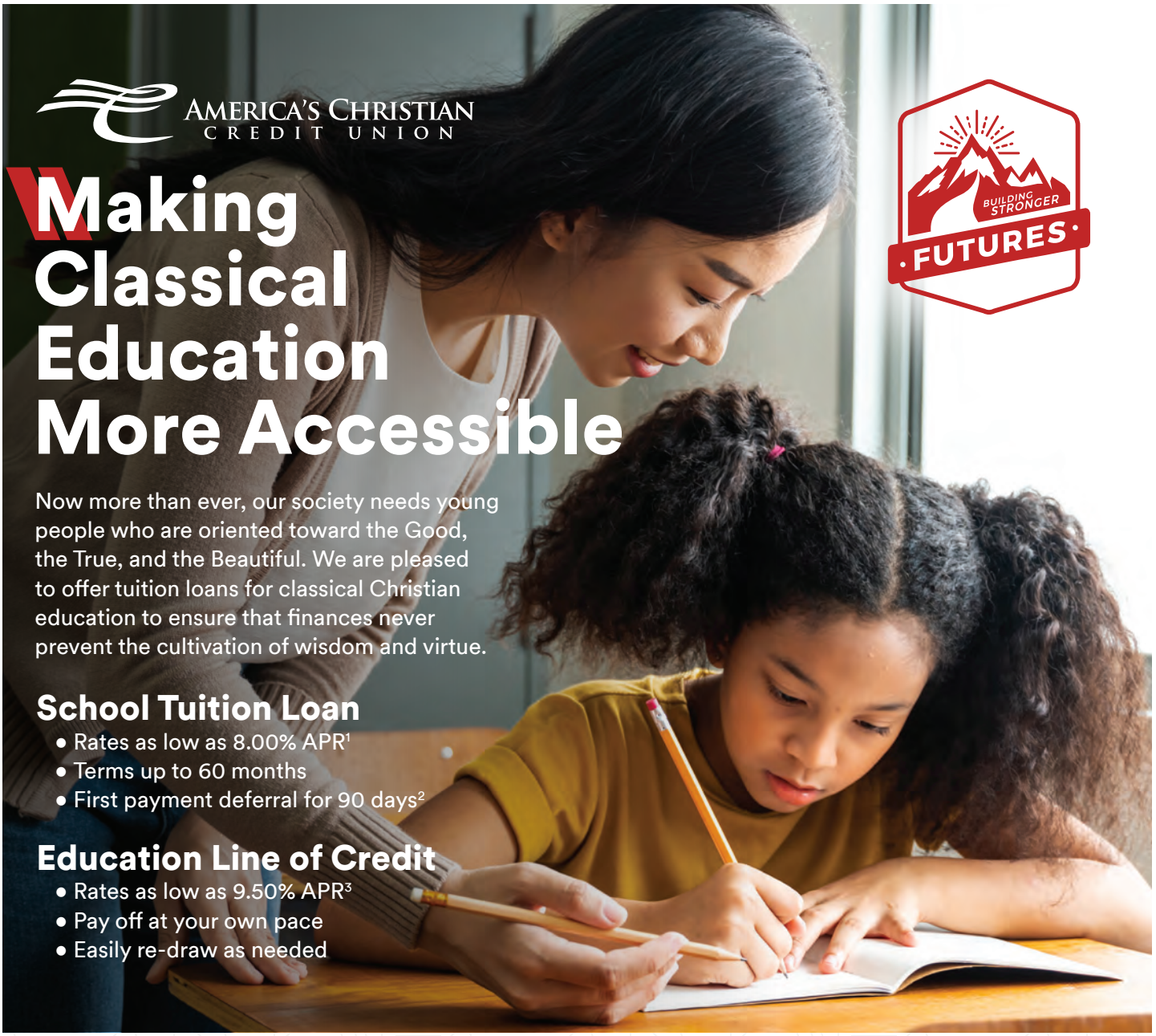

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Classical Christian Education:
A New "Old-Way"

MISSION STATEMENT
The primary mission of this association is to promote, establish, and equip schools committed to a classical approach to education in light of a Christian worldview grounded in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

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THE FAILURE OF EVANGELICAL ELITES

by Carl R. Trueman, Grove City College

There are times in history when Christianity feels its place in society coming under threat. As it finds itself pushed to the margins, two temptations emerge. The first is an angry sense of entitlement, an impulse to denounce the entire world and withdraw into cultural isolation. In the early twentieth century, American Fundamentalism offered a good example of this tendency, renouncing public engagement and defining itself against alcohol, evolution, the movies—characteristic productions of the society by which it felt attacked. Arguably, we see something of the same thing today in evangelical support for Donald Trump, though in this case populist Protestantism is contending for America's future rather than retreating from its present. I daresay readers of *The Christian Century* wish that truculent evangelicals would take the Benedict Option.

The second tendency is more subtle and more seductive. While appearing to be valiant for truth, it conforms Christianity to the spirit of the age. If fundamentalist fist-shaking is the temptation of the ragamuffin masses, accommodation appeals to those who seek a seat at the table among society's elite. And these elite aspirants often blame the masses when their invitation to high table fails to materialize.

Over the last few years, America has witnessed plenty of both tendencies. We've seen the anger of the evangelicals who think the country is being stolen from them, and we've detected the condescension of those who blame their less urbane coreligionists for the woes of the Church and the nation. Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is nothing new under the sun. As often as Christianity has had its cultured despisers, it has had adherents who respond by warring against the age or by making entreaties to the despisers—often reinterpreting the anti-Christian sentiments of the moment as fulfillments of the true faith.

Today, countless apologists insist that a rejection of Christian sexual morality is actually a fulfillment of the Christian imperative of love, which they gloss as the imperative to "include." But one of the first of these apologists, and arguably the most sophisticated, was Friedrich Schleiermacher. He is credibly called the father of modern theology, which really means modern liberal Protestant theology. Liberal Protestants pioneered the tactic of labeling critics "anti-modern" rather than engaging their arguments. Only in the last few decades, as liberal Protestantism has declined as a cultural force, have historians recognized that theologies framed to reject modern individualism, subjectivism, and historicism are themselves uniquely modern.

When Schleiermacher was a young man, an older, confessional Protestantism still had ownership of

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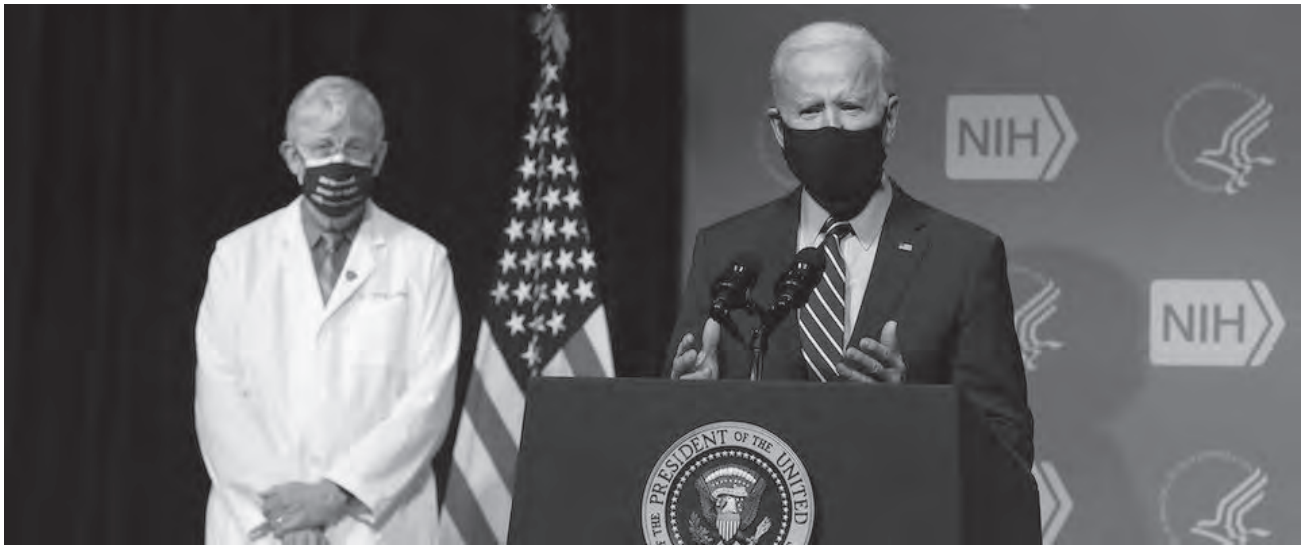

institutional culture in his native Germany. But even then society was in transition, and Christianity was losing ground among elites. The first generation of historical critics was shaking old Reformation certainties. Theology, once queen of the sciences and the crown of university education, was subject to fundamental challenges from Enlightenment thinking. The empiricism of thinkers such as David Hume called into question the traditional proofs for God's existence and the credibility of miracles. Influenced by Hume, Immanuel Kant ruled out-of-bounds any possibility of knowing transcendent realities. In effect, Kantian philosophy, which rapidly came to dominate German intellectual life, made it impossible to sustain classical Christian theism. In the world of Kant and his successors, God was perhaps useful as a presupposition by which to anchor moral duty—what Kant called a "postulate" of practical reason—but theological notions served no substantive purpose. At the same time, Romanticism was placing sentiment or feeling at the heart of what it means to be human. This, too, ran counter to inherited forms of Christianity, with their dogmas and systematic theologies full of close arguments and fine distinctions. Christianity was being cordoned off from the influential modes of inquiry that inspired excitement and enjoyed the prestige of the new.

It was in this context that Schleiermacher produced his brilliant work *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*. He did not dispute Kant's strictures against metaphysics, which entailed that we cannot know God's revelation and thereby denied that Christian doctrine has authority. Instead, he attacked Kant's reliance on argument and analysis. God, Schleiermacher insisted, is not a postulate. He is rather the object of our most intense emotions. Religion is thus a matter of feelings, not of reason. The purpose of doctrine, therefore, is not to convey knowledge but to evoke intense feelings that move our souls. We do not "know" God; rather, we commune with God in an "immediate feeling."

One rightly marvels at Schleiermacher's ability to concede all of Kant's philosophical points while advancing a passionate case for the enduring relevance of pious emotions. At one point, Schleiermacher notes that Christianity is heatedly rejected by those influenced by Enlightenment thought—and the passion of unbelief indicates that religion has great power and significance. Yet it is not so much Schleiermacher's argument as his strategy that is instructive. Rather than defend Christian orthodoxy, he concedes the ground claimed by religion's cultured despisers. He redefines Christianity to make it accord with the assumptions of its critics. He argues that Christianity is not characterized by irrational credulity, because it is not concerned with beliefs at all, but rather with feelings. By Schleiermacher's way of thinking,

Christian beliefs are symbols, cherished because they evoke the "immediate feeling" that links us to the divine.

With this approach, Schleiermacher was free to partake of the rising criticism of theological systems. He need not defend the authority of doctrine or of those who believed that Christian doctrine made objective claims about reality. By turning the dogmatic faith of previous generations into a religion of feelings and intuitions, he construed Christian doctrines as expressions of religious sentiment rather than as statements of objective truth. For example, predestination was not for him a matter of divine action effecting the eternal decision or decree of God, which divided the human race into elect and reprobate. Rather, it was a conceptual-poetic expression of the feeling of absolute dependence upon God, which Christianity evokes and Christians experience.

Schleiermacher is long dead, as is the Enlightenment audience he sought to address. But the problem of Christianity and its cultured despisers has not disappeared. It has become increasingly evident in recent decades. Powerful forces of secularism, metaphysical materialism, and scientism, among other factors, have driven religion from its former places of influence. One need only note that very nearly all private universities in the United States were founded by religious groups and were for a long time anchored in a religious tradition, only to become secular in the last two generations. In response to this pressure, Christianity has once again put forward those who seek to persuade its despisers that the faith is not inimical to polite society.

In the mid-1990s, a sustained effort was made to rehabilitate and defend the intellectual and academic integrity of orthodox Christians. The leaders of this movement, the historians Mark Noll and George Marsden, made valiant cases for the Christian mind. In *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Noll argued that American evangelicalism was hamstrung by its commitment to indefensible positions that lacked intellectual credibility. It consequently attracted the scorn of educated people outside the Church. Worse still, the lack of intellectual standards made life hard for thoughtful individuals within the Church. Noll focused on dispensationalism and literal six-day creation, arguing that these commitments were not defensible by the canons of reason, nor were they necessary for a rigorously orthodox Christian faith.

The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind was a bestseller and named Book of the Year by *Christianity Today*, the flagship evangelical magazine whose purpose was, in part, to articulate a Christianity that avoided the excesses of fundamentalism while defending orthodox Christianity. Shortly afterward, Marsden argued for what he dubbed "the outrageous idea of Christian scholarship" in a monograph of the same name. The historical portion of his case was based on research he had earlier published on the Christian origins of many of America's most significant institutions of higher education. Marsden concluded that Christianity's cultured despisers were simply wrong when they claimed that faith set a person at odds with the life of the mind. In the constructive portion of his case, Marsden argued that Christian scholars could cultivate careful respect for the canons of academic discourse and thoughtful, honest engagement with other academics within the guild without compromising their faith.

Unlike Schleiermacher, Noll and Marsden are careful to sustain full-blooded affirmations of orthodox Christian faith. And unlike Schleiermacher's, I find their arguments convincing. There is nothing about belief in the saving death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ that undermines intellectual rigor or compromises academic standards—unless, of course, those standards are deemed above criticism from the get-go. But there can be no doubt that the extraordinarily positive reception of Noll's and Marsden's ideas came about because university-educated Evangelicals in the 1990s were anxious to be reassured. The universities they attended increasingly told them that their faith was

disqualifying. Noll and Marsden argued otherwise, showing that a person of faith who engaged in self-criticism and discarded untenable beliefs could participate fully in modern intellectual life.

Though Marsden and Noll made their cases less than thirty years ago, I am struck by the fact that their arguments belong to an age that is long past. The idea that a commitment to honesty and integrity in scholarship might gain a person membership in today's universities and other leading institutions was, in retrospect, naive. Higher education today is largely the land of the woke. One might be a brilliant biochemist or have a profound knowledge of Minoan civilization, but any deviation from cultural orthodoxy on race, sexuality, or even pronouns will prove more significant in hiring and tenure processes than considerations such as scholarly competence and careful research.

Noll and Marsden are committed to a thoroughgoing supernatural Christian orthodoxy. Nevertheless, a sociological comparison of their project with Schleiermacher's is legitimate. Like the great German liberal, these American evangelicals assumed that the problem between their religion and the culture that despised it primarily concerned intellectual integrity and respectability. Schleiermacher accepted the rationality of the cultured despisers. Noll and Marsden adopted a narrower strategy, embracing the scholarly criteria of the academy and making a credible case that religious scholars, if capable, deserved respect from the cultural elites. It was also true that these American evangelical intellectuals, like Schleiermacher before them, largely blamed Christians themselves for the scorn heaped on them—for Christians had failed to distinguish between the essential core of faith and its accidental elaborations, which invite unnecessary conflicts with unbelievers.

What Noll and Marsden advocated in the nineties seemed, at least initially, to bear good fruit. Their doctoral students published fine monographs with respected academic presses and obtained positions at colleges and universities. And their idea—that Christians could obtain high intellectual office if they conformed to the expectations of the scholarly guild—had perhaps no better exemplar than Francis Collins.

Collins, a distinguished Evangelical scientist, was appointed by President Obama to the National Institutes of Health. His appointment was hailed in the *Washington Post* as a signal that evangelicalism was finally maturing—a comment cited with approval by *Christianity Today*. If ever the "evangelical mind" could be said to have realized its full potential, this was surely the moment. A devout evangelical Christian appointed to a prestigious position in the scientific community by a progressive Democratic president! Collins was proof positive that, yes, a careful adherence to scholarly standards combined with a gracious and thoughtful demeanor can earn a faithful Christian a place in the professional elite. Even in twenty-first-century America, when a presidential candidate can speak of bigoted people who "cling" to religion, Christians can rise to high office and make a difference in the secular world.

Yet in the years since his appointment, Collins has consistently defended the use of fetal tissue from elective abortions. Worse, in recent months details have emerged of an NIH grant supporting research on the remains of aborted babies specially curated from ethnic minorities—an atrocity that has received no comment from *Christianity Today*. To be sure, Collins may not have approved the grant personally. But it must be legitimate to ask what difference his Christian presence makes at the top of his organization, given that it funds research that legitimates abortion and racism simultaneously. Woke Christians, typically so sensitive to matters of systemic racism, have been rather muted on what would seem to be a clear example of just that.

The hope had been that Collins would be an instance of what James Davison Hunter called "faithful presence": the idea that Christians should eschew worldly notions of power and influence and not seek to change the world

by direct means. Instead, by being faithful disciples pursuing earthly callings in a godly and humble manner, they are to transform the world indirectly—or transform at least those people and institutions with whom they are connected. In principle, this idea is sound, and Collins could have put it into practice. But for faithful presence to be effective, the faithfulness must be at least as important as the presence. That seems not to be the case here.

The problem with Noll and Marsden's approach, as with Hunter's related notion of faithful presence, is that modern intellectual culture has never been engaged in a morally neutral exercise of refining the canons of intellectual inquiry and debate. The leading figures of the Enlightenment and their intellectual descendants were engaged, with varying degrees of conscious intention, in an attack on the moral significance of orthodox Christianity.

In *Revelation and Reconciliation*, Stephen Williams cautions us not to take modernity at its word: Though the "epistemological challenge to Christianity must be taken seriously," we must not forget "that it is grafted onto a fundamental resistance to the message of reconciliation." The Enlightenment did not simply rebel against old ways of thinking about knowledge; it rebelled also against the moral teachings of Christianity. The mainstream of modern thought has deemed doctrines of human sinfulness and Christ's atonement incompatible with human autonomy and freedom. This moral and political objection to Christianity is the dominant motif of today's cultured despisers. Unlike the canons of scholarship, the objection that Christianity promotes subservience, injustice, and hatred cannot be accommodated by Christians. Reason is compatible with faith, but the opposite of humility before God and obedience to his commandments is antithetical to it.

Last year I taught a class in historical method at Grove City College. One of our texts was Marsden's *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. The students' response to the book was striking. Though they saw Marsden as a thoughtful and engaging writer, they considered his argument—that Christians could find a place at the academy's table by being good scholars and treating colleagues with respect—unpersuasive in the present context. No student today thinks that a professor in any discipline at a research university who is polite and respectful to a gay colleague will also be allowed to voice his objections to gay marriage. That is not how the system works anymore.

My students have an accurate view of reality. Today's cultured despisers of Christianity do not find its teachings to be intellectually implausible; they regard them as morally reprehensible. And that was always at least partially the case. This was the point missed by Noll and Marsden—though it may not have been as obvious at Wheaton College or the University of Notre Dame in the nineties as it is almost everywhere in higher education today. Our postmodern world sees all claims to truth as bids for power, all stable categories as manipulative—and the task of the academy is to catechize students into this orthodoxy. By definition, such a world rejects any notion that scholarly canons, assumptions, and methods can be separated from moral convictions and outcomes. Failure to conform to new orthodoxies on race, morality, sexual orientation, and gender identity is the main reason orthodox Christianity is despised today. These postmodern tenets rest upon cultural theories that cannot accommodate Christianity, precisely because they underwrite today's academic refusal to discuss and weigh alternative claims. To oppose critical race theory or gender theory is to adopt a moral position that the culture's panjandrums regard from the outset as immoral. The slightest hint of opposition disqualifies one from admission to polite society.

Here's the rub: within Christian circles, particularly those of the leadership class and its associated institutions, the desire to appease religion's cultured despisers has

become a powerful force. Like Schleiermacher, those who hold to this vision think that a winning strategy involves standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the despisers. This no longer means conformity to the canons of academic discourse, the well-considered position advanced by Noll and Marsden. It means echoing woke outrage. And, where possible, it means laying the blame for Christianity's failure to meet elite standards on other Christians, typically on those who stand to the right of the "good Christians" politically and beneath them economically and socially. Sadly, the Schleiermachian ambition to appease the cultured despisers has reinforced the Menckenite tendency to sneer at the "fundamentalist" masses. The class division in American society between the educated people who count and the "low-information" people who do not appears just where it should never be found: in the body of Christian believers.

In this respect, militant rank-and-file evangelical support for the Trump phenomenon was paradoxically a gift to evangelical elites. It was only too easy for evangelical leaders to adopt the simplistic progressive narrative: Each and every Trump voter is a hardcore ignorant bigot and, if professing Christianity, also a rank hypocrite. The idea that not all who voted for Trump did so with any enthusiasm had no place in the secular elite's interpretation of 2016; nor did it fit with the therapeutic narrative adopted by many anti-Trump Christians. To concede that Trump's victory was not an artifact of white Christian nationalism or some similarly simplistic construct would have demanded a painful degree of heart-searching and self-criticism on the part of the officer classes of society at large and Christianity in particular. And that made the two extreme camps, Trump and anti-Trump, similar in the moral clarity with which each believed it understood its opponents. Rhetorically, the language of many of the most prominent figures on either side was nasty in the extreme and incompatible with basic Christian decency. Yet both sides hurled accusations without hesitation because of the obvious (to them) evil of their opponents. Stories of how leading #NeverTrumpers suffered like Shakespearean tragic heroes at the hands of Trumpite Twitter mobs merit an equally Shakespearean response: A plague on both your houses!

Post-Trump, the political landscape has shifted, but the game is the same. The moral preoccupations of secular progressive America now focus on two basic issues: race and LGBTQ+ rights. Christian leaders professing orthodoxy cannot support gay rights in the form of, say, the Equality Act. It is therefore unsurprising that we find so much vocal outrage among members of the Christian establishment on matters surrounding race. This topic provides a perfect opportunity for Christian leaders to place themselves (for once) on the "good" side of a moral debate that is generating turmoil in wider society, and thus to stand with the cultured despisers. It also allows the older generation to assure the young that the Church is not a haven of reactionary bigots, as their secular peers would have them believe. And given America's legacy of slavery and segregation, the race issue offers ample opportunity for public displays of self-loathing and expressions of shame, the acts of atonement that progressive America encourages and enjoys.

Yet leading anti-racist Christians operate within parameters set by cultural progressives. Police actions in 2018 accounted for the deaths of fewer than three hundred African Americans, while in the same year abortions of African-American babies accounted for more than 117,000 of the same. One would think this extreme difference (390 to one) would make abortion the centerpiece of Christian critiques of racism. But abortion was remarkably unremarked upon in the myriad op-eds and blog posts about George Floyd and critical race theory that dominated establishment Christian websites in 2020. That is not surprising: condemning abortion would not have been to the taste

of the cultured despisers.

Let me put it bluntly. Talking in an outraged voice about racism within the boundaries set by the woke culture is an excellent way of not talking about the pressing moral issues on which Christianity and the culture are opposed to each other: LGBTQ+ rights and abortion. Even Schleiermacher would cringe. Christian elites try to persuade the secular world that they aren't so bad—no longer in terms of Enlightenment conceptions of reason, but in terms of the disordered moral preoccupations of the day.

For all his brilliance, Schleiermacher did little to mitigate elite cultural contempt for Christianity or preserve Christian orthodoxy for future generations. He conceded too much and failed to see that Christianity is despised not simply because of its doctrinal content but because of its moral teachings. I suspect the same will prove true today: those who seek selective solidarity with our cultured despisers on the woke fixations of the day will find their strategy inherently unstable. We cannot pick and choose moral priorities. The Christian gospel is first and foremost a judgment on this world, not a selective affirmation of it in the service of winning friends and influencing people.

Christians should not expect to be warmly embraced by the world, nor even to be tolerated. In John 15, Christ tells his disciples:

> *If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

Harkening to Jesus's words is not an excuse for sloppy scholarship any more than it is an excuse for indifference to injustice and evil. Nor does it justify treating with contempt those with whom we disagree. Christians who act despicably should not complain when they find themselves despised. But Jesus's warning surely reminds us that we do not need to take our cultural despisers seriously; still less ought we to side with them against those who actually share our faith. Christianity tells the world what it does not wish to hear. We should not expect to be embraced by those whose thoughts and deeds contradict the truths of our faith. Nor should we seek to make our faith more palatable, lest the salt lose its savor. Accommodating the world's demands is a fool's errand, as anyone who reads Schleiermacher should know.

BOARD HEALTH AND STABILITY

by Mark Buckholtz, Cair Paravel Latin School

The health and stability of a school's governing board is perhaps the most accurate indicator of the direction and future success of that institution, and yet it is mostly opaque and not easily measured by the larger community. A skilled and engaged faculty, top-notch facilities, and even administrators who operate at an elite level are all critical pieces of a flourishing institution, but they can all eventually be overcome by a board that has an unhealthy relationship with the head of school, is at war with itself, or is trying to do too little or too much. Every board has a different personality and makeup, but there seem to be common pitfalls which if avoided, can go a long way toward ensuring that children and their families are receiving the best education in the healthiest environment possible.

I've served on the board of directors at Cair Paravel Latin School in Topeka, Kansas, for almost four years, three of those years as president. While some potential board members need their arms twisted to serve in what is typically a thankless assignment, I willingly signed up as soon as I could. My interest stemmed from my own childhood, being the son of two educators, both working in Christian schools. My father served as the headmaster of two large Christian schools in the southeast, and my mother was a French teacher for many years. As a teen I remember having conversations with my dad about strong boards versus weak ones (before he explained the difference I couldn't understand why any group would want to be weak) and I very clearly remember his anguish as one of the boards he served under succumbed to unhealthy practices which eventually led to his resignation. Christian education is in my blood, and I have a somewhat unique perspective as a board member, with my dad's experiences always in the back of my mind.

It may be my background influencing me, but I believe that the relationship between the head of school and the governing board is the most critically important one in the entire institution. This is a complex and delicate union that requires trust, accountability, and healthy communication in order to function properly. Like any relationship, trust between the board and the head of school can only be built up over time, and through proof of words and action. If either party agrees to something, they must either do it as agreed upon, or notify the other of any need for a change in plan. Confidentiality in appropriate discussions must be upheld. We sign confidentiality and conflict of interest statements each year as board members, and we do this not

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only for compliance to our bylaws, but also as a reminder of how important these principles are. If a confidential board conversation finds its way into the broader community, the trust that was forged over time can be quickly shattered.

Trust is also a key element to the issue of accountability. When we revamped our process for evaluating the performance of the head of school a few years ago, I immediately called my dad and asked him what an ideal evaluation process would like look from his perspective. He helped me to craft our current policy which, in addition to checking set benchmarks in areas like financial health, enrollment, and staffing, also includes an annual survey of the head of school's direct reports. The survey is not anonymous, but individual responses are only seen by the president before a distilled report with names removed is shown to the head of school, and ultimately to the larger board. If an issue is presented in the responses that deals with the conduct of the head of school, that direct report will be contacted by the board president and VP to determine its legitimacy. If deemed credible, the president and VP will present the issue to the head of school, but the identity of the direct report will only be revealed if they allow it.

This system is a compromise between evaluations which simply rely on a report from the head of school without any outside verification, and those which allow direct reports or even faculty members to submit truly anonymous surveys, which I believe can be unfair to the one being evaluated. My father felt that while the first system is obviously the easiest for the head of school to "pass," but when he was a headmaster he preferred something with more accountability. For the health of the institution, and for his own sake, he wanted and needed to know if his direct reports felt there was a real deficiency in his conduct or leadership. As the Russian proverb popularized by Ronald Reagan put it, "trust, but verify." To clarify, our current head of school is a dear friend of many years and someone that I trust wholeheartedly. It's just that we all need accountability, whether in our work, in our relationships with each other, or most importantly in our walk with the Lord.

Finally, communication. This one may seem the most straightforward, but it can also be the easiest to ignore. Most boards meet monthly to discuss pressing concerns and to plan out future endeavors, and this is a critical function. The board must also set clearly defined parameters for how they will judge the head of school's evaluation to be a success or not. However, and once again following the lead of my father, I feel like it is also critical for the head of the board to meet on a somewhat regular basis with the head of the school in a more informal setting. My dad loved having breakfast with the president of his board, as it served to deepen and enrich their relationship, and to build trust between the two of them. I try to do this with our head of school, and from my perspective it has allowed us to navigate some very difficult issues with greater ease.

One final issue I'd like to tackle is that of a board's role in the day-to-day operations of the school. While I firmly believe that a strong board is the best model (meaning that it has the authority to hire, fire, and evaluate the head of school vs. an advisory board with no power to do these things), I think it is just as important that it be clearly defined what a board does not have the authority to do, and that it makes every effort to abide by those guidelines.

For anyone who has served on a board, the temptation to start interfering with the daily operations and functions of the school has probably been felt. Whether it's because as a parent, they come across a decision they don't agree with or a situation that feels like it needs to be improved, or because other parents have reached out to them with a complaint, the pressure to "do something" is real. Our board is a governance board, and therefore if the subject matter is not related to the overall budget, the physical campus and its long-term maintenance and/or development, the evaluation of the head of school, or if we truly believe that the school's mission or vision is being threatened, we don't make it a board issue. If parents come to us with complaints, we must redirect them to the

appropriate teacher or administrator. We absolutely serve as a sounding board for the head of school on a variety of subjects, but that is their choice to bring items to our attention to get our opinions.

There are many reasons to be so dogged in our adherence to these limitations. For one, we are not "on the ground" at the school on a daily basis and it is highly unlikely that we have a better view of individual problems than the head of school and the administration. There are dynamics of which we are simply not aware. Secondly, we must have faith in the person that we appointed to lead the school to handle daily operations, unless that trust is broken for some reason. An administrator who knows that their board may not support them on the handling of daily matters may ultimately either conceal things from the board or become too timid to act decisively and lead effectively. In order for a board to be disciplined enough to function this way over the long run, it must be made very clear to new board members what their role is and isn't. The board must also do everything in its power to weed out candidates who are not joining to serve, but in order to address one or more pet issues.

Serving on our board has been extraordinarily difficult in this time of politically charged issues and a pandemic that has forced us to make one excruciating decision after another. It has also been a source of spiritual and emotional growth for me, and I would never take back my decision to join. There will never be a perfect board or a perfect school, but we can strive to take the steps, both large and small, which will take us closer to that ideal. I cannot think of a more important task than to ensure our children are receiving a rich and Christ-centered education in a loving and safe environment. God speed to every board member, administrator, and faculty member as you seek this same thing in your own schools.

AUTOMATIC ENROLLMENT

by Leslie Collins, Covenant Academy

The time and effort that good-fitting families put into finding a school involves a thorough investigative process. Good-fitting families want to find a school that feels like home, and they want to stay there until their children graduate. Even if things got hard, something would hold them there. Your school may experience turnover, gossip, even bad hires, but they will keep their children enrolled because it feels like home. Good-fitting families get what you're doing and want to grow in their understanding of classical and Christian education. They become better educated each year as they grow with their children in your school. They're your steady financial supporters, loudest cheerleaders, and best volunteers. You love them and want them to bring their friends and keep coming back. So, let me ask you a question: Why do you give them an invitation to leave every year? If you have a cumbersome annual parent contract that needs to be completed in order to re-enroll next year, that's exactly what you're doing. Parents are overwhelmed with digital information. They have a hard time keeping up with email and crafting a timely response. Why allow them even one day to imagine their kids at another school? On their worst day they might think that a school change might be good for them. If your school really is home to them, it's due to your hard work in creating a sticky culture—one that's hard to leave. You want them to experience your school as a big family. So why invite separation?

As one of many strategies to employ when growing your school, I recommend you consider auto-enrollment for your school. This process is relatively simple to manage with FACTS/RenWeb or any school information software. Consider using this change as one of many steps you are taking to strengthen your community through a more streamlined approach to your partnership in educating your students as you let them know they will be automatically re-enrolled each year unless they opt-out. To the administrators who immediately think, "I don't necessarily want everyone to come back," use auto-enrollment as one step towards more pro-active and honest communication with your school family. In other words, don't leave the decision to them if they're not a good fit. Take an active approach and enlist all teachers as partners in this improvement.

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APPLYING SCRIPTURE TO THE STUDY OF U.S. HISTORY

by Jerry Keehner, Rockbridge Academy

What does it mean to apply a biblical worldview as we teach our classes? As we begin to explore that question, perhaps first we should specify what it does not mean. Applying Scripture to any subject does not mean finding an appropriate verse and appending it, bumper-sticker style, to our lessons. There may be, of course, mature and nuanced ways to introduce Scripture to any lesson, asking how the truth proclaimed there impacts the current lesson.

I am suggesting, however, a more integrated approach and use the study of U.S. history as a foil for this exploration. While America was not founded *as a* Christian nation, its founding ideals were based firmly in biblical principles, so we can compare what happened with biblical principle. In what follows, I will explore both of those points: the founding ideals that require us to apply Scripture, and what it looks like to do so in class.

Both the Declaration and the Constitution have clear foundations in political theory that relies heavily on a biblical understanding of man, especially his sinful nature. Those foundations are found in eighteenth-century British political theory of the Whig variety. In a nutshell, Whigs relied on four major principles[1]:

1. Man is born with certain rights, especially the right of liberty.
2. In order to preserve liberty, men relinquish a portion of those rights to form a government whose primary responsibility is to preserve liberty.
3. Governments, made of people, tend toward corruption, destroying liberty.
4. To protect against corruption, liberty must be allied to virtue.

Note the resonance with biblical principles. Liberty is a natural right, given by the Creator, not a civil right bestowed by a government. The sinfulness of men is a constant threat to that liberty. Liberty needs virtue. In *A Free People's Suicide*, Os Guiness expands on this. True liberty requires virtue, but true virtue requires faith, and atheists have no real foundation for virtue. Even more, true faith requires freedom.[2] That is the genius of the American system made explicit in the First Amendment. The founders knew that a faith legislated is most often mere capitulation and not true faith. Was America founded as a Christian nation? No, but it was founded on decidedly biblical principles.

What made us a nation? These colonies were diverse in many ways: the intentions behind the founding of

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each, the religious positions they held, the ways their economies developed, even their concepts of what a good life could be. It would be difficult to bring together such a wide-ranging collection of people and band them together.

What did bring them together? Two realities: the benign neglect with which the British government had treated them from the beginning, which gave rise to a long tradition of self government in all the colonies, and concern for liberty. This is not merely liberty from England as a political entity, but liberty of persons. The freedom to choose your government, to have a say in how that government functions, and to live free from coercion within the bounds set up by your government was a uniquely consistent desire amongst all the colonies. The United States was the first nation to constitute itself on the basis of ideals. The reality that those ideals resonate from a biblical foundation means that we have not only the right but the responsibility to assess any event or decision in American history from a biblical perspective.

How do we do this yet avoid "bumper-sticker theologizing"? Since I am writing in late January, I will use two examples from my current lessons: a Virginia legislature debate in 1831 and the Compromise of 1850. First, consider this little-known event: In its 1831 legislative session, the Virginia General Assembly engaged in a vigorous debate about slavery. Rather than defending it, they reached a resolution that called slavery evil and that it should eventually end in Virginia.[3] Virginia! However, before the end of the decade, that same institution was passing laws bolstering slavery and closing off even the opportunity for debate in the South. How did this happen?

There are many contributing factors that led to this sea-change of southern opinion, most stemming from the same fateful year of 1831. The Nat Turner Rebellion certainly had an effect, as did the rise of abolitionist periodicals in the north (e.g., William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*). Also important is the reality that the entire Southern economy was firmly grounded in slave-based cash crops.

A typical way to teach this series of events might be to take the cause/effect approach. The Nat Turner Rebellion happened, which caused white Southerners to clamp down decisively on the African slave population. Is that really sufficient, though? Beyond knowing *that* they responded in this way, we want to know *why*. What motivated such a response? My students just wrote an essay on this topic. The point of the essay was an exploration of why these events might cause such a reaction.

For the Nat Turner Rebellion, students might discuss how both the "mob justice" employed by white Southerners was an example of vengeance, and the "across the board" crackdown on the entire slave population was a fearful and sinful response that attributed motives to slaves who knew nothing of Nat Turner. None of this excuses the crimes of Turner and his accomplices. Justice should indeed be sought. However, can we really say that this was done in a biblically sound way?

The same kinds of questions could be asked about Southern responses to abolitionist charges. We know that when we are confronted with our sin, the most likely response is to defend ourselves, even to the point of arguing that it is not a sin. That is exactly what the South did with abolitionist charges. None of this excuses the South for slavery, but it opens up a dialogue in which we can assess those responses from a biblical perspective.

Then there is the Compromise of 1850. It did nothing of lasting value except postpone the Civil War for ten years. The most troubling part of it in the North was the Fugitive Slave Act. Many abolitionists saw it as a war against God. Certainly there were many federal judges who now found themselves stuck between the proverbial rock and hard place: their consciences telling them that they must ignore the law they were sworn to enforce.

While you most likely won't find this prompt in a history textbook, now is the time to stop "the lesson" and ask your students a question: "If you were a judge in Pennsylvania, what would you do?" They will have many opinions. Let them work it out. You will find encouragement when someone says, "I'd have to resign. I couldn't keep serving as a judge if it requires me to support sin." You might find even more encouragement when someone else says, "But if you resign, who will take your place? Probably someone with a far less ethical stance. What if it's someone who just ignores the law? What if it's someone who blindly upholds the law? Either way, things will be even worse!" Let them struggle with it. Let them see how difficult real-life questions can be. Let them wrestle with applying Scriptural principles to questions that are not merely academic. Only then will they have a sense of what happened historically. Usually, they walk away far less judgmental of those who faced those questions so long ago. Hopefully, they are also slowly habituating the practice of asking biblical questions of history rather than merely learning lists of facts. Perhaps they'll even start to do it with current events and their own lives! Facts are grammar. We need them. Asking why is dialectic. Learning how to express the challenge of living well before God in the world is rhetoric. We need both of them, too, maybe now more than ever.

ENDNOTES

1. See David N. Mayer, "The English Radical Whig Origins of American Constitutionalism," *Washington University Law Review,* Vol. 70, 1 (January 1992).

2. Os Guiness, *A Free People's Suicide: Sustainable Freedom and the American Future* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012).

3. See Wilfred McClay, *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story* (New York: Encounter Books, 2020).

LESSON PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

by Craig Hefner, Covenant School

During the past year, administrators and teachers at the Covenant School (Huntington, West Virginia) focused on improving classroom instruction. The school required all teachers to use a standard lesson plan format as part of this effort. Over a year, school personnel tried several formats, eventually adopting the template found on the next page. Teachers reported that although using this template wasn't easy, after a time, they discovered that the disciplined use changed how they thought about their lessons.

The Covenant School earned ACCS-accreditation this year. Thank you to Craig Hefner for sharing this template.

Teacher:

Lesson Plans

Week:

Subject:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
LESSON and MATERIALS:				
OBJECTIVES: *A teacher must be one who knows the lesson or truth to be taught. Course objectives should teach the whole person and so they aim for the three parts of the human soul: What should the student know? What should they be able to do? And what should they love?*				
INTRODUCTIONS—CONNECTIONS—BACKGROUND: *A learner is one who attends with interest to the lesson given.*				
LESSON: *The lesson to be learned must be explicable in the terms of truth already known by the learner — the unknown must be explained by the known. The language used as a medium between teacher and learner must be common to both.*				
REFLECTION and APPLICATION: *Teaching is arousing and using the pupil's mind to form in it a desired conception or thought. Learning is thinking into one's own understanding a new idea or truth.*				
ASSESSMENT and REVIEW *The test and proof of teaching done — the finishing and fastening process — must be a re-viewing, re-thinking, re-knowing, and re-producing of the knowledge taught.*				
MISSION: *How is this lesson distinctly Christian? How is this lesson distinctly classical?*				

NO HALF-TRUTHS ALLOWED

by Christie Wright, Highland Rim Academy

"How is this lesson different from that of the school down the road?"

I pose this question to our faculty as often as I can. The answer reveals a great deal about what we think it is we are really doing in our classrooms as classical schools, but more importantly, as Christian ones.

So how is this lesson different from that of the (government) school down the road? What about the (nominal Christian) school down the other road? If someone observed your classroom instruction out of context entirely, what evidence would they have to convict you in a court of law of teaching your students Christianly? Would it be the kind of evidence a fancy legal team would have to craftily piece together? "Well, there was that one prayer at the start and the "do unto others" bit later, plus doesn't this teacher attend a church somewhere?" or would it be more akin to launching an argument for the wetness of rain?

I train our teachers at Highland Rim Academy to consider the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration framework in their lessons. How does the truth of the Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration at the grandest level inform our understanding of the lesson at hand today or this week? I'd like to present a few examples:

Let us consider an example from a lesson from King Arthur. Nothing introduces an exhilarating discussion on adultery into the lives of fifth graders like the reading of Guinevere and Lancelot in the literature classroom (ready or not, here it comes). How does our framework help us out of this one?

The Christian teacher sees this uncomfortable part of the story as a fantastic opportunity to share with our students what God has created in marriage: a covenant between one man and one woman before God, to live faithfully and sacrificially for a lifetime that Christ and His Bride might be pictured in the lives of this newly formed family before their friends, neighbors, church members, and the local milkman. A wise school will

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have a statement on marriage of one sort or another, and now is a fine time to read together that this is what we believe God's word says about marriage. But since we're talking about Guinevere and Lancelot here, we move directly into the next category of our framework, the Fall, and what God's word has said about sin. Any good Christian knows not to stop there, lest we all sink in despair! Let the children understand what God has made, how the curse has taken its toll, and how Christ has brought redemption and the forthcoming restoration, of course culminating in a wedding feast!

Let me be clear. I am not advocating for unpacking the full wickedness of adultery with fifth graders. I believe the emphasis ought to be the goodness of marriage and Christ's faithfulness to His bride. Yet our sweet fifth graders are ready to consider the implications of sin. They will feel the betrayal whether you discuss it or not, so we do well to help them rightly order their affections or distastes, accordingly. Delicate subjects should be addressed delicately with delicate children. But they should be addressed, as an opportunity for developing a complete Christian worldview, for searching God's word for truth, and for growing to maturity in Christ.

Let's consider a second example: a lesson on metaphor I recently taught to my 11th grade rhetoric students.

Since I know that "by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him," (Colossians 1:16) then I can understand how it is that metaphors can function. I understand how it is that Virgil can compare the industriousness of the people of Tyre to a beehive, for both human industry and beehives are created by Christ and for Christ. They are related, in the very least, in their source and in their telos. They are like cousins, so that two seemingly different things created in the world by God aren't ever really entirely separated one from the other. A comparison can always be found (not always a good one, albeit). Additionally, I know that because Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh, so also can metaphors be used to make abstract ideas concrete, invisible things visible, unknown things known. Metaphor works, simply put, because of the doctrine of the Incarnation.

And of course it is these kinds of answers, that when I consider them, I must also purpose to make known to my students. My lesson on metaphors must include proper instruction at the grammar, logic, and rhetoric level, to be sure, replete with a review of the definition, specific examples from literature and history, various written and verbal exercises, culminating in a final skillfully fashioned metaphor for the students' own

speeches. But I must now also include the truths about how metaphors are like the incarnation, like words that take on flesh. I am now beholden to tell my students the truth, the whole truth: that to write metaphors today, in this particular lesson, is to become a sub-creator, in the very fashion of our Father, the first and ultimate Creator of all things. They don't think, imagine, and write foremost because Mrs. Wright will grade it later in their papers; they think, imagine, and write because we are practicing being like our Father, who makes words into trees and mountains, and like Him we, too, use our words to create things that previously were not.

If I know this to be true about the lesson of the day, must I not tell it to my students? A classical, Christian education is, after all, an education of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. No half or part truths allowed. In *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, Gregory's first law of the teacher tells us the teacher must teach what he knows, so that to rightly understand the theology of a lesson is the imperative to teach it.

So now my lesson is different—vastly different, I suspect—than the lesson on metaphors at the school down the road. But even more importantly, my students are developing a thoroughly Christian understanding of their world, even as they grow to become better poets. I have given them the truth, not in part, but in whole.

To tell only part of the truth, disconnected from its very source and purpose, to divorce it from the truths found in Scripture, is to make our lessons no different than those of the school down the road. Too many students, children of believers, nonetheless, busy themselves in the school day learning mere half-truths. This ought to never be the case in a classical, Christian school.

Lastly, I'll list key truths I like to see in classrooms to help provide teachers with some basic guiding themes, lest anyone not feeling up to taking on a metaphor and metaphysics lesson grow discouraged. Do not be discouraged! We can give our students a belly full of truth, if we do our own due diligence to grow in our own understanding of Scripture and take advantage of the many wonderful training opportunities provided by the ACCS or your own school.

The following list is certainly not a complete description of Christian thought on each subject but may serve as a thin guide to help focus teachers on key points in their instruction. I recommend developing specific catechism questions and answers to address the themes explicitly.

MATH

- Math was created by God for His own glory and for our discovery.
- Math helps us understand objective Truth in an overly subjective culture.
- Math trains our minds and hearts to care for the specifics, the details, for precision and perfection. The careful thinking required in the theology classroom is prepared in the math classroom.

HISTORY

- History is the story of humankind before the face of God:
    - Every human is created in the image of God, by God, and for His glory.
    - Humans are born into Adam's family line and are thus born into sin.
- We believe God's purposes and sovereignty extend to all events throughout history.
- Humans often err in their accounting of history, yet objective truth is knowable and attainable. For this reason, Christians must read history with a discerning mind but not a cynical one.

CHRISTIAN STUDIES/BIBLE

- Teachers should know the school's Statement of Faith.
- Teachers should seek to help students see all of Scripture through the lens of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work on the cross (Gen. 3:15–Rev. 21).
- All biblical teaching should be God-centered and not man-centered and never reduced to mere moralistic tales for children.

SCIENCE

- God's creation includes both a natural and supernatural world.
- Science is the study of the natural world and is not meant to measure, assess, or draw conclusions about God or His supernatural workings.
- All things were created through Christ and for the glory of God. He is glorified by our discovery and enjoyment of it.

ART/MUSIC/READING/LITERATURE/COMPOSITION/LANGUAGES

- Christians are people of the Word and therefore must become people of words. Christians must seek to become very competent readers and writers.
- Creativity, while necessary, does not reign as the supreme standard.
- Creating excellent art, music, and writing require the development of technical skills and hours of practice. Students and teachers must not be content with a first attempt.

WHAT IS TRUTH IN EDUCATION AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

by Emory Latta, Providence Christian School

Soon Christians will have to consider the question, whether a mere intellectual education with no moral basis is worth the having. Already the question has come before the Presbyterian Church of the United States, whether the time has come when they must establish schools of their own. —Matthew Hale Smith, October 15, 1846

I have found it interesting that amidst our working through the subject of truth in this space these last few weeks, word comes from Montgomery that our legislators are considering changing how tax dollars are distributed in education. SB-140 is proposed legislation that would return tax dollars for education to the parents to use for the school that they choose, public or private. This legislation could potentially be a monumental shift in relieving financial pressure on families that attend schools like ours. And that could be a tremendous boost. It is ironic that this consideration comes in the two-hundredth anniversary of the proliferation of public-school education with the Common School movement's widespread launch in New England in the 1820s.

Before we get too giddy, let's consider a couple of perspectives. One, the track record of state governments staying out of the board room and decision-making process in education is not good. In fact, for all two-hundred-plus years of publicly funded education, the influence has always followed the money, which is true in Washington and Montgomery. Historically, the attachment of the strings of influence on the flow of funding is as old as our country. Strategically, financial independence has always been necessary for schools like ours to maintain our ideological and theological independence.

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
A Classical Christian School

It is true that "history trains the skeptic." Nearly one hundred years ago, had the Roman Catholic Church not fought and won a decision in the U.S. Supreme Court in what is referred to as the Magna Carta of Protestant Christian Schools, PCS would likely not exist. *The Oregon Case* of 1925 declared unconstitutional the Oregon Department of Education law that required its children to attend a state public school. Likewise, in that opinion, Associate Justice McReynolds stated that "The child is not the mere creature of the state," precedence under which schools like PCS continue to operate (Kienel, 2005).

The other perspective we must remember is that religious institutions have always been the torchbearer for the instruction of truth in the classroom. The thread of dissonance with public education has been the right to teach from a truth platform—not of conformity. Allowing our school to keep independent control of teaching truth will be of great importance during and after this tax

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dollar discussion. Surely reasoned logic suggests that the constituency of America was much more aligned with Biblical truth in 1822 than what we see in 2022. Alcorn (2003) supports that observation as he states that only 22 percent of adults believe in absolute moral truth in America today. Worse, that number is only 13 percent for people under the age of 36. We are likely more vulnerable to compromise regarding teaching truth than ever before in our history. Conversely, it has never been more important!

As Christ-followers, we believe that the concept of truth is the foundation of education. This conviction includes the truths of Scripture, and that the created truths point to biblical truth. Here's what Christians believe as truth: To dismiss Christ as mistaken or the Bible as irrelevant is the ultimate arrogance. "Anyone who does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about His Son" (I John 5:10b). Think about it, is a real thinking education possible in an environment that scorns the very existence of truth? Facts can be taught, skills learned, propaganda disseminated, diplomas dispensed. But that isn't education (Alcorn, 2003).

Because our culture has turned its back to truth, it has made education out to be a performance on a test, not a possession of understanding and awareness of truth. As a classical Christian school, we believe there can be no separation between education and truth. Perhaps the process of having the funding for education turned back over to the people will be the shift to empowering schools to leverage truth in instruction with quality and purpose. This may be the new Magna Carta of Christian Education for schools like PCS!

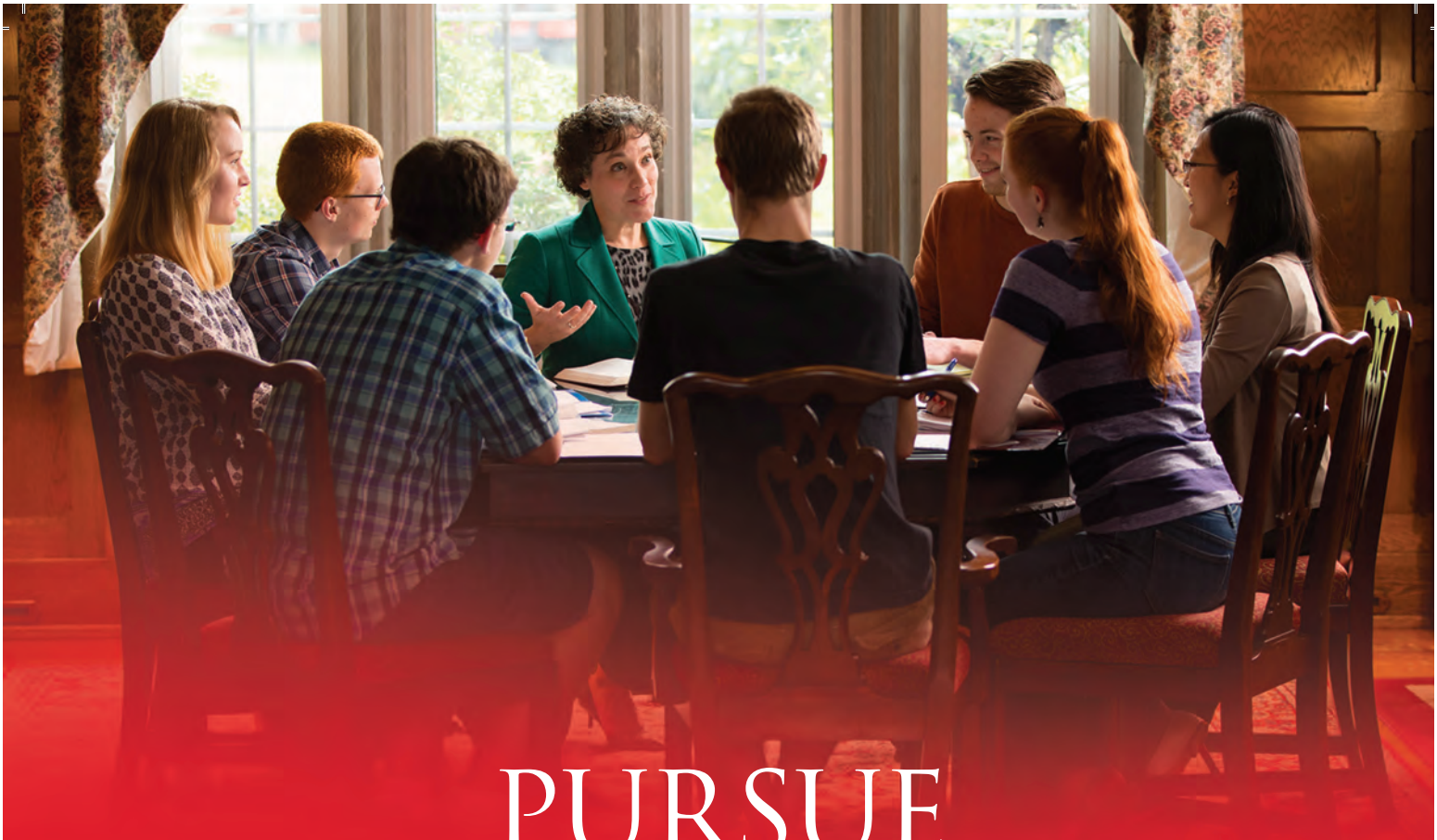
Like you, I would like to seize the opportunity to get on that bandwagon of momentum that desires something beyond the failures that are taking place. But…

We must guard that, if this bill becomes law, and if the ACCS and the PCS Board agree to allow us to accept tax dollars, by doing so we do not lose our independence and freedoms. Likewise, we need to ensure that whatever decisions and agreements are made we do not compromise the real bottom line: the understanding, the teaching, and the adherence to biblical truth and all the created truths that point to the Scripture as these are fundamental to real education. Let's be faithful to agree that we band together to ensure that teaching from truth is not on the bargaining table of compromise.

NOTE: Emory originally wrote this for the Providence Christian School community on February 4, 2022. At that time, the Alabama Legislature was considering a bill in both the House and the Senate to assign public tax dollars earmarked to public schools to parents to use for the school of their choice.

This bill received quite a bit of scuttlebutt in our state. The local TV station called Emory for comment, and the Providence Christian School community was also discussing the legislation.

So, Emory wrote his weekly staff and board piece about it. On April 6, 2022, the bill was indefinitely postponed.



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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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