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CLASSIS

Sine Doctrina Vita est Quasi Mortis Imago

FEATURING

“Socrates Canceled”

by Louis Markos

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CLASSIS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

CLASSIS is a quarterly journal promoting a new "old way" and is designed to edify, support, and encourage educators around the world who seek to recover classical Christian education in the twilight of the West.

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Commonplace

Friends, Colleagues, and Fellow Classical Christian Educators,

The now forty-year history of our enterprise at ACCS can be likened to the rather humble way in which many individual schools began. We are told to not despise the time when a small band of smartly dressed 5-to-8 year-old children huddled together for school in the ramshackle playroom of a pastor's house. The reason for this is contained in that Latin motto, *sic parvis magna*, where greatness is born of a little thing. It shouldn't surprise us that this narrative archetype also describes the collective institution as well. Just as a school grows in maturity, it should be expected that the larger association will go from strength to strength.

It is in this light that we are pleased to welcome you to the new and improved Classis. I want to thank and honor Tom Spencer, as well as many others, who worked diligently over the years to curate a scholarly discourse around the recovery of a "new old way" of education, situated within a Christian liberal arts tradition. Classis has featured professors and theologians, alongside the insights of fellow teachers and administrators, and it's our desire to continue cultivating that collegiate ethos of learning and practice.

In this issue, Louis Markos teaches us about the high calling to carry the mantle of Socrates. Joe Carlson reveals some of Dante's thoughts on political philosophy. Nicholas C. DiDonato enjoins us to take a second and more contemplative glance at the transcendentals. Danielle Dillenscheider reminds us of the comfort we have in teaching the Great Books. And last, we learn about why calendars matter and we find out why we all might wish to imitate Oxford and rename this first quarter, "Michaelmas." In addition, we are pleased to share "Commonplace," where we feature excellent student essays from our member schools. With each volume, we look forward to curating the voices of new scholars, as well as showcasing the insights and talent of our students. Finally, a special thanks goes to Ethan J. Greb for the beautiful design and artistry that went into this new version of Classis.

Te Deum,

Devin O'Donnell, Editor-in-Chief

ACCS exists to promote, establish, and equip member schools that are committed to a classical approach in the light of a Christian worldview.

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ARTICLES

The Kingdoms of Earth

Joe Carlson, *University of Dallas*

According to Dante in the fourteenth canto of the *Inferno*, there is a giant statue of an old man standing alone somewhere in the mountains of Crete. Reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, this statue has a head of gold, chest of silver, belly of bronze and legs of iron. His feet, however, tell a different story. Instead of toes mixed with iron and clay, one foot is solid metal, while the other, his right foot, is formed entirely of terra cotta. Nevertheless, this foot, as fragile as a flower pot, is the one on which the statue stands erect ("sta... eretto"[1]), more so than on the other made of choice iron ("ferro eletto"[2]). While interpretations vary, it is obvious that the 14th Century Florentine is riffing off of Daniel, doing so 1300 years after that prophecy began to be fulfilled.

Famously, the ancient Babylonian king's dream ended with a rock cut out by no human hands striking the statue's feet, dashing the whole to pieces. According to Daniel, the ancient empires, from Babylon and Persia to Greece and Rome, would be undone by the Rock that we would come to know as Jesus Christ. He would be born under the partly strong, partly weak Roman empire, and would establish a kingdom not of this world, though very much for this world. And we know this happened. Those ancient empires crumbled beneath the weight of the Gospel, as the rock began to cover the surface of the earth.

It is commonplace now for us to see kingdoms and empires rise and fall. The student of history will realize that what we are currently living through, which seems to be the tail end of the American empire, is nothing new. This is the inevitable course of secular states, a kind of photo-negative version of Hegel's synthesis. Instead of thesis and antithesis coming together and forming something new and unified, all man-made states and empires eventually fall apart. Hegel, while optimistic about the future, was entirely blind to the past, and to human nature in general. The world and all humanity are broken by the Fall. This is represented in Dante's statue on Crete by a large crack that starts with the silver chest (after the golden age of prelapsarian innocence), and runs all the way down to the ground. Incidentally, out of this crack pour forth so many tears that they cascade down the infernal pit, creating and feeding the four rivers or, more accurately, the four stagnant swamps of Hell. That crack is real; those tears are real, and they have real consequences for the kingdoms of this earth. The kingdoms of this world totter and fall, built on the cracked foundation of human frailty and sin. It is foolish to expect anything different.

In Daniel, after the supernatural rock hits the feet of the statue, it becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth. Pair this with other texts from the Old Testament (Isaiah 9:7, Habakkuk 2:14) and from the parables of Jesus

1. *Inferno* XIV.111
2. *Inferno* XIV.109

Himself (Matthew 13:31-33), and the image is clear: the kingdoms of this world are impotent in the face of the King and His Gospel. They have no ability to remain dominant over the lives of men for any length of time; instead they will grow silent, paving the way for some new glorious strain of music, coming from the choirs of heaven.

In Dante's statue, the foot of choice iron cannot hold the statue upright. Representing civil government and empire, the iron foot is ultimately powerless on its own, no matter how strong it may seem. Stability comes from something else; and paradoxically, it is found in the foot of terra cotta. Early commentators saw this right foot as the Church. Others have argued that this interpretation fails because the statue is a representation of ancient, pre-Christian man, given both the ancient kingdoms represented in Daniel 2, as well as the ancient taxonomy of ages that the metals represent. But Dante is not known for playing by other people's rules. Whatever elements of history or theology or philosophy have come before become mere tools in his hands as he shapes his own unique vision of Christian culture. I believe the early commentators were right, or at least close to the truth. More specifically, the right foot of terra cotta is Jesus Himself. In the Incarnation, the Word took on flesh, took on clay, became as man, as fragile as a flower pot. He did this so that His own personal terracotta vessel could be broken on the cross, for us men and for our salvation. He did this so that in the Resurrection He could glorify it into incorruptibility.

The kingdoms of this world totter and fall, built on the cracked foundation of human frailty and sin. It is foolish to expect anything different.

This is the stone not made with human hands that has struck the feet of the statue. It is the terracotta Son of Man, Son of God, who has identified with us in our weakness, and glorified us in His resurrection. However, instead of dashing the kingdoms to pieces as He does in Daniel, the image from *Inferno* 14 emphasizes a different, though related, truth: not only is Jesus remaking the world, He is the stability of all things, even while the old remains. Let that sink in. He does not come to destroy only. He comes to make new. While kingdoms come and go, the world turns, and does so in His hands, under His authority, for His purposes of renewal and grace. The world rests, in both its temporal and its eternal aspects, on Christ the Solid Rock. Mankind, as represented by the statue as a whole, rests on the right foot, which is Christ, visibly apprehended in His terra cotta body, the Church; the left foot, the transient empires of men, at best plays only a supporting role.

Their transient nature is not at odds with the fact that empires, or civil governments more generally, are necessary and inescapable realities. God has created this world to be governed on different levels and in different spheres through different mid-level-management-type figures. Though all begins and ends in Christ, He works through temporary

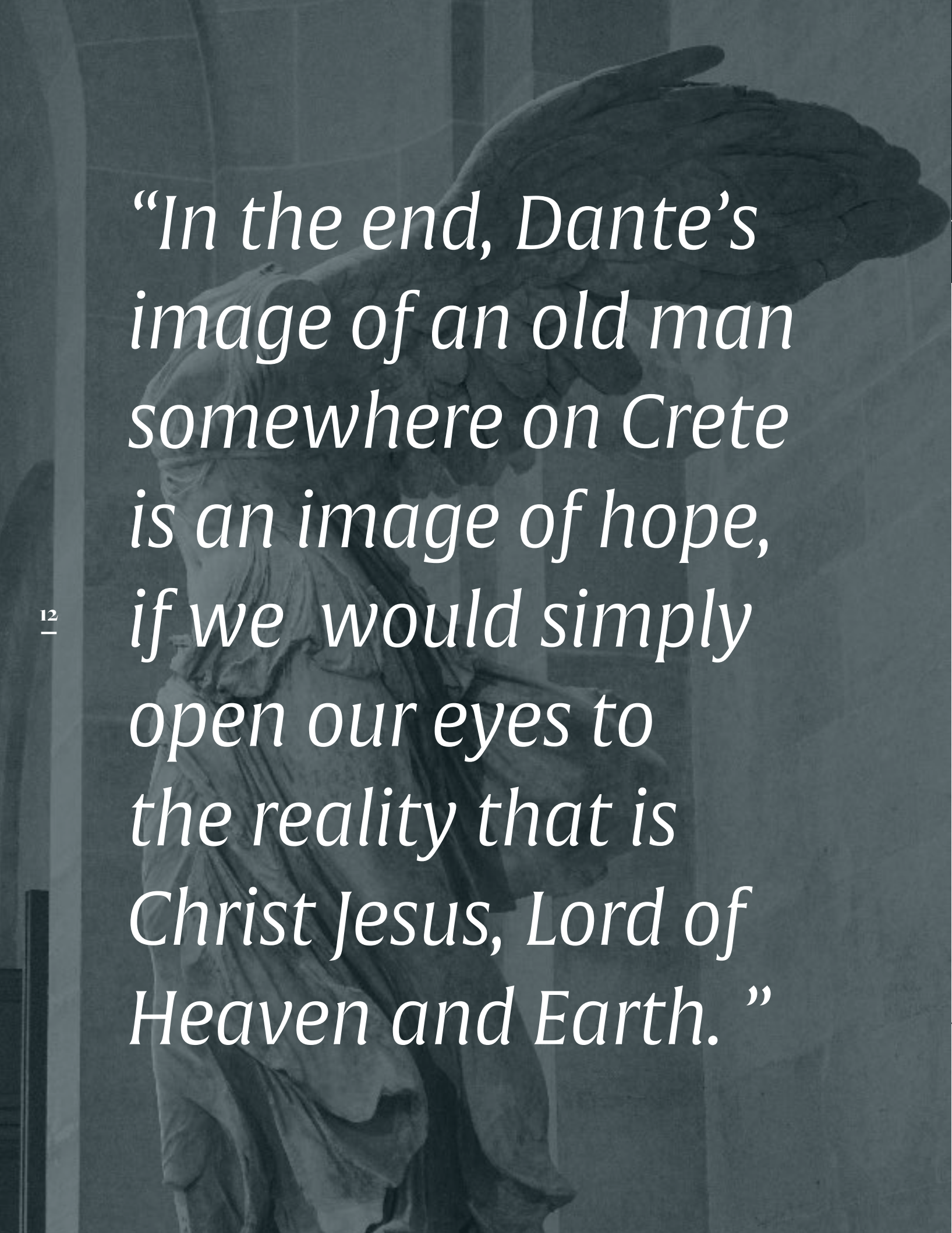
and human structures and institutions. In short, the right foot uses the left for His good purposes. But this means the left foot ought never to forget its reliance on the right. In his treatise on the nature and necessity of empire, *De Monarchia*, Dante concludes with these striking words:

> *Wherefore let Caesar honor Peter as a first-born son should honor his father, so that, refulgent with the light of paternal grace, he may illumine with greater radiance the earthly sphere over which he has been set by Him who alone is Ruler of all things spiritual and temporal.*

Caesar, representing civil government, and Peter, representing the Church, exist in different spheres, and are equally authorized by Christ to do their different duties, but they do not carry the same weight. Temporal matters rest, necessarily, on eternal ones. As such, the state ought to rest, in spirit, on the teachings and exhortations of the Church. Dante is not saying the Church has direct authority in civil matters. That is not her sphere. However, she does have direct authority over men's souls, out of which the systems of government arise. In this way, Caesar ought to show reverence to Peter, as a first born son to his father. For the state, "illumined by the light of paternal grace," ought to point to Christ in its governance and ministrations. The fact that the state doesn't do this, is simply a consequence of that large and tearful crack, running through the hearts of mankind.

Despite unbelieving man's rejection of Christ as King, the statue remains standing because of its foundation, which is Christ and Christ alone. Caesar owes Peter his reverence, not the other way around. Therefore, Christians need to stop living in fear of Caesar. The Church has real-time authority to speak truth and hope and good news into this world, no matter the very real hatred that message will provoke. Yes, we are terracotta. We are the broken earthenware vessels Jesus united Himself too. But even in our fragility, even in our brokenness, even though we fail almost as often as secular man to fully acknowledge the supremacy of Christ in this present world, both in things visible and invisible — even though these things are true, the body of Christ has been given this indestructible truth: Jesus Christ is at work in us for the building and expansion of an already established Kingdom that cannot be undone or replaced. In the end, Dante's image of an old man somewhere on Crete is an image of hope, if we would simply open our eyes to the reality that is Christ Jesus, Lord of Heaven and Earth. He is the stability of our times (Isaiah 33:6); He owns the kingdoms of this earth (Revelation 11:15); all things rest in Him (Colossians 1:16-17). We respect Caesar, and render to him those things that are his. But we do not fear him. We do not give him more power than is rightfully his. We must see him in relationship to his betters, to the very source of his own limited and given authority — that is, to Christ Himself.

Joe Carlson (MA Humanities) lives in the DFW metroplex with his wife and son. He received his BA at New St Andrews College, and his MA at the University of Dallas, where he is currently finishing up his doctorate. He has managed a chain of coffee shops, published (micro) epic poetry, co-pastored a church, helped create and staff a university campus ministry, written for the Salvo Magazine blog, and taught many different kinds of classes over the years. He is coming out with a new verse translation of the *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno*, Summer 2022; *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, Summer 2023), through Roman Roads Press, complete with Reader's Guides, as well as an interlinear edition.



“In the end, Dante’s image of an old man somewhere on Crete is an image of hope, if we would simply open our eyes to the reality that is Christ Jesus, Lord of Heaven and Earth. ”

Recovering the Lost Transcendentals: Beyond Truth, Goodness, and Beauty

Nicholas C. DiDonato, *Delaware Valley Classical School*

Truth, Goodness, Beauty. Again and again these three transcendentals are reiterated to every classical educator's mind. And rightly so. The larger culture only continues to drift farther away from the transcendentals, and the sooner these are recovered, the better. Yet, in our rush to preserve the riches of the Western tradition, we have overlooked the transcendentals to be found alongside Truth, Goodness, and Beauty—namely, Being, Unity, Sameness, Difference, Rest, and Motion among others.[1] But before we understand these "lost transcendentals," we must first consider the definition of what a "transcendental" is, and then demonstrate how all the aforementioned meet that criteria. Only when we've established this can we finally move to consider how we might apply some of the "lost transcendentals" to our classical classrooms.

What exactly is a "transcendental?" A "transcendental" (1) is a universal or Form in which any possible created being must participate to some degree in order to be at all (it "transcends" any particular entity), and (2) that manifests "divine reality in the cosmos."[2] Simply put, a transcendental is God's presence in the creation. It represents God in and through each and every creature.[3] Of course, to be participated in by every creature, a transcendental cannot itself be a particular but must be a universal or Form. Classically, the Forms are the content of God's own Intellect. Contrary to popular misconceptions, Forms are not, for example, the "ideal couch" or "perfect couch," but the fullness of all the reality of all couches (to stick with this example) across time and place in one undifferentiated unity. As such, they can be known only by the intellect (nous), not by the senses.

As Plato argued, Form is what truly is (in this case, the Form Couch) rather than the many particular instances of it (the infinite possibilities of what a couch could be).[4] Each Form is one unity, a unity which the intellect can see, but to the senses appears as many.[5] Thus, when speaking of the transcendental Truth Itself, one does not mean some particular "ideal truth," but the fullness of Truth in one unconfused, undifferentiated unity, which is, well, the Truth. The senses can detect various truths, but only the intellect can know the Truth Itself. In short, a transcendental is a Form (meaning it is the fullness thereof), a fullness such that is required for any creature to exist,

1. This essay does not attempt to recover all of the lost transcendentals, but merely to show how some of the most common ones in the Western canon have been neglected as of late. For example, Justice, understood classically as "right ordering" (see Plato, *Republic*, IV, 433c-444a, and Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, VIII.7-9), meets the criteria for being a transcendental. So too could Love, as that which harmonizes (see Plato, *Symposium*, 206a-d, 211e, and Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, IV.7, 10-17).

2. Stephen R. Turley, *Awakening Wonder: A Classical Guide to Truth, Goodness, and Beauty* (Camp Hill, PA: Classical Academic Press, 2014), 3. See also Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, II.7.

3. Ibid., 105. See also Ibid., 18. For connection between the Incarnation and the transcendentals, see Ibid., 38 and 56.

4. Plato, *Republic*, VI, 494a, 507b.

5. Plato, *Republic*, V, 476a.

and such that it makes God manifest. With "transcendental" defined, let's consider how Being, Unity, Sameness, Difference, Rest, and Motion are properly transcendentals.[6]

First, "Being" is, by definition, a transcendental, because without Being, no thing could exist. Every being shows forth Being Itself simply in virtue of being at all. Further, Being Itself is not only a manifestation of God, but for various theologians in the Western tradition (e.g., Thomas Aquinas[7]) the highest and most proper name for God. Going back at least as far as Plato[8], Being and Truth have been intimately intertwined, for a being has Truth precisely insofar as it exists and vice-versa. Hence, for Thomas Aquinas, Being and Truth are convertible.[9] If Truth is a transcendental, so must be Being.

Thus, when speaking of the transcendental Truth Itself, one does not mean some particular "ideal truth," but the fullness of Truth in one unconfused, undifferentiated unity, which is, well, the Truth.

Second is "Unity" (or Oneness). Unity is a transcendental[10], for no being could exist without also being one thing. As third century philosopher Plotinus argued, "It is in virtue of unity that beings are beings.... What could exist at all except as one thing? Deprived of unity, a thing ceases to be what it is called. No army unless as a unity, a chorus, a flock, must be one thing. Even a house and a ship demand unity: one house, one ship. [With] unity gone, neither remains. Thus even continuous magnitudes could not exist without an inherent unity: break them apart and their very being is altered in the measure of the breach of unity."[11] Following Plato's Parmenides, Plotinus goes so far as to argue that Being Itself depends on Unity, and thus God transcends even Being (hence he calls God "the One").[12] As such, God is Unity as the precondition for all Being, upon which all beings depend in order to exist at all.[13]

Third, and similarly, "Sameness" applies to all things, for each thing must be the same as itself. Further, Plato argues that Sameness is beyond the senses because the knowledge that anything is the same as itself or similar to any other thing comes from the intellect comparing two (or more) sensations rather than from the senses themselves.[14] While Sameness

6. The reason for these six in particular is that Being and Unity are transcendentals for Thomas Aquinas, while Being, Sameness, Difference, Rest, and Motion were interpreted by the Medievals as the "Platonic Genera." In other words, they are historically significant.
7. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q13, A11.
8. Plato, *The Republic*, V, 477a.
9. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q16, A3.
10. See Turley, 44f, for his discussion on the transcendentals of Thomas Aquinas, among which is Unity.
11. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.9.1.
12. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.9.2. See also Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, II.4.
13. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 5.5.4. This is also why Plotinus says that God is the measure of being.
14. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 185a-c.

clearly meets the first criterion for being a transcendental, how does it meet the second? How does it reveal God? Pseudo-Dionysius explains:

> *God is called the same as everlasting beyond every manner of being, incontrovertible, abiding in* [*Himself*]*, always the same and in the same way, presencing similarly to all, steadfastly and purely established in* [*Himself*] *and by* [*Himself*]*... unchanged, inflexible, unswerving unalterable... self complete be-ing, be-ing the same in* [*Himself*]*... abundance and cause of identity.*[15]

In simple terms, God is Sameness Itself because God is the ground and foundation of all self-identity. Each thing is the same as itself, which is but a pale reflection of and participation in God's own self-sameness.

Fourth, everything has "Difference," something argues Plato by showing how a thing's "Oneness" is different than its "Being." Even if, Plato suggests, there were only Parmenides's idea of the "One Being," there would still be Difference (i.e., the difference between its Oneness and Being).[16] Since it has already been established that every being participates in Being, Unity, and Sameness, and since it also has been granted that every being also participates in Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, every being must also participate in Difference because these transcendentals differ from each other.[17] Regarding Difference as a manifestation of God, David Bentley Hart rightly argues that one of the key Christian insights against the pagan Platonists was that Difference must be as participatory as Unity and Sameness, otherwise to be a creature is to be estranged from God.[18] Lack of a distinctly Christian understanding of Difference leads to the destruction of what theologians call "particularity." As Hart puts it, "if the truth of all things is a principle in which they are grounded and by which they are simultaneously negated, then one can draw near to the fullness of truth only through a certain annihilation of particularity... progressively eliminating ... all that lies between [God] and the noetic self."[19]

Lastly, how are "Rest" and "Motion" transcendentals? How can polar opposites both apply to all creatures and make present divine reality? As before, Pseudo-Dionysius shows the way:

> *What are we to say concerning the divine rest or seat? What else but that God remains* [*Himself*] *in* [*Himself*]*, abidingly and irrevocably fixed in an unmoved sameness, that* [*He*] *is complacently founded beyond, and acts in the same way and according to the same. ... That which is beyond every seat and rest is cause of the seating and rest of all;* [*He*] *has contained all in* [*Himself*] *such that they are constantly protected by the stability of their proper goods.* [20]

15. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, trans. John D. Jones (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011), IX.4. Jones's translation distinguishes the various kinds of "to be" verbs in Greek; in the present quotation, "be-ing" translates the participle.

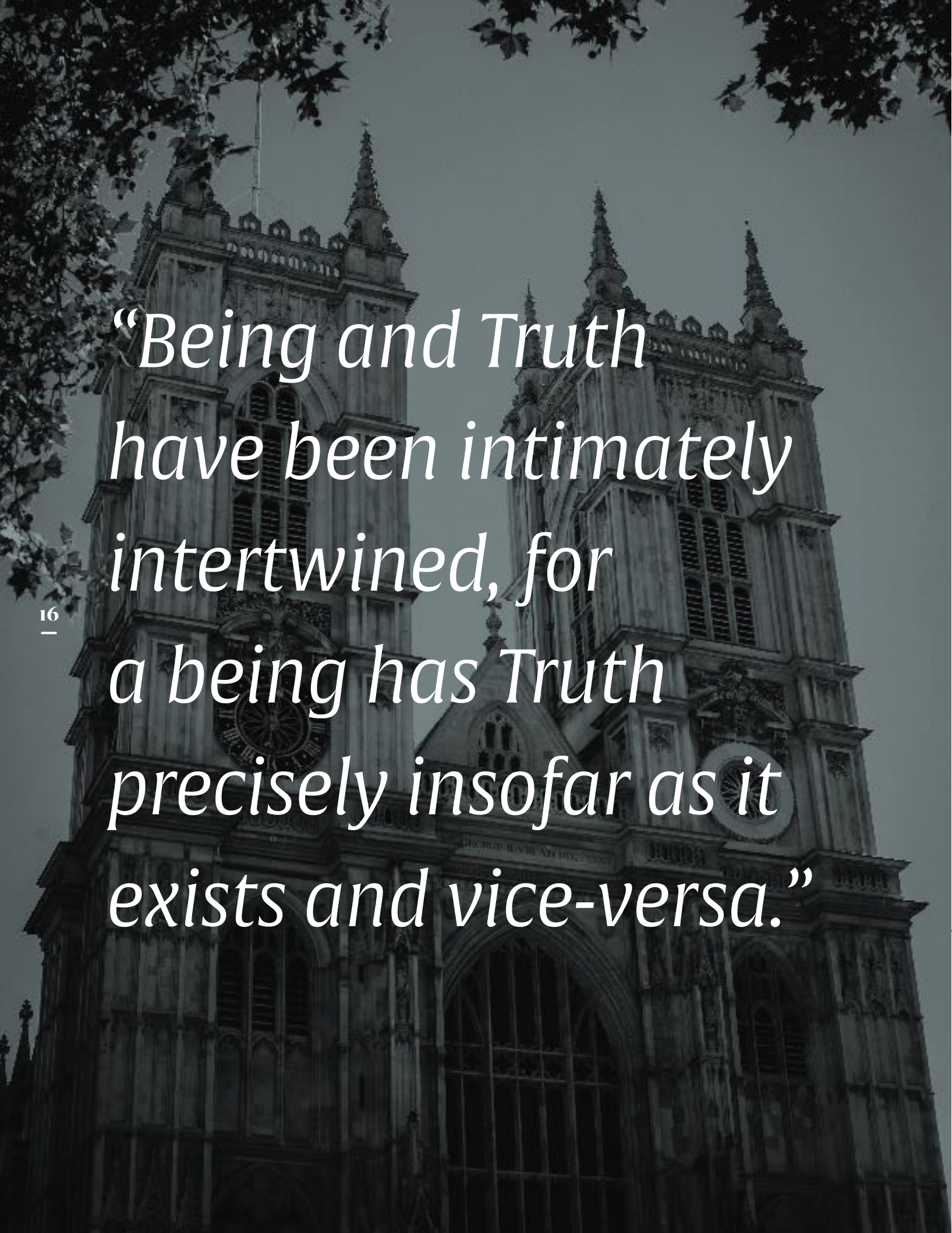
16. Plato, *Parmenides*, 142b-c.

17. Of course, exactly how—whether a conceptual, formal, or modal distinction—is a matter of debate beyond the scope of this essay. Even if one were to refute Plato's argument, and insist on a conceptual distinction in all cases, God as Trinity puts Difference at the center of the Godhead. See Klaus Hemmerle, *Theses towards a Trinitarian Ontology*, trans. Stephen Churchyard (Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press, 2020), 50f, where the very meaning of Being, which is *agapē* (35), is rooted in the immanent Trinity. In other words, Being reflects and participates in *Trinitarian Difference*.

18. David Bentley Hart, "The Hidden and the Manifest: Metaphysics after Nicaea," reprinted in *The Hidden and the Manifest: Essays in Theology and Metaphysics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 145f.

19. Ibid., 146. See also Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, II.5 and IX.5.

20. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, IX.8.



“Being and Truth have been intimately intertwined, for a being has Truth precisely insofar as it exists and vice-versa.”

Similar to how all creatures participate in Sameness, they also all participate in Rest as what is immovably the same and stable; and this rest upon which all creatures depend, in Whom all are protected and find their "proper goods," is none other than God. All creatures, then, indeed participate in Rest, which is a manifestation of divine reality, and therefore Rest is a transcendental.

As for Motion, its candidacy for being a transcendental is more controversial, since even Pseudo-Dionysius warns that we must understand God as Motion in a way appropriate to Him, and not in a way that implies *change*.[21] He writes: "God leads and conserves all in being, provides for all in every manner, and is present to all by the unbounded encompassing of all and by [His] providential processions and activities in all."[22] Motion too is a manifestation of divine reality because it is God leading all beings and conserving all beings in being—hence He is "present to all." All creatures are in motion in the sense of moving towards their telos, Who is God Himself, specifically, God as the Good and Beautiful Itself, Who is the yearning of all beings' desire (eros).[23] Maximus the Confessor argued that all beings are in motion insofar as their appetites have not found what they ultimately desire,[24] because they have not found what is by nature desirable in itself: the Beautiful Itself,[25] Who is God, the beginning (or principle—archē in Greek) and end (telos) of all beings.[26] Or, in Aristotelian terms, as Thomas Aquinas argued, God is the ultimate final cause,[27] and the only One who can constitute our happiness.[28] Regardless of expression, Motion is a transcendental because all beings participate in Motion as they move toward their telos—God—and Who is Motion Itself. This is not at all to suggest there is change in the Godhead, but that Motion conserves all beings and leads them to Himself as their telos. If Goodness and Beauty are transcendentals, so must be Motion.

Having demonstrated that Being, Unity, Sameness, Difference, Rest, and Motion equally qualify as transcendentals alongside Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, let us consider how these transcendentals apply to the classical classroom.

Teachers, writes Dr. Stephen Turley, must reveal the nature of divine reality to students in all that they teach, especially through beauty: "Aesthetic theory can help us to think through and experience how seemingly ordinary things can transform into extraordinary realities."[29] Beauty continues to be key, but now, with an expanded understanding of the transcendentals, more nuances and depths of beauty can be explored. Traditionally, Beauty is the fullness of Being,[30] the desire for complete and perfect Unity, which entails each being having Sameness

21. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, IX.9.

22. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, IX.9. "Procession" here is being used in a technical Platonic sense of how an effect is differentiated from its cause (as opposed to "abiding" and "return").

23. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Divine Names*, IV.7.

24. Maximus the Confessor, *The Ambigua*, 7.3.

25. Maximus the Confessor, *The Ambigua*, 7.5.

26. Maximus the Confessor, *The Ambigua*, 7.9-10.

27. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q44, A4.

28. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q2, A8. See also I-II, Q3, A8.

29. Turley, 88.

30. Plotinus, Enneads, 1.6.

and Rest within itself, but also Motion towards that Unity while preserving the Difference between the transcendentals within itself and between itself and other beings. Far from being separate from Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, the six argued for here complement and supplement them, opening new ways to encounter them in the classroom.

For instance, artwork in a classroom can be arranged to evoke Motion by "pointing" to a key part of the classroom (where the Motion finds Rest), such as a lectern, Harkness table, or bookshelf. Teachers can demonstrate Sameness and Difference in any subject they teach: each unit or sub-unit is the Same as itself and as an instance of that subject (e.g., theology, mathematics, literature), yet is Different from all others instances which gives it its unique particularity. This may seem obvious, but what is easily missed is how this interplay between Sameness and Difference is a manifestation of God. Finally, academics aside, teachers and students alike need reminders that every being, in school or out, participates in and shows forth Being and Unity. The difficulty with applying Being and Unity is that they are simultaneously abstract and yet immediately evident; they apply to literally everything, which, on the one hand, allows for everything to be an occasion for wonder, but on the other, allows us all-too-easily to forget them and go about our mundane routines.

Turley rightly notes that the triad of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty comes not from Plato, the Ancients, or the Medievals, but from the Renaissance via Marsilio Ficino.[31] It is not a classical triad—one that is directly ad fontes—but an early modern synthesis of Plato's thought. And an excellent one at that! However, this triad omits other transcendentals such as Being, Unity, Sameness, Difference, Rest, and Motion. Indeed, to this list could be added Justice and Love.[32] Each of these is a universal or Form which (1) any possible created being must participate in to some degree, and (2) manifests God. As classical educators, we should strive not just to emulate thinkers of the Renaissance, but to strive for a classical education that is truly classical.

Nicholas C. DiDonato, Ph.D, teaches history and theology at Delaware Valley Classical School. He has previously published in *Theology & Science*, appeared on *Reason & Theology*, and presented at the ACCS annual conference. His research focuses on the intersection of theology, metaphysics, and philosophy of science.

31. Turley, 13.
32. See n1 above.

On Calendars and Culture: *Angels in the Architecture of Time*

Devin O'Donnell, *The Oaks Classical Christian Academy*

When we first meet T. S. Eliot's ironic antihero, J. Alfredo Prufrock, he invites us into a modern dystopia, his own personal "inferno," where we go "through certain half-deserted streets," avoiding the "yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes."[1] It is an urban hellscape that some may feel they recognize, a place "Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels / And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells." Such is the existential angst of modern man living under the secular sun, when "the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table." In such a state, perhaps all Prufrock needed was a glimpse at an older world with a sacred order, where he could have seen "angels in the architecture / Spinning in infinity."[2] Perhaps then, he might have exclaimed along with Paul Simon, "Amen and Hallelujah!"

We don't have angels in the architecture anymore, and this is perhaps the simplest way to illustrate philosopher Charles Taylor's concept of "immanent frame."[3] In modern secular life, the conditions for belief in the transcendent have eroded, and the metaphysical stanchion cables have snapped. Churches are big boxes and our government buildings have shallow and unadorned facades. No doric columns. No gargoyled gutters to carry the rains away, "Making a thrift of the throats of hell."[4] Not even the hallowed stories of heroic men carved in stone to elevate man above the professional business of work. Just the straight angels of modern architecture, notes without chords, lines that come to ends without closure.

In contrast to this, angels were in the architecture of a once-upon-a-time Christian civilization. The medieval stone mason, illiterate as he may have been, would have still been fully aware of what Phillip Rieff calls a "sacred order."[5] Those medieval buildings, which even today continue to express the highest confluence of beauty and significance, were, as G. K. Chesterton puts it,

> *Wilder than all that a tongue can utter,*
> *Wiser than all that is told in words,*
> *The wings of stone of the soaring gutter*
> *Fly out and follow the flight of the birds;*
> *The rush and rout of the angel wars*
> *Stand out above the astounded street,*
> *Where we flung our gutters against the stars*
> *For a sign that the first and the last shall meet.*[6]

But the presence of beauty is not merely the only difference between our buildings today and those of the past. Rather, it is what that beauty points to that matters most, the significance

1. T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *The Complete Poems and Plays* (New York, Harcourt Brace & Co: 1980) 3.
2. Paul Simon, "You Can Call Me Al," *Graceland*.
3. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 542.
4. G. K. Chesterton, "For Four Guilds: The Stone Masons," *The Ballad of St. Barbara and Other Verses*.
5. Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020) 74.
6. Ibid.

and content of its architectural form. There was once a world where the dominant sacred order, which could be glimpsed in all aspects of culture, was a Christian one.

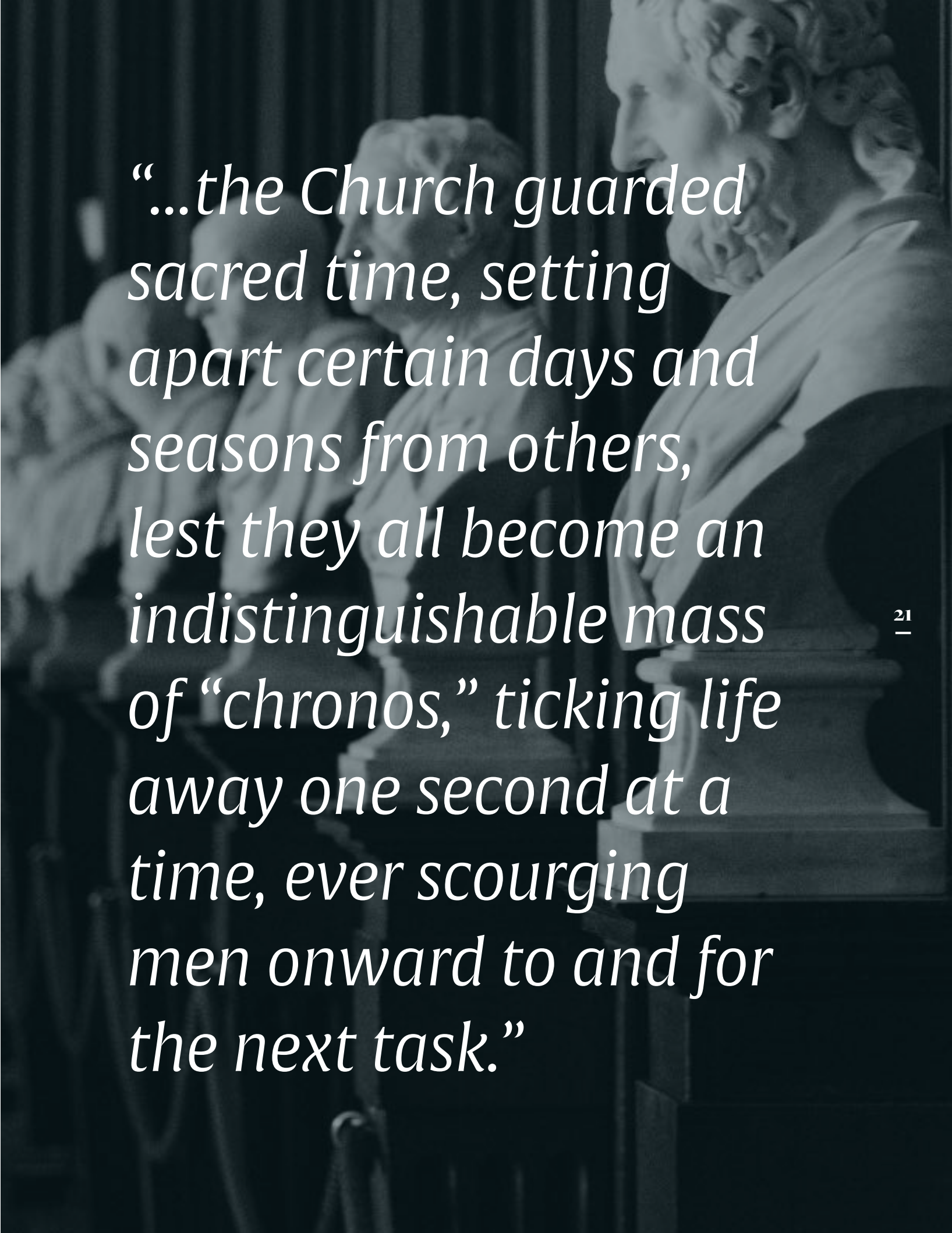
The same goes for time. Just as one could see and experience the "sacred space" of a cathedral or a university library, so one could also encounter the "sacred time" of the liturgical calendar. The sacred order that would cause masons to carve men and angels into the facade of their buildings was the same organizing principle (*archē*) that animated the Church (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant) to carve out of the chronos of quantitative time, the qualitative and sacred time (*kairos*) that enriches the life of man, the substance of which are worship, contemplation, and festivity. That principle, that point of reference, for the Christian civilization was the life of Christ. Consider what some have called Paul's Colossian hymn

> *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*
>
> (*Col. 1: 16-18*)

When the risen Christ made it clear that all authority on heaven and on earth had been given to him (Matthew 28:18), the Church responded as soon as it was corporately able with a new calendar. And in so doing, the Church guarded sacred time, setting apart certain days and seasons from others, lest they all become an indistinguishable mass of "chronos," ticking life away one second at a time, ever scourging men onward to and for the next task.

Consider, for instance, the name given to the beginning term for Oxford. It is not "Autumn Term" or "Fall Term." Rather, it is called "Michaelmas" (pronounced "mickelmas" with a short "i"). Even in our secular age, the name of a Christian feast day still marks the time when students will begin their studies at several universities in the UK. What does this mean? It means that we can glimpse the ghosts of a Christian sacred order still haunting the halls of our social order. It means that we once believed in things, to borrow language from the Nicene Creed, "visible and invisible." It means that angels were carved not only in the architecture of space but also in the architecture of time.

On the Western liturgical calendar, September 29th marks the holiday traditionally known as the feast of "St. Michael and All Angels." Michael, of course, is the warring angel, but as "herald" and messenger of God, Milton also has him stand in as Adam's tutor in *Paradise Lost*. Why should we remember angels? The answer should be obvious, given that we live in a highly secularized and materialistic age. Angels are powerful beings who could unmake each of us with a glance. (Think of the destruction of Sennacherib.) Michaelmas reminds of something very important, and the fact that this day is marked on the Church Calendar illustrates no mere mystery cult. As Christians, we believe in the "visibilium omnium et



"...the Church guarded sacred time, setting apart certain days and seasons from others, lest they all become an indistinguishable mass of "chronos," ticking life away one second at a time, ever scourging men onward to and for the next task."

invisibilium." We believe that reality comprises both seen and unseen, and the reality we inhabit is shared with other beings that are "super" natural. Some of those beings work on behalf of God for our good, fighting against those others who do not. Our world is crowded with angels and demons, cherubim and seraphim hurrying without haste to do the Lord's bidding. Shakespeare's Hamlet says, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (I.v.187). That philosophy for us is materialism, and it is the zeitgeist that poisons our natural and healthy credulity.

Make no mistake, there will be a calendar. There will be celebrations and feasts that shape desire. As "Pride" months and Marxists holidays abound, they point to a different sacred order—one that is the antithesis of what we are seeking to recover and cultivate in our schools, families, and churches. Michaelmas is one of many small ways to counter that. In terms of Charles Taylor, a holiday like Michaelmas reinforces a Christian "social imaginary,"[7] reorienting students and teachers, administrators and parents back to the life of Christ and His Kingdom. It is the small dose of an antidote against the pestilential air of modernity, which looks at Reality with the sideways glance of suspicion and is out of tune with the festal dimensions of the world. As classical educators *in loco parentis*, we cannot merely guard the prohibitions and taboos of our sacred order, important as this may be. We must also "keep the feast," as Paul enjoins, along with other feasts so that we might overcome the utilitarian ethic of life under the sun. By attending to the Church's calendar, we recalibrate the soul's proper doxological response to the world God made, cultivating in our school community the ceremonial capacity that makes a Christian culture.

Perhaps then may the average Prufrock today, who measures out his life with "coffee spoons," look upon Reality without boredom and receive it as a gift. Perhaps he might be so uplifted as to say, "Amen and Hallelujah!" to the angels in the architecture of time.

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7. Talyor, 171.

Teaching in the Great Works, and Being Taught By Them[1]

Danielle Dillenschneider, *Bayshore Christian School*

Even in the classical Christian school community, modern teachers are often plagued with trivial matters that obscure the goal of classical Christian education: soul formation. It is easy to lose sight of the vision and wonder, "What is a great classical Christian teacher even like—and could I ever become one?" As classical Christian teachers refine their craft, they should contemplate the great teachers found in the very works they teach. By examining the works of Plato, Augustine, Boethius, and Dante, teachers will not only find inspiration for their classrooms but also—and this is of equal importance—consolation in their trials. How strange that we have life breathed into us by the dead, and how apt that we are soothed when we sit with those who have gone before us. When we teach the great teachers, we will find that they were students and teachers not unlike us. We still have much to learn.

Plato: A Guide to Seeking the Truth in the form of Dialogue

Plato used his famous teacher, Socrates, as his mouthpiece throughout his dialogues.[2] In *The Last Days of Socrates*, he painted Socrates as a figure who questioned people into states of "aporia", or complete and total puzzlement. There are days I wish I could welcome a snarky old Socrates into my room to ask some self-assured teenagers some questions; yet even on the page, he still manages to puzzle them well enough.

While Socrates didn't offer an actual answer to his own questions in *Euthyphro* nor win any favor through his *Apology*, he did something more interesting that we should do as teachers: he questioned commonly held cultural assumptions and he freely admitted what he did not know. Do you find yourself shying away from what is contentious or uncertain? Take a page from Plato's playbook and assert yourself as a gadfly to your students and spur them out of their media-induced stupor. Remember also that when Plato has his teacher venture beyond merely stirring up confusion to actually begin explaining his ideas, he has Socrates use illustrations like images, allegories, and myths. Whether he is building a city with words (*Republic* Books II-V), venturing out of a cave (*Republic* Book VII), or imagining the afterlife (*Republic* Book X), Socrates is giving his "students" an illustration to deepen their understanding. These illustrations shape our imagination and have staying power.

We may find that when we imitate Socrates, we need some consolation. Some of our students, like his, may be led into and through a state of aporia (or confusion), yet some will settle for apathy. I often sit with the warnings

1. This paper is a synthesis of notes on a workshop for Repairing the Ruins 2022, the ACCS national conference.

2. I also recommend the Great Courses series, Masters of Greek Thought, by Robert C. Bartlett. These lectures help me understand the wider context and affirm for me that, yes, even I can understand Greek philosophy.

that Socrates gives Euthyphro at the end of the dialogue, and I think on the reception of the freed man upon his return to the cave. The bearers of truth are not always well received, as even our Gospels note.

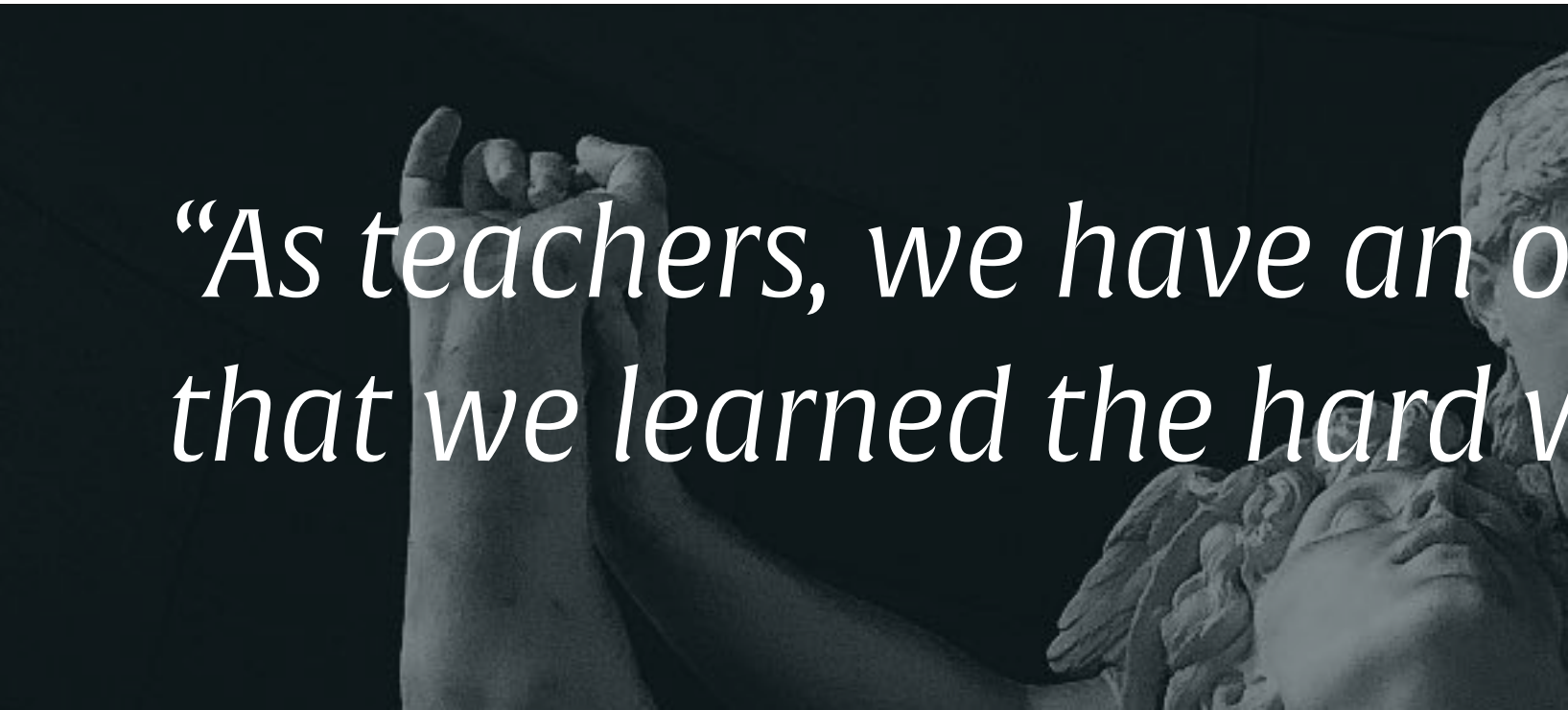
As you read and research these works for yourself, Socrates would likely challenge you to consider questions that pertain to your role as an educator. Ask yourself: "Do I think I have this all figured out? What are my questions about life? Am I seeking truth with the same zeal as this pagan groping dimly for it?" These questions are especially pertinent when you hit an impasse with your teaching. Consider, for instance, the disorienting moment when you realize that you've been on autopilot in your approach to a particular work or lesson, because you happened to stumble upon a footnote that undid all your settled opinions about the text you've been teaching for years. Such an experience is called "aporia," a feeling that you have no obvious answer, no clear path forward. Socrates has paid you a visit, and you are at an intellectual impasse. While this is not necessarily comfortable, it is also not bad. At this point, it's helpful to take your questions to others who want to seek the answers with you.[3]

Augustine and the Restless Hearts Club Band

Nothing will call you out quite like reading Augustine's *Confessions*. Augustine's words act like a mirror to the student and teacher alike. Throughout his movements and restlessness, he was always pursuing more. When I sit with Augustine's words that "our hearts are restless until we find rest in you, oh God", I recognize the difficulty of stillness in my own life as a teacher (*Confessions* Book I).

As Augustine recalls his early life as a student, he looks back on his time in school and remembers the fear he had of his teachers. Even for all their authoritarian veneer, he saw

3. "Aporia" is also the name of a podcast where Tim Dernlan and others discuss our moments of disorientation and discovery.



through to their ambition for worldly gain, their hypocrisy, and their lack of purpose (*Confessions* Book II). Augustine points this out, though, not simply to shame his teachers. Augustine simply grows up to become like his teachers: eager to excel in the world and consumed by worldly accomplishments. Even more, his teachers, his parents, and the rest of his culture turned a blind eye to the lust that consumed him. It didn't matter: he was a top student (*Confessions* Book III).

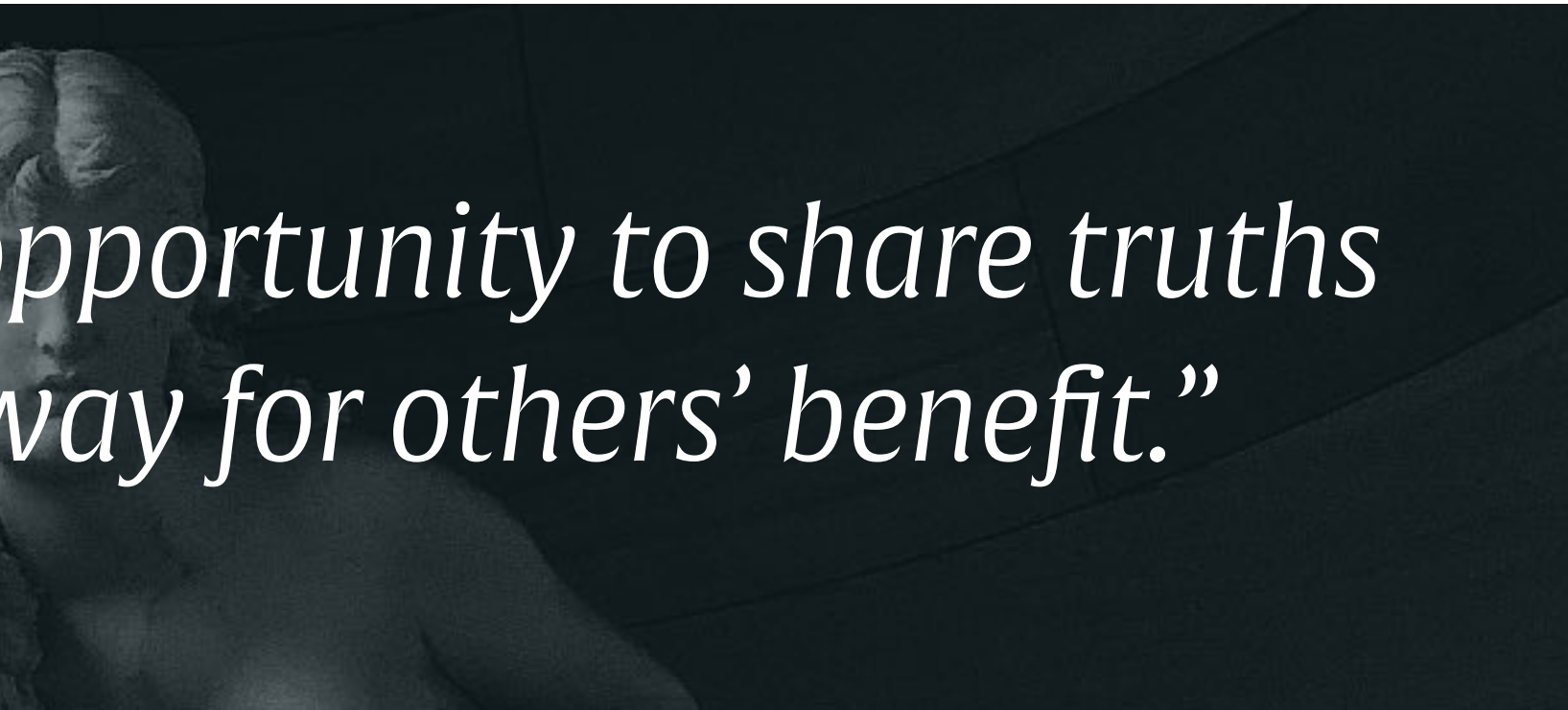
Augustine's words breathe into life more questions: "What do my students see that motivates me? What if my students become like me? Are the students only good in my eyes because of their grades? Do my students want to live the way that the media and popular culture encourages them to? How am I actively challenging their desires, calling them to reorder their loves?"

Now if you haven't read all of Augustine's *Confessions* already, shame on you. No judgment, but really–go ahead and start your journey through it. No need to rush it, just soak in the beauty of the language and images. Sheed's translation and James K.A. Smith's *On The Road with Saint Augustine* will make fine traveling companions for you. If you wish to be a classical Christian teacher, you can't do better than read all of Augustine's *Confessions*.

Boethius, and the Allegorical Admonishments of a Wise Lady

If only we could embody wisdom itself, then we could be good teachers, right? Well, that might be a long shot for us, but it is essentially the premise of *The Consolation of Philosophy*: Lady Philosophy, the embodiment of the loving study of wisdom, comes to confront and console her former student Boethius (Book I).

When we meet Boethius's character at the beginning of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, he is distracted and in despair. His life is ruined, and he has seemingly forgotten all that he has learned (Book II). When I read this, it gives me pause to think more about the condition of my



own students. Perhaps our students are going through a tough time with their family, or maybe they have just come back from a break and it is too early in the morning. Still, we must remember that our students are more distracted, despairing, and forgetful than we can see.

So how do we speak to the students who have become distracted? We can take notes from Lady Philosophy and channel her authoritative approach; rather than using punitive fear (like Augustine's teachers), she simply confronts in love. Boethius knew her, trusted her, and followed where Lady Philosophy led (Books III - V). Confronting and reminding students of what is true is the first part of imitating Lady Philosophy's instruction. From there, we imitate her by questioning our students. Test them: can they defend their ideas? Can they reason through the culture's half-baked claims? Through questions like these, Lady Philosophy is able to take Boethius from a state of utter ruin and despair to peacefulness and confidence in God.

Boethius trusted his teacher to wisely guide him for his good. While we may never grow to the wisdom, authority, and beneficence of Lady Philosophy, we can find life in studying this work. Reading *The Consolation of Philosophy* is a breath of fresh air in a world of frivolity and shallowness. Boethius's work is in some ways the easiest of the four works listed here to pick up and read in its entirety, so I heartily recommend reading it even if you do not teach it.[4]

Dante, Guided By One Who Has Himself Been Guided

Have you ever considered that teachers are like guides? While this metaphor for teaching is profitable for considering on its own, it also sheds light on teaching in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Midway through his life's journey, Dante the pilgrim was lost, unsure of what was Good or how to attain it (Canto 1). As a sort of "everyman", Dante the pilgrim is a character teachers and students could relate to. However, Dante's two main guides, Virgil and Beatrice, show us what it is like to teach. Virgil, the height of human reason, helps the pilgrim to observe, question, and think critically. As he takes Dante through Hell, he shows him the consequences of sin (see Inferno Cantos 5, 11, and 34). Virgil demonstrates teaching in its simplest and finest form.

Since reason and good teaching alone cannot get one to heaven, Virgil is not able to take Dante up all the way to Heaven. However, along the way up Mount Purgatory, Virgil is shown as a figure who holds a lamp of truth out for others' to see by (See Purgatorio Cantos 17, 21, 22). As teachers, we have an opportunity to share truths that we learned the hard way for others' benefit. Do we hide our lamps under our facades, or do we display them in meekness for others? Dante's Divine Comedy should challenge us to strip away our facades as we spur our striving students onward and upward.

In parallel to Virgil as Reason, Beatrice is like Contemplation–the sudden, undeserved arrival of insight into God's character and person. For all of the effort that comes with the classroom and the climbing of Virgil's reason, that effort alone cannot take a person to the presence of God. It is Beatrice, a symbol of God's grace, who transmits and transports Dante to God's presence as he gazes at her.

Grace initiates Dante's journey, seeks him out, and confronts him. What a challenge to

4. I also recommend Josh Gibbs's book How to Be Unlucky. Some of the personal narrative aside, his work offers some fantastic connections and juxtapositions to the contemporary world. I have been thankful for the insight Gibbs shares, especially helping teachers to compose questions for students to discuss.

our notions of grace. As a teacher, we should remember that grace is not mere permissiveness nor is it weakness; grace could very well cause a meltdown like Dante's (Purgatorio Cantos 30 & 33). However, it is through this arduous grace that the pilgrim is able to behold God (Paradiso Cantos 1-2, 10-12, 21, 24, and 33).

As I think about these guides, I wonder: "Do my courses call for rigorous reasoning and make space graceful contemplation? What practices do those in Purgatory partake in that would help me and my students order our loves? Do my courses allow for students to gaze, to contemplate? Am I, like Virgil, Beatrice, and so many others throughout the Comedy, content with being a humble nobody who directs others to God?"

Since I cannot improve upon what Dante already said so beautifully, I recommend reading all of Dante's Divine Comedy for yourself. This is good for all people to do at some point in their life, but for teachers it is perhaps the most essential. It is important to read the entirety of the Comedy. We too often stop with Inferno, the "sewer system" of Dante's Cosmology, as Dorothy Sayers puts it. Perhaps this is a commentary on our culture as well. Perhaps we are too comfortable simply being out of hell, but not diligent enough to pursue Heaven through the arduous summit of Purgatory.

When looking back at Dante's work, we see once more the great teachers of tradition. Boethius, Augustine, and Plato make their appearances in the Divine Comedy, yet for all the names we do recognize, there are about as many (if not more) that we don't know at all. While we may want to be great teachers, desiring rewards now, we also must remember that God works through particular, humble people, and promises us a far greater reward later. As I re-read these great works, I am inspired to ask anew: "How can I, with my own particular interactions and talents, show my students Christ?" This leads me to a prayer that God might open our eyes to help us see how these great works impart life, and not simply to those more poetical teachers who enjoy dusty books. The point is that the math teachers and the third grade teachers would find themselves planted amongst a long-standing tradition of teaching, ultimately rooted in Christ.[5]

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5. If, like Dante midway through life's journey, one does happen to feel lost or at an impasse, consider listening to the podcast, Aporia, where Dr. Tim Dernlan and I discuss the practical questions of classical Christian education with philosophical depth.

Socrates Cancelled: *A Charge to Classical Graduates*[1]

Louis Markos, *Houston Baptist University*

The first major victim of democratic cancel culture was silenced and then put to death in 399 BC. His name was Socrates, and he was 70 years old. The radical democracy that put Socrates on trial *did* have charges, but they were trumped up and false. They accused him of advocating foreign gods, making the weaker argument the stronger, and corrupting the youth of Athens. The sad irony is that Socrates was not only not guilty of these charges; it was his accusers who were guilty of the very sins that they projected onto Socrates.

Socrates may have technically advocated foreign gods but that is only because he was moving beyond the arbitrary gods of Homer to a single, holy God. His accusers, in contrast, had sunk below Homer's gods to worship absolute power and freedom. It was not Socrates who made the weaker argument the stronger but the sophists who believed that morality changed from one city state to the next. It was not Socrates who corrupted the youth, but the citizens of Athens who had given way to political expediency and lost the high ideals that they had defended during their Golden Age.

Of course, behind these three charges was the real charge. Socrates was an absolutist who believed in universal, cross-cultural standards of goodness, truth, beauty, and justice, while his accusers embraced moral, political, ethical, and aesthetic relativism. And behind that was simple envy, envy that Socrates was willing to stand his ground and uphold absolute standards of truth while they had given way to an anything-goes ethos.

It is sad and troubling to say, but today the same accusations that the radical Athenian democracy projected on to Socrates are being projected by the public-school establishment onto the growing number of private and public classical schools. And yet, as was the case with Socrates, it is the progressive, not the classical schools that are guilty of the same three charges.

It is they who have bowed the knee to the false gods of consumerism and egalitarianism. It is they who have radically redefined the meaning of such words as justice, sex, gender, marriage, violence, hate, and racism, and who have given up rational discourse to shout down anyone who disagrees with them. It is they who have corrupted the youth by abdicating their responsibility to instill absolute morals and virtues, and by enabling them to destroy their own God-given identity and personhood. Of course, like Socrates' virtue-signaling accusers, what they ultimately hate about classical schools is that they stand for absolute standards of goodness, truth, beauty, and justice and therefore expose the hollowness of their own relativism.

1. A shorter version of this essay was delivered as the commencement address for the graduation ceremony at Geneva Classical Academy in Lakeland, Florida.

Heavy is the Mantle of Socrates

To all of you who have graduated recently from a classical school or who will do so soon, I urge you to think carefully on Socrates and his fate. Although you need not fear the death penalty or prison, you must be prepared to face ridicule, slander, and willful misunderstanding from the wider culture. You are all recipients of a Socratic education, and not merely in the sense that your teachers engaged you in a vigorous dialogue grounded in a question-and-answer dialectic.

After the manner of Socrates and his pupil Plato, you have been taught to seek after and define words in their divine and absolute sense, to look past the many and competing small "t" truths to gaze upon truth with a capital "T." You have been taught, further, to transcend the fashionable, man-made values of your historical-cultural-social moment so that you may imitate—and shape your beliefs and behaviors against—God-ordained virtues that are true for all people at all times.

I say again that if you remain true to what you have been taught, you will likely become an object of public scorn. But do not fear. Even as Socrates was canceled by the radical democracy of Athens, he responded with a defense of himself and his mission that is perhaps more relevant today than at any other time in history.

The word for defense in Greek is *apologia* and thus we call the speech he gave before the Athenian jury, Socrates' *Apology*—or, because it was later written down by his pupil, Plato's *Apology*. Join me then as we draw from Socrates' defense a timeless and timely message with the power to spur us all on to virtuous living that honors and embodies goodness, truth, beauty, and justice.

I, Socrates: Defending The Wisdom of Humility

When Athens was strong and confident, she was happy to allow Socrates to accost citizens in the agora (or marketplace) and question them on the nature of virtue. For the last twenty years, however, as her civil war with Sparta had accelerated, Athens had abandoned her dedication to justice in favor of an ends-justifies-the-means ethos. Instead of a city on the hill devoted to ordered liberty and responsible freedom, she had morphed into a meddling superpower willing to do whatever it took to retain her dominance.

Well aware that she was no longer living up to her professed democratic ideals, Athens became less and less willing to have those ideals questioned by Socrates. But that did not stop Socrates. As he explains in the *Apology*, his mission had been given to him many decades earlier by the Oracle of Delphi, and he did not feel free to abandon it, even under the threat of death.

Socrates, the Oracle had decreed, was the wisest of men. Too humble to believe this decree, Socrates set out to disprove it by finding someone who was wiser than he. First, he went to the politicians, then to the poets, and finally to the craftsmen. But in every case, he discovered that, while these men claimed to possess wisdom, they in fact knew little to nothing. In contrast, Socrates knew and accepted that he did not possess wisdom. In that sense, he concluded, he was the wisest of men.

Unfortunately for Socrates, in the process of questioning those who claimed to be wise, he had publicly exposed their ignorance, building up for himself two generations of enemies who were committed to silencing him. Still, he did

not regret what the Oracle's decree had taught him about himself and his fellow citizens, nor did he regret the enmity that his philosophical journey had provoked against him:

> *. . . therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and the oracle that I was better off as I was. This investigation has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies, and I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and in this oracle he means to say that the wisdom of men is little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name as an illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing. (Benjamin Jowett translation)*[2]

Like Socrates, it is vital that you accept both your potential and your limits. According to Genesis, we are all made in God's image, and thus possess inherent value and worth, but are fallen and sinful. Although Socrates did not have access to the Old Testament, he understood this duality in our nature. It is that understanding that gave him the courage and the self-confidence to rise above the crowd and assert his uniqueness, while yet confessing to his weakness and ignorance.

Is Socrates then teaching us to be true to ourselves? Yes and no. He is certainly not teaching us that we can be anything we want to be, that we can shake our fist against God and claim the absolute right to remake ourselves in our own image. His acknowledgment that God only is wise and that his own wisdom is, in comparison, worthless gives the lie to the radical individualism of our own age that demands that society conform to our every passing whim. Still, Socrates does call on us to remain true to the calling on our lives and to fulfill the mission that has been appointed to us by God.

Socrates neither exalts nor denigrates himself, and we should strive to do the same. If you forget you are a glorious creature made in God's image, then you will allow yourself to be brainwashed and manipulated by every new fashionable value in our ever-shifting agora of ideas. If you forget you are a sinner with a fallen nature, then you will falsely convince yourself that you do not need to heed the wise counsel of others or adhere to the rules of proper conduct. You can do great things, but you are not invulnerable, and you are not immune from temptations to lust, greed, and pride. Do what you can to make this world a better place, but do not delude yourself into thinking you can build utopia.

You can do great things, but you are not invulnerable, and you are not immune from temptations to lust, greed, and pride.

2. Plato, *Apology*, 23a.

Although your calling from God will be different from that of Socrates, you do share something with him for which you are accountable: an education in philosophical truth and ethical virtue that knows the difference between first and second things and ordered and disordered desires. In the increasingly relativist world that we live in, where public schools often see it as their mission to deny absolute truth and promote disordered desire, you must insist that words and actions have real meanings and consequences.

Socrates knew the jury would let him off if he stopped insisting on true definitions for words and true standards for behavior. Nevertheless, he refused to abandon his mission:

> *Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet after my manner, and convincing him, saying: O my friend, why do you who are a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens, care so much about laying up the greatest amount of money and honor and reputation, and so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? Are you not ashamed of this? And if the person with whom I am arguing says: Yes, but I do care; I do not depart or let him go at once; I interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the greater, and overvaluing the less.*[3]

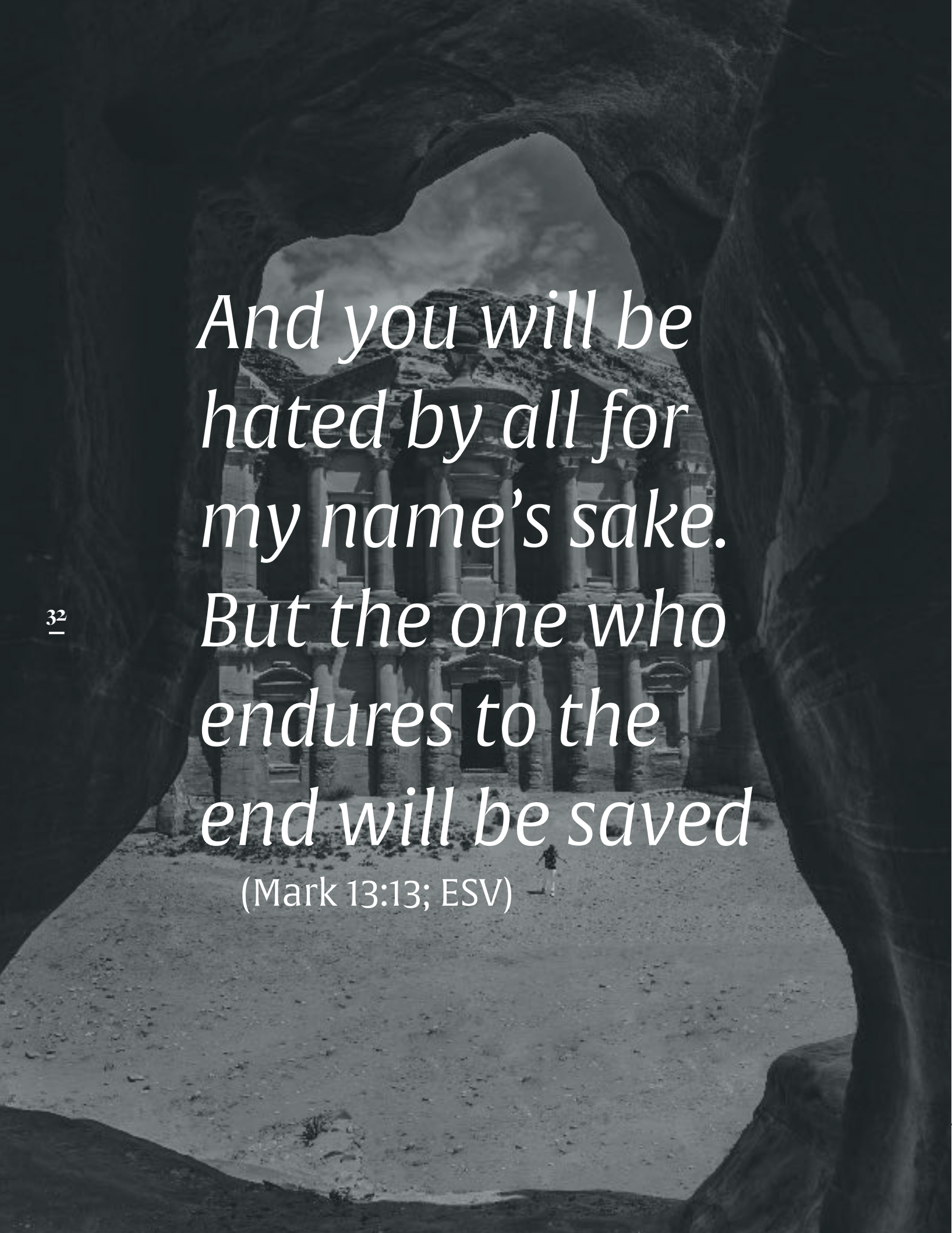
As graduates of a classical school who have been trained to seek after goodness, truth, and beauty and exhorted to live lives of virtue, it is vital that you do not abandon your post. Wherever you are led to live and whatever you are led to do, your calling should include a commitment to bear witness to truth and virtue. You should first call yourself and then call others to lift their eyes above the temporal quest for money, power, and influence and fix them instead on the eternal quest for faith, love, joy, and peace.

Later in the Apology, Socrates clarifies his mission by comparing himself to a gadfly attached to the state. Just as a gadfly stings a horse out of its lethargy and stupor, so Socrates sought to rouse up the lukewarm horse of state and compel it to stay true to its duty of instilling virtue and enterprise in its citizens. In the middle of the twentieth century, Martin Luther King, Jr. would consciously play the role of a gadfly whose stings forced America to awaken from her moral slumber and seek true justice for all people.

Knowing Thyself: You Too Shall be Socrates

In the tradition of Socrates and King, you too must challenge your fellow citizens to pursue wisdom and righteousness and to use their freedom to promote liberty rather than license, hope rather than hate, spiritual growth rather than selfish gain. Do not allow fear or apathy or false humility to cause you to abandon

3. *Apology*, 29d.



And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved

(Mark 13:13; ESV)

your post. Instead, be like Socrates, who made it clear that he would not stop his teaching even if it meant his death:

> *For if I tell you that this would be a disobedience to a divine command, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that daily to discourse about virtue, and of those other things about which you hear me examining myself and others, is the greatest good of man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living, you are still less likely to believe me.*[4]

The young people of your generation have been encouraged since they were children to engage in excessive introspection. Although such navel gazing may seem, on the surface, to line up with Socrates' bold claim that the unexamined life is not worth living, the two pursuits could not be more different.

The Socratic mandate to know thyself, like David's wish to have God search his heart and know his anxious thoughts (Psalm 139:23-24), is motivated by a desire for a kind of illumination that will align us with that which is good, true, and beautiful. Introspection, in contrast, allows its practitioners to free themselves from all guilt and shame and to lay the blame, instead, on their parents or teachers or pastors or society for why their lives are not what they would wish them to be.

Examine yourselves, then, but in such a way that you will be convicted rather than complacent, transformed rather than justified. Be lifelong learners, devoted to continual intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual growth. Keep reading and questioning and wrestling, but as one who desires final answers rather than one who has despaired of their existence. Above all, let your pursuit of wisdom and virtue provoke in you awe and wonder, never cynicism and skepticism.

Justin Martyr, who gave his life for Christ in the early second century, considered Socrates to be a martyr for monotheism. Our word martyr comes from a Greek verb that means "to bear witness," and Socrates was supremely one who bore witness to the truth, no matter the cost to himself. I do not fear that those of you who bear witness to the truth will be compelled to drink hemlock by the democratic government of America, but there will be resistance and there will be ridicule.

But be of good cheer. Have courage and faith and stick to your post. Remember the *Apology*, and, as you do, cling to the promise of Christ: "And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13; ESV).

Louis Markos, Professor in English and Scholar in Residence at Houston Baptist University, holds the Robert H. Ray Chair in Humanities; his 23 books include *From Achilles to Christ*, *The Myth Made Fact*, *From Plato to Christ*, and *Ancient Voices: An Insider's Look at Classical Greece*. He has delivered versions of this essay as a charge to the graduates of Geneva classical Christian school in Lakeland, FL, and Founders classical charter school in Lewisville, TX.

4. *Apology*, 37e-38

COMMONPLACE

Mathematica Cælestia: How Transcendental Ideas Animate Every Branch of Knowledge[1]

Boaz David Dernlan, *Bayshore Christian School*

Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are Transcendentals—by which I mean they are objective standards defined by, and found in, God alone. They are not determined by human feelings or perceptions. There are many Transcendental concepts, but these three form a kind of supreme trinity among the great ideas.

However, there is a trend in some places to subjectivize their definitions, a movement which has rooted itself deeply in some of even the most classical of schools. I have asked many people, both teachers and students, at several different classical Christian schools, whether beauty is objective or subjective. The most common answer I heard was "subjective, because beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Sadly, this is a subtle lie very similar to the one that Satan told Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, that man is the ultimate standard rather than God. This has been refuted by Plato in his dialogue Theætetus, where he responded to the sophist Protagoras' claim that man was the measure of all things, and by C. S. Lewis in his *Abolition of Man*, where he attacked progressive educators of his day who sought to remove objective standards from the curriculum.

What has happened is that we have been fooled into using the word "beauty" to refer to our own feelings about something, not how it actually is. We have other words for our own feelings—such as "attraction"—but because of misuse, we no longer have one to talk about this Transcendental. We have an attraction to something on the one hand, and on the other we have Beauty: that to which we ought to be attracted. Among classical authors, Beauty was never defined by a standard of one's own tastes or perceptions. Rather, Beauty is based on the real, measurable principles of Balance, Proportion, Clarity, and Telos (a thing fulfilling its purpose).

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1. First published at the CLT Blog. Reprinted here with permission from the author.

Of the Transcendentals, Truth, Goodness, and Beauty relate to each other in a special way: they form a triangular structure, which we may call Standard, Method, and End. This triangular pattern is seen throughout the cosmos in many places. Strikingly one of them is the "three steps" in the method of learning, which we call the Trivium: the Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric stages of education. However, this "triangle of Transcendentals" is not entirely like the subjects of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. None of the Liberal Arts are stages in and of themselves, although the Trivium bears a marked resemblance to this old-fashioned scholarly framework. Rather, all seven of them (and any other topic for that matter) can be learned by applying the three steps in the method of learning.

1. *Acquire knowledge as a foundation.*
2. *Use that knowledge to reason, deduce, and discover causes.*
3. *Take action by applying that to some end.*

The Transcendentals follow this same pattern, in that Truth (the standard) applied in a Good way (the method) produces Beauty (the end). We base our principles upon the Truth of reality, we strive to do things well or in a Good manner, and our aim is to produce Beauty. For example, I might say to someone: "That's a nice car you have," which is true, but if I speak it in a jealous rather than wholesome way, my speech was not beautiful and our relationship has not been beautified.

That established, let us take a further step in the algebra of Transcendentals. Another lie closely related to the redefinition of Beauty is that things like Beauty cannot be modeled using mathematics. This is part of the barrier that has been erected between the so-called humanities and sciences by many modern thinkers; the liberal arts tradition is opposed to this divided mode of thought. The Transcendentals can be modeled just as mathematically as other parts of nature using set theory, a branch of mathematics that deals with collections of objects. (It may seem odd to be performing mathematical operations on non-numeric objects, but this is commonplace in higher-level mathematics.)

Let us turn for a moment to the mathematical relationships of exponent, root, and logarithm between three numbers. We can begin quite simply, with the number 2. Two to the third power (2^3), or 2 multiplied by itself three times ($2 \times 2 \times 2$), is 8. The cube root of 8 is accordingly 2, and the logarithm base 2 of 8 is 3, because logarithms are inverse functions of exponents.

Now, this threefold set of mathematical relationships (exponent, root, and logarithm) maps neatly to the "triangle of Transcendentals" we talked about above. In set theory, an isomorphism is a mapping of one set to another such that the relationships between the elements in the sets are preserved. The requirements for an isomorphism are: every element in set A corresponds to an element in set B; nothing is left over; and the objects of set A relate to each other in the same way as the objects of set B. The benefit of such a mapping is that anything we prove about one set applies to the other as well. This will allow us to use the same notation with both sets. In this case, 2 corresponds to Truth, 3 to Goodness, and 8 to Beauty. (To be clear, the numbers need not be 2, 3, and 8—any three numbers that satisfy the equation work as examples.) We can say that

"Truth applied to itself in a Good way produces Beauty," just as 2 self-multiplied 3 times equals 8. Truth interacts with Truth in many different ways, but when those ways are Good, we can produce Beauty: Truth to the Good power equals Beauty [TG= B]. The Standards applied using the Method produce the End. (This extension of exponentiation beyond its original intent is also nothing new; when complex numbers such as i were discovered, the operation was extended beyond repeated multiplication in order to make sense of equations such as Euler's identity.)

All of this is a reflection of the deeper concept of compounding, the thread that underpins both exponentiation and application, and which lies at the heart of these triangles. The other statements we end up with are "The Good Root of Beauty is Truth" and—albeit more obscurely—"The Logarithm base Truth of Beauty is Goodness". If we keep our subjects with the right connecting framework, understanding that all disciplines really are connected, these statements and others like them introduce potentially helpful terminology in our ongoing discussion of the Transcendentals, and we can continue further mathematical deductions from here. What kind of deductions, you might ask? I do not yet know, but I am excited to find out.

Boaz David Dernlan lives in Daphne, AL; he is going into his senior year at Bayshore Christian School, where he is the Captain of House Ignis. He is considering several institutions of higher learning at which to continue his studies, such as New Saint Andrews College, Hillsdale College, and Bethlehem College, and he enjoys studying mathematics, logic, and philosophy, running cross country, and playing the piano.

On The Resurrection of Jesus

Megan Tallman, *The Oaks Classical Christian Academy*

Forensic oratory is one of the three branches of rhetoric. It is generally courtroom oratory, but applies to many other situations outside of the courtroom. One kind of forensic speech is the conjectural speech, which aims to prove whether a crime happened or not. More broadly, a conjectural speech is a question of fact: did an alleged event happen? Of all the facts in the history of the world, the resurrection of Jesus is the most significant. Did the resurrection happen? How one answers that question will control the rest of life. At a Classical Christian school, it seems obvious that we ought to take the classical tools of rhetoric and apply them to proving the historical reliability of the Christian faith.

How many unbelievable things do we believe on a regular basis? Think of gravity. Gravity is unbelievable. It is supposedly a force that impacts everything in the universe. It holds our solar system in orbit, and it makes an elephant heavier than a feather. And yet no scientist has ever truly understood gravity, and it's difficult to even prove its existence. Nearly every person on earth believes in gravity without ever having seen it, and yet many people reject the occurrence of real events because they seem too unbelievable. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of these events.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He was raised from the dead after three days. This event is the basis for the Christian faith, which becomes one of the most influential religions of all time. It has impacted every single aspect of history from the Roman Empire to the founding of America. The world has been shaped by Christianity, and Christianity is founded on the resurrection. So did the resurrection actually happen?

Many people deny that Jesus rose from the dead because it seems unbelievable. While I agree that it defies ordinary expectations, the resurrection is proved true through three methods: verifying the authenticity of the gospels, confirming through outside sources, and examining the cultural impact of Christianity.

First, we have four separate, consistent accounts of Jesus' life from four separate witnesses. What's surprising is that the authors don't try to leave out the unflattering details. For instance, the first people to witness the risen Christ were women, who in ancient times would not be considered as trustworthy sources. In addition, the disciples are often portrayed as cowardly, stupid, and unbelieving, such as Peter, who denied Jesus three times to save himself. If the authors were trying to fabricate a story, they would not have included facts that seem to cast doubt. Secondly, analysis proves that they were all written independently of one another. Where they use the same

words, the gospel authors were simply quoting the same passage from the Old Testament of Jesus' sermon, so they would necessarily be the same. But in many cases, they differ, not just in wording, but in content. For example, Matthew's gospel says that the angel at Jesus' tomb was sitting on top of the stone after it had been rolled away whereas Mark's gospel claims that the angel was sitting inside the tomb. If Matthew had copied Mark, he would have made every detail consistent. On the contrary, the fact that small details differ proves they were working independently. Not only are the authors authentic, but the manuscripts themselves are authentic, too. The New Testament has been preserved in more manuscripts than any other work of ancient literature, with over 5,800 complete or fragmented copies in the original Greek, many of which have been carbon dated to the century after Jesus. For comparison, we currently have about 1000 copies of Homer's epics, the earliest of which was made nearly 400 years after Homer. The overwhelming amount of ancient documents written so close to Jesus Himself confirms that the gospels were not fiction or legend, but real accounts documenting a real occurrence.

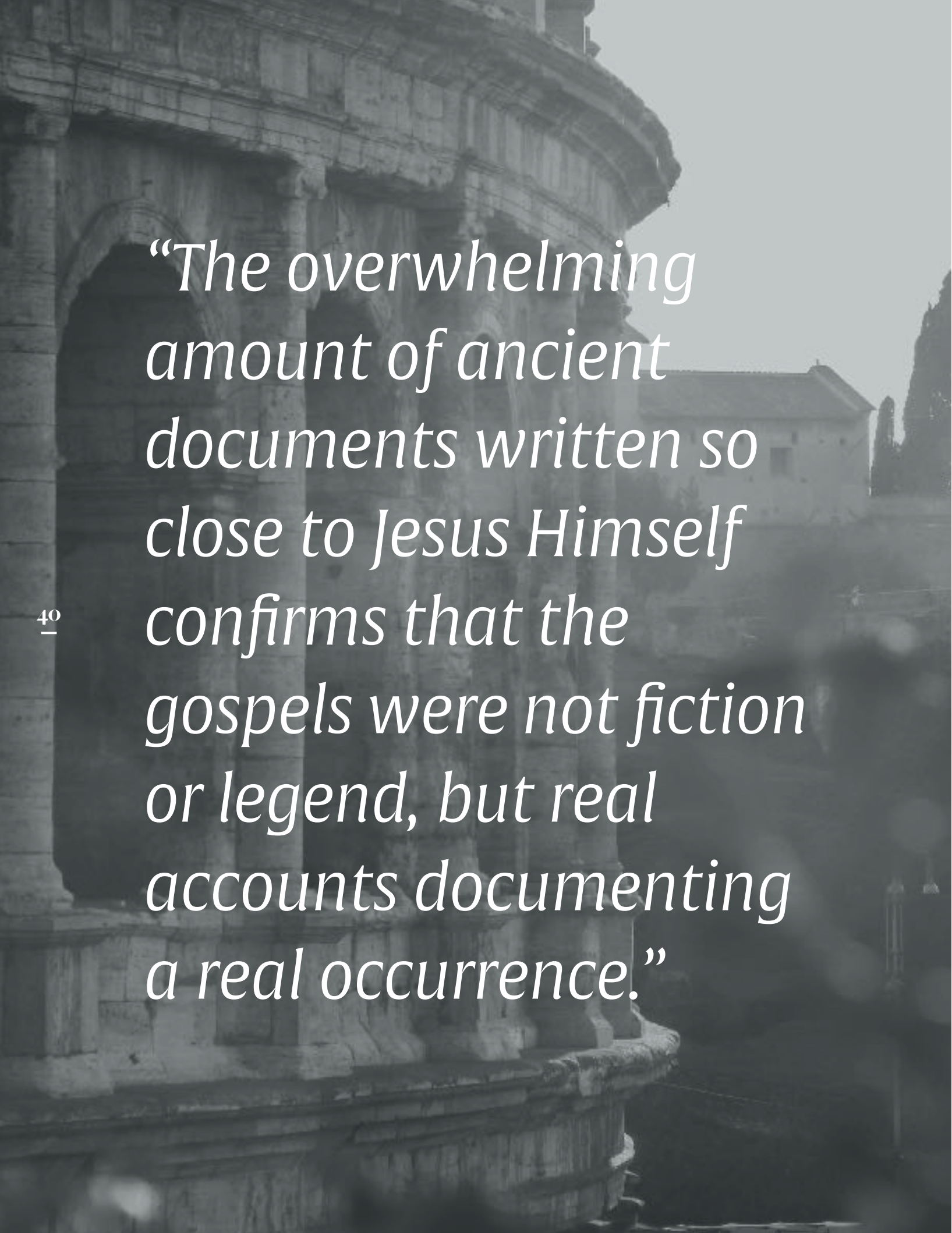
Some might say that the gospels were fabricated by the authors for personal gain, but this is simply not true. The writers of the gospel had no motive to do so, and this is evidenced by how they lived. Each of the authors lived humbly and never sought money or power in relation to Christ. In fact, they were harmed by associating with Jesus. They suffered and died without denouncing Jesus, which a self-interested liar would never do.

In addition to the accounts in the gospels, Paul records in his writings that the risen Christ was witnessed by hundreds of people. He writes in I Corinthians 15:5–8,

> *He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred at once... After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.*

There was an overwhelming number of witnesses who all corroborated the truth of the resurrection. Every one of them strongly believed what they saw, although many were tortured and died for their faith. Jesus' resurrection also fulfilled thousand year old prophecies from Old Testament prophets. These prophecies are so specific that they cannot be explained any other way. Psalm 22:16–18 says, "They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Jesus' resurrection fulfills these Old Testament prophecies in every detail. It is more absurd to say this was a coincidence than to say that it really happened. Secular historians, too, confirmed that Jesus was a real person and that He was persecuted under Pontius Pilate. The Roman historian Tacitus, who lived at the same time as Christ, confirms such in the Annals. Thus, the resurrection of Jesus is recorded by the gospels and confirmed by Paul, ancient prophecy, and secular historians.

Some may say that Jesus was a real person, but His resurrection was nothing more than a legend. But legends about real people do not arise that quickly. All four Gospel accounts can be traced to the same century in which Jesus himself lived. The early church fathers, who



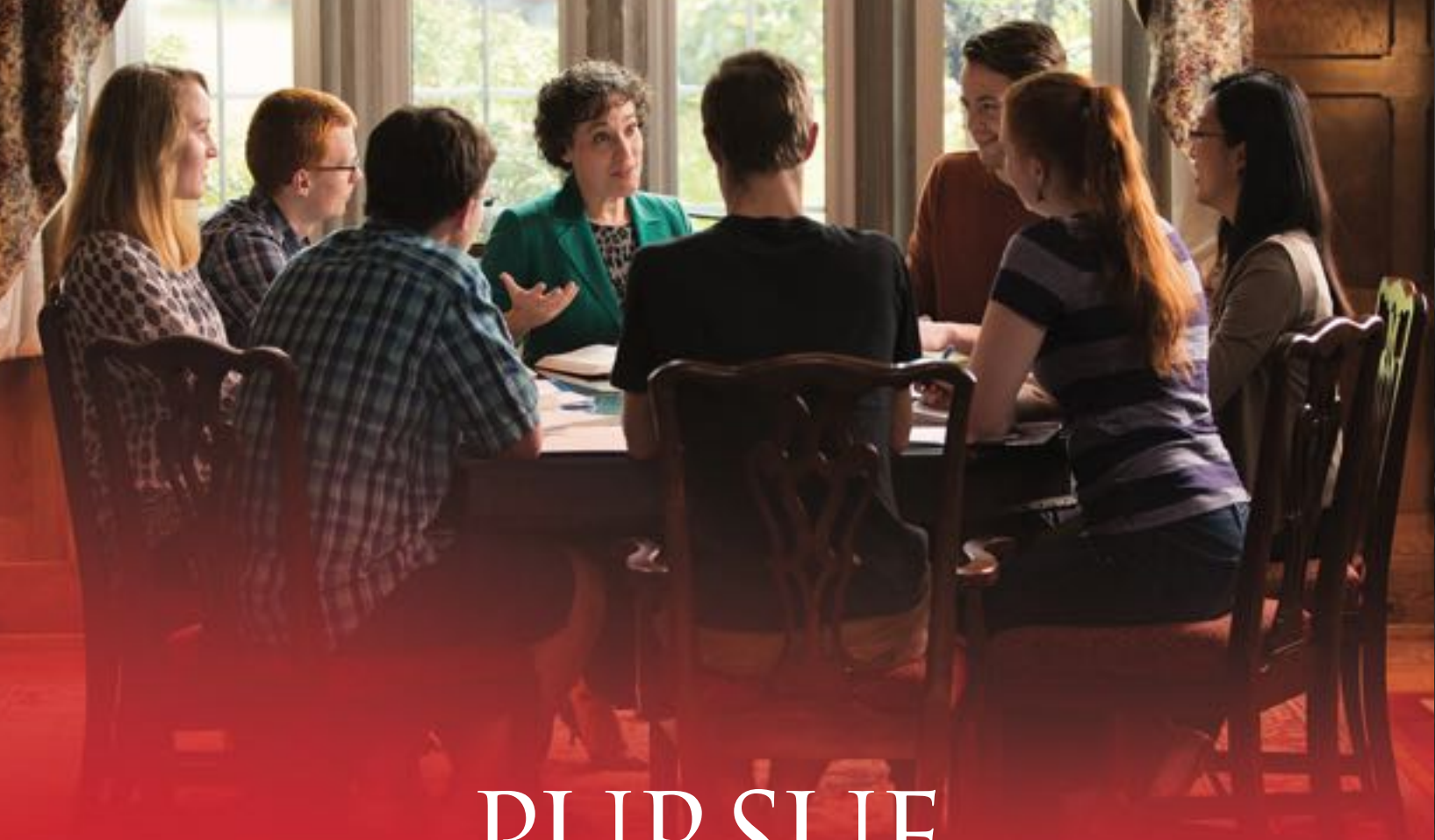
"The overwhelming amount of ancient documents written so close to Jesus Himself confirms that the gospels were not fiction or legend, but real accounts documenting a real occurrence."

wrote within decades of the resurrection, all share the belief that Jesus miraculously rose from the dead. Beyond this, many details cannot be explained by legend. It cannot account for the Roman guards who stayed by the tomb. Was the body stolen? Any attempt to steal the body would have been prevented by the guards. Maybe Jesus was never dead? How did a ruthlessly tortured and malnourished Jesus managed to sneak past highly trained Roman guards? The only explanation that stands up to reason is what Jesus Himself told us in Luke 18:33, "After three days I will rise again."

Finally, Jesus' resurrection is confirmed by its effects. Paul, a Pharisee who brutally persecuted Christians, witnessed the risen Christ, and his life turned completely around. He became the most prolific advocate of Christianity and defender of Jesus in his time. He suffered trials, such as imprisonment and persecution, all in the name of Jesus. James, one of the most important leaders in the early church, was a skeptic until he encountered the resurrected Christ, and he was martyred for his faith. Lastly, the stories of the disciples testify to the impact of the resurrection. Beforehand, the disciples were cowardly and unbelieving. Afterwards, they became brilliant scholars, bestowed with spiritual gifts. The resurrection transformed their lives, and this cannot be explained if the resurrection isn't true. No myth or legend has ever had such a monumental effect on the lives of individual people.

Jesus' resurrection is proved through the veracity of the gospel accounts, the confirmation of outside sources, and the cultural impact. Every person on earth has had the opportunity to read the Bible and examine the evidence for themselves. We have more evidence of the resurrection than we have that gravity exists, but everyone believes in gravity and most people reject the resurrection. This is because evidence is not the core issue, but biases are. Those who accept the truth of the resurrection also accept the hope that it provides for us. As it says in John 14:6, Jesus calls us to follow Him because He is "the way, the truth, and the life." Through Jesus, we have redemption from our sins and the hope of eternal life, but we can only accept this reward after we accept the resurrection.

Megan Tallman attended The Oaks Classical Christian Academy from Kindergarten through 12th grade, graduating Summa Cum Laude in June of 2022. She advanced through the Royal Conservatory of Music completing Level 10 Piano and earned her Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do. As a senior, she was designated a 2022 Spokane Scholar in Social Studies and earned an honored place on the Spokane Lilac Royalty Court where she was awarded the Lilac Festival Scholarships. She attained the Presidential Scholarship from George Washington University, where she is now a freshman pursuing her degree in International Studies.



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