



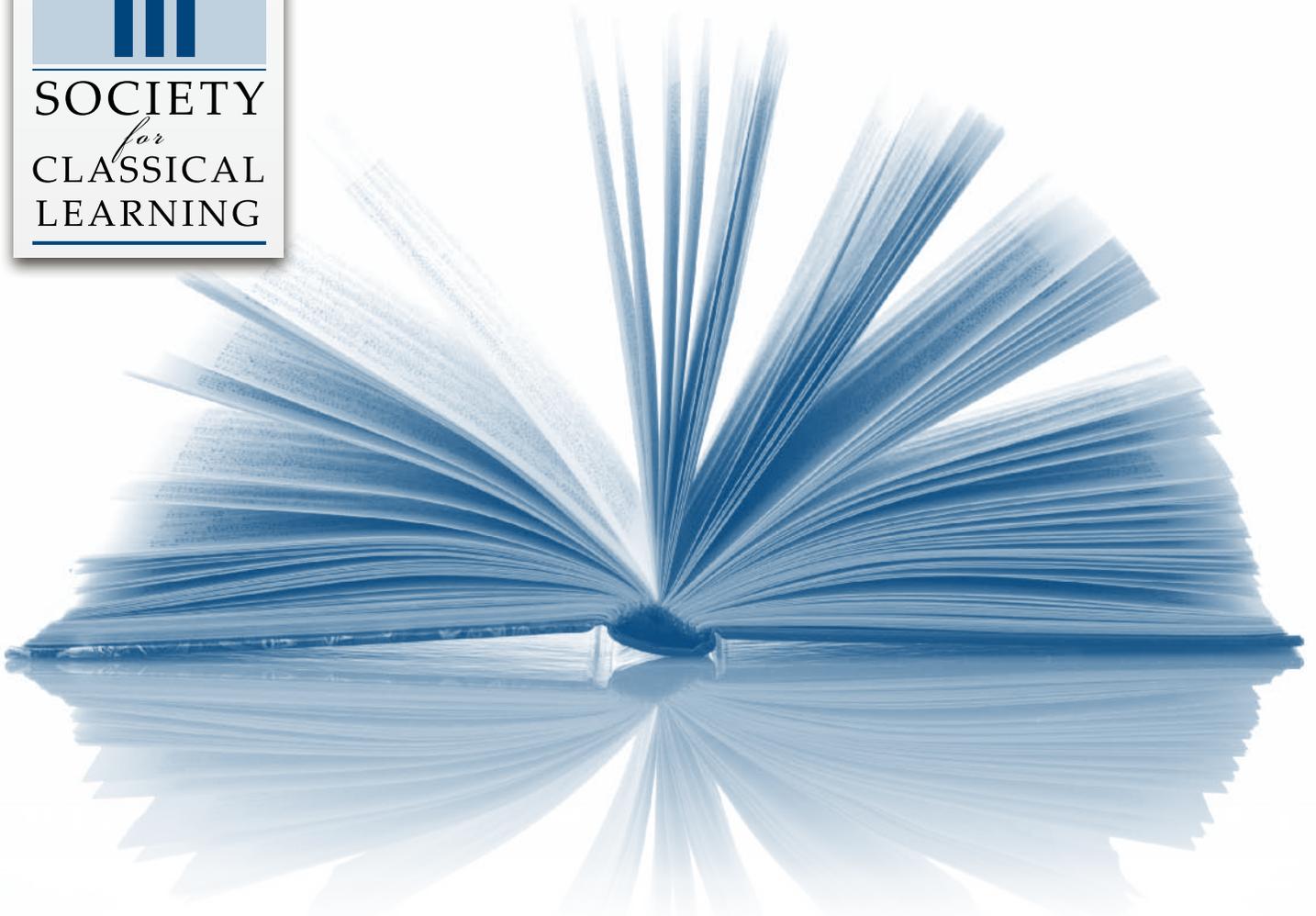
SOCIETY  
*for*  
CLASSICAL  
LEARNING

# THE JOURNAL

*A conversation on education in the classical tradition*

Volume III

WINTER 2010



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MARVIN PADGETT, PUBLISHER

## Sure Guides

Jean and I are lifelong readers and managed to spawn three readers and they, in turn, eight more. We owned a Christian bookstore and I've gone on to be the Editorial Vice President of two publishers. In short, we're "into reading." It's who we are.

Reading for understanding, careful deliberate and well-schooled reading is the key to the great conversations with people stretching all the way back to the ancient past and pressing us into our future. Every pathway, and reading is the great pathway, needs guides and maps. In this issue we have found some tested and true guides to this pathway. And there's even a guide to show how best to learn these paths and then how to teach others to follow on with us.

Eric Cook introduces me, at least, to a new author, Colin Gunton. Brad Green, founder of Augustine Christian Classical School in Jackson, TN, brought four of my grandchildren into the classical school movement. Brad has a potpourri of new and old books to consider or to reconsider. Ken Myers with his "gift of bibliography" shows us recent books on education and the "end" of knowledge. Erin Valdez commends Jacques Barzun as "a reliable shipmate." Dan Coupland digs through and leads us into the next reading war. He recommends, as do I, one of the most reliable Baedeker's guides to reading—Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren's *How to Read a Book*. And Stanley J. Ward asks "Can conversation lead the way?"

Something a hard read? Read it again and then if you think it's still over your head, try stretching your neck. You could also ask someone to help you.

Oh, and did I mention, that you should have fun along the way and from time to time indulge yourself in reading for pure pleasure?

*Marvin Padgett*  
Publisher

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The Society for Classical Learning is a professional society committed to promoting the cultural benefits of the classical, Christian tradition by providing leadership and support, opportunities for the exchange of ideas, and standards of excellence for educators and schools.

The Society for Classical Learning is a non-profit organization. Gifts to the society are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

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# The Power of Reading

by Charles T. Evans

*I*t's not hard to understand why great movements are often powered by literacy. Luther's grand scheme for the Protestant churches and their congregants was fueled by schools that taught children and adults alike to read. Not only could Christian people learn to read their Bibles, but, once reading, they could learn virtually anything else. Thus was ignited one of the greatest explosions of knowledge and piety in history.

The current state of illiteracy in our country would appall our forebears. And as Dan Coupland points out in this issue of *The Journal*, a host of educational forces have arrayed themselves against the recovery of this most basic educational necessity. The battle for literacy in our schools is not just pedagogical esoterica. It is a battle for civilization. A battle for souls.

The counter-intuitive notion active in every classical and Christian school that I know is that children can and should be taught to read, for themselves, beyond levels deemed appropriate by experts. Why? Because the most important things that they need to know in order to live faithful, productive lives are contained in pages (or hard drives!) that cannot wait until college to be read.

Even apart from sheer knowledge, it is incumbent upon us to open the beautiful world of language to them. The very first artistic act in the history of our universe was a sentence: "Let there be light." Everything else we know or could possibly experience flowed out from that simple creative pronouncement. David's Psalms, Homer's epics, the sonnets of Shakespeare and Donne. None can be known or loved without the gift of words.

There is another underlying issue relevant to a conversation about books and reading. Learning, no

matter what the medium, is hard work. Even now, having read hundreds or thousands of books in my lifetime, I must periodically read something beyond my immediate grasp. Had someone not lovingly taught, urged, forced me to read, I would be abandoned. Ironically, our compassion for students can rob them of the very things we want for them.

**“The current state of illiteracy in our country would appall our forebears.”**

For those fighting the fight with flashcards and phonemes, for those crusading with students through timeless myths, for those grabbing a few moments of professional encouragement—for those who teach children the joys of lifelong learning: this issue is for you.

*Charles T. Evans is co-Editor of The Journal. A former headmaster, he consults full-time and lives in Austin, Texas.*

# Colin Gunton's *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity*

Reviewed by Eric Cook

Colin Gunton, late professor of Christian Doctrine at King's College in London, undertakes a monumental task in *The One, the Three, and the Many*. Gunton wrote the book to "illuminate both the gospel and the modern condition, so that a continuing dialogue between them may take place." In the introduction of his masterpiece he states, "I have hoped to contribute to modern thought and to what is now called the renaissance of Trinitarian theology in our times." Gunton's contribution has left a lasting mark on the implications of a truly Trinitarian understanding of reality. He traverses the arcane and mysterious with due humility, but also with imagination and wisdom. It is a demanding read, but well worth the sweat.

There are two parts to the book. In part one, "The Displacement of God", Gunton analyzes the roots of modernity and the subsequent cultural crises, namely fragmentation and disengagement. He argues that modern culture (he includes postmodern culture) has bred an anthropology that views others as instruments. He says, "...we use the other as an instrument, as the mere means for realizing our will, and not as in some way integral to our being."

Christian theology did not provide a sufficient apologetic to combat this defective conception of man. In fact, Gunton argues that the proclivity towards a more monistic, hegemonic medieval theology laid the foundation for the Enlightenment revolution. Both extremes, a conception of man as independent and autonomous and a Gnostic conception of man, are equally flawed. Gunton argues that much of modern social and political thought is a revolt of the many against the one. But, in revolting, man has been displaced, making

himself god, where he was never intended to be. Because he is displaced in his relation to God, he has consequently been displaced in his relation to creation and his fellow man.

What Gunton offers, in part two of the book, is an attempt at a Trinitarian metaphysic, one that accounts for a proper relationship between the created world and man, between man and God, and between man and man. He emphasizes that due significance be attributed to the one and the many, which can be found only in the Trinity. Gunton seeks to formulate a "trinitarian sociality in the light of which we may understand something of who we are and what is the world in which we are set." He argues that human beings must be understood relationally rather than in terms of fixed characteristics, such as reason or will. He says, "Individualism is a false creed, because it teaches that I do not need my neighbor in order to be myself." According to Gunton, reality reflects the inherent relationship of the Trinity; everything "contributes to the being of everything else, enabling everything to be what it distinctively is." Gunton calls Christians to a deeper understanding of the Trinitarian order of being and, more importantly, to reflect that order in our lives and in our world.

In a culture where pervasive theological and philosophical aberrations abound, Gunton's approach grounds the reader in the most fundamental truths of Christianity. If there truly is a renaissance in the study of Trinitarian theology, then reading Colin Gunton is a must for thinking Christians and classical educators.

*Eric Cook is Headmaster of Covenant Classical School in Fort Worth, Texas.*

# On the Reading of New (and Old) Books

by Brad Green

“So what is on your list of books to read?” This is my perennial question to my college students as I prepare to send them out into the periods of time out from under my supervision. In the season of curriculum review, it is also a good question for those of us whose classes or whose spirits need a recharge.

The following review is rather eclectic and looks at new and fairly new publications, as well as some not-so-recent publications worth picking up. I hope something from the following brief review of books might prove helpful or stimulating or renewing. Happy reading!

## Education

Perhaps of particular interest to readers of this journal, Louis Markos has written *From Achilles to Christ: Why Christians Should Read the Pagan Classics* (InterVarsity Press, 2007). The introduction lays out a basic apologetic for the reading of the pagan classics, and the remainder of book consists of interaction with various key Greek and Roman classics.

Forthcoming this summer is Stratford Caldecott’s *Beauty for Truth’s Sake: On the Re-enchantment of Education* (Brazos). Chapter titles include “Educating the Poetic Imagination,” and Caldecott’s work looks to be a good read for Christians interested in the recovery of the liberal arts.

Every year or two (at least) someone writes a book on the great books. Anthony O’Hear has recently written *The Great Books: A Journey through 2,500 Years of the West’s Classic Literature* (ISI, 2009). Beginning with Homer, O’Hear works through highlights of the western canon, offering a helpful

introduction to some of the central great books.

## Christianity and Culture

For teachers and parents wanting a brief introduction to the so-called “New Atheism,” it would be hard to improve upon Albert Mohler’s *Atheism Remix: A Christian Confronts the New Atheists* (Crossway, 2008). In 108 pages, Mohler engages such persons as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens. But one might also want to read the printed debate between theist and classical school guru Doug Wilson and Christopher Hitchens, *Is Christianity Good for the World?* (Canon Press, 2008). Tim Keller is known as a good communicator, and his *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (Dutton Adult, 2008) is also a helpful read in coming to terms with resurgent atheism.

Any new publication by Peter Leithart is a cause for rejoicing. Leithart’s *Deep Comedy: Trinity, Tragedy, and Hope in Western Literature* (Canon Press, 2006) would be an enjoyable read for anyone, but the teacher of theology or literature might be intrigued by Leithart’s thesis that the Graeco-Roman and Christian worldviews can be distinguished by their differing eschatologies—the Graeco-Roman worldview having a tragic eschatology and the Christian worldview having a “comedic” eschatology. Leithart has also written *Solomon Among the Postmoderns* (Brazos, 2008), in which he brings Solomon and Ecclesiastes into conversation with postmodern thought.

His last book before his death last year, Richard John Neuhaus’ work *American Babylon: Notes of a Christian Exile* (Basic Books, 2009), is an attempt to wrestle with the relationship of our heavenly and

earthly/temporal citizenships. Neuhaus' journal *First Things* has been one of the most significant "thought" journals in America for almost two decades, his provocative mind and wit the engine driving much of *First Things'* impact. The review of his book by Stanley Hauerwas (*First Things*, April 2009) is also worth reading.

## Something to Read with the Children

Douglas Bond has authored a number of books for children, and so if you are looking for something to read with your children (particularly boys), you might look into Bond's "Crown and Covenant" series, a trilogy of books following the adventures and challenges of the M'Kethe family, set in 17th century Scotland: *Duncan's War*, *King's Arrow*, and *Rebel's Keep* (P&R, 2002/2003/2004). You and your children will find yourself thinking through the nature of Christian worship, the role and limitations of civil government, and the vexing issue of just war. Bond is currently two-thirds of the way through a new series, the "Faith and Freedom" trilogy, which carries on the story of the M'Kethes into the American colonial period and beyond.

## Theology and Scripture

Before Dallas Willard published works like *Spirit of the Disciplines* and *The Divine Conspiracy*, he labored as a professional philosopher (as he still does) at the University of Southern California. His latest book, *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge* (HarperOne, 2009), has just been published. Willard argues for the indispensability and possibility of knowledge, and argues that the divide between "faith" and "knowledge" should be removed.

Edward L. Smither has written a particularly unique book, *Augustine as Mentor: A Model for Preparing Spiritual Leaders* (B&H Academic, 2008). Smither examines the ways in which Augustine invested in numerous persons as mentor, both in person and through his writings, and suggests that Augustine may be able to mentor us as we

determine to mentor others.

2009 has been an important year for many reasons, including the fact that it is the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, one of the leading lights of the Protestant Reformation. As part of the slew of commemorative publications, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing released several books on the person and legacy of John Calvin: two by David W. Hall, *Calvin in the Public Square: Liberal Democracies, Rights and Civil Liberties*, and *The Legacy of John Calvin: His Influence on the Modern World*; David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback, *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes*; Ford Lewis Battles, *The Piety of John Calvin: A Collection of His Spiritual Prose, Poems, and Hymns*. InterVarsity Press published a new biography of Calvin: *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life*, by Herman Selderhuis of the Netherlands.

For those wanting an entry way into the church fathers, Bryan Litfin is an able guide with his *Getting to Know the Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction* (Brazos, 2007), with ten chapters on ten of the key fathers. Litfin's summaries are helpful, and his guides for continued reading are spot on.

Though there are a number of good "New Testament Theologies" in print (Ladd, Marshall, Thielman, among others), Tom Schreiner's *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Baker, 2008) would be an excellent volume for anyone wanting insight into the New Testament.

Teachers of Bible and history might also enjoy the recently published *The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament Within its Cultural Contexts*, by Gary M. Burge, Lynn H. Cohick, and Gene L. Green (Zondervan, 2009). An introduction to the New Testament for college students, with an eye to historical and cultural backgrounds, beautifully done with excellent pictures, this would be a helpful resource for faculty.

The essays in Bruce L. McCormack [ed.]'s, *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives* (Baker, 2008) are the published papers from the 2005 Dogmatics Conference at Rutherford

House (Edinburgh, Scotland). The essays are uniformly good, but if you have to choose, don't skip French theologian Henri Blocher's chapter, "God and the Cross."

John Frame, who teaches philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, continues to write and publish, and the latest volume in his "A Theology Lordship" series is *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (P&R, 2008). In this 1000+ page volume, Frame offers his own vision and understanding of Christian ethics. Almost half of the volume focuses on the Ten Commandments, and educators will likely be interested in part five, "Christ and Culture."

## Fiction

Folks had told me for a long time that I had to read Cormac McCarthy. His latest, *The Road* (Vintage International, 2006) is an apocalyptic "thriller" without the superfluous fight and chase scenes, though replete with suspense. But it is ultimately a story of the love between a father and his son, and when the son asks "Are we still the good guys?" and the father answers "Yes" — you believe him.

If you have never read the fiction of Michael O'Brien, reading his latest novel, *Island of the World* (Ignatius, 2007) will likely result in additional O'Brien purchases. Set in a World War II Europe, this is a moving and memorable story of faith and suffering and perseverance. Other novels (all with Ignatius) by O'Brien include *Plague Journal*, *Sophia House*, *Father Elijah*, *Strangers and Sojourners*, *A Cry of Stone*, and *Eclipse of the Sun*. Of interest to all educators, he has also a book on children's literature, *A Landscape with Dragons: The Battle for Your Child's Mind* (Ignatius, 1998), in which he suggests that much of contemporary children's literature offers a confused portrayal of good and evil, thus marring a child's ability to discern good and evil.

## Politics and Current Issues

If one enjoys conservative commentary

and perspective, one will undoubtedly enjoy *The Politically Incorrect Guide to . . .* series. Published by Regnery Publishing, this series seeks to offer basic introductions—generally of a provocative sort—to any number of current issues and fields of study. All volumes are written by established scholars in their various fields. Volumes include *The Politically Incorrect Guide to American History*, . . . *the Constitution*, . . . *Global Warming*, . . . *Science*, and on and on!

Everyone should be concerned about America's financial and economic situation. If you are looking for a succinct introduction to these issues, perhaps the best thing around is Thomas E. Woods, Jr., *Meltdown: A Free-Market Look at Why the Stock Market Collapsed, the Economy Tanked, and Government Bailouts Will Make Things Worse* (Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2009). Sum: federal control and "takeovers" will not solve problems caused by federal control in the first place. Both Republicans and Democrats beware.

## Intellectual History

Liberty Fund is another publisher that all educators should be aware of. Among their many titles, they publish a two volume set of primary sources that would be of value in any high school. Bruce Frohnen has edited both volumes, *The American Republic: Primary Sources* (2002), which covers U.S. history up through the War Between the States, and *The American Nation: Primary Sources* (2009), which continues up through America's entry into World War II. And while we are speaking of Liberty Fund, Ted J. Smith, III edited *In Defense of Tradition: Collected Shorter Writings of Richard M. Weaver, 1929-1963* (Liberty Fund, 2001). Weaver's writings on education, logic, and rhetoric are priceless, and should be read by every educator wrestling with the nature of the liberal arts, and how they might be applied today.

The Intercollegiate Studies Institute publishes

☞ See "Books," continued on page 18

## How Shall We Then Think? Recent Books on Education and the Ends of Knowledge

by Ken Myers

Educators must necessarily spend a lot of time assembling and mastering the content of their lessons. In addition to what is being taught, teachers must also attend to matters of educational method. The best teachers go a step further and reflect on how their teaching—in the structure of form and the patterns of content—convey deep assumptions about the nature of knowledge, reason, and the life of human “knowers”. Since educational institutions and most available modern scholarship have been significantly affected by the grand assumptions of the Enlightenment, Christian educators would do well to spend some time reflecting on how the prejudices of modern Western thought frequently crowd out Christian concerns related to our creaturely vocation of knowing and being in the world.

Several recent books may be helpful both for teachers who are thinking through such questions for the first time and for those who are looking to think more deeply about them. *The Passionate Intellect* (Baker Academic, 2006), by Norman Klassen and Jens Zimmermann, explores ways in which the Christian belief in redemption achieved by an incarnate and resurrected Savior—one who is fully Man and fully God—affects our understanding of the nature and purposes of reason, and hence of education. The book’s subtitle—*Incarnational Humanism and the Future of University Education*—may give the impression that it has little to offer teachers in primary and secondary school settings. But while writing especially for professors and students in higher education settings, Klassen and Zimmermann have a great deal to offer teachers of pre-college students and to non-educators interested

in how and why so much modern thought distanced itself from a Christian view of the place of reason in life.

The authors insist that the firmest foundation for any intellectual life is belief in the redemption of Christ of men and women *in the fullness of their humanity*. “Christians are supposed to be the paradigm for a new humanity founded by Christ and inaugurated by his resurrection from the dead, a decisive event signaling the reconciliation of humanity to God and anticipating the full redemption of God’s creation.” On the basis of this historical reality, Christians are properly committed to growth in understanding about God’s creation and about the possibilities for the flourishing of human gifts and capacities therein. Only an “incarnational humanism” can rescue the contemporary academy—and contemporary thought more generally—from the nihilistic dead-end toward which modernity has led us.

Following an introduction surveying the chaotic state of contemporary higher education, Klassen and Zimmermann, both English professors from Canadian universities, begin their book with a chapter (“Can Christians Think?”) repudiating the charge that to be a Christian is *ipso facto* to be a committed enemy of reason. They are not responding to the observation that many Christians don’t care about the life of the mind; after all, neither do many non-Christians. They are addressing the deeper claim that because Christians believe in certain fundamental truths (the existence of God, their own identity as creatures, the reality of good and evil), they cannot fulfill the high calling of true intellectual work, of mature, heroic, autonomous

reason. The authors challenge the assumption that what we call “reason” must proceed in accordance with the prejudices of the Enlightenment.

The bulk of the book is a historical survey of the developments of higher education (and parallel developments in philosophy) from early roots in a holistic understanding of God, Man, and cosmos in the Middle Ages to the fragmentation that characterizes secularized modernity and postmodernity. It is a story that moves from Christian humanism to post-Christian anti-humanism. Advocates of classical education will be particularly interested in the place in this narrative of the rupture between logic and rhetoric, a schism occasioned by the rise of one of the many dualisms this book documents. In this case, it was a dualism that separated reason from metaphysical assumptions, history, language, and revelation.

The book concludes with three chapters discussing how “incarnational thinking” looks in practice. The chapter “Incarnational Humanism and Common Grace” will be of particular interest to those struggling with a framework to integrate deliberately Christian scholarship with the work of non-Christian thinkers.

The question of the nature of human knowing and knowers is also addressed in Steve Talbott’s *Devices of the Soul: Battling for Our Selves in an Age of Machines* (O’Reilly Media, 2007). Like Klassen and Zimmermann, Talbott is concerned with the dehumanizing tendencies of contemporary culture and how they affect education. But where *The Passionate Intellect* concentrates on ideas, Talbott’s book (twenty-one essays in five major groupings) is concerned more with the way techniques and technologies distort our understanding of who we are; Talbott is alerting us to the antecedents rather than the consequences of bad ideas.

The five essays in the middle section of the book (“From Information to Education”) will be of most interest to teachers, but the rest of the book provides a necessary handle to grasp the

framework in which Talbott criticizes common uses of technologies in the classroom. He challenges the modern assumption that the main purpose of knowledge is to acquire power to do things. “Something in our culture works powerfully against a sensitive, participative understanding of the world, often obliterating that understanding wherever it does arise.” While not explicitly so, there are strong incarnational themes in Talbott’s book as well, as he repudiates the common assumption that we know the world only as minds that happen to be in bodies.

Instead, he argues, we know the world best in a fully engaged way, attentive to its details, its interconnectedness, its specificities. Talbott is obviously critical of various fashionable technologies and their uses, but only because we assume that we can be mere “users” of technology, and not symbiotically shaped by it.

Of course, the computer itself is one of the things we need to find a living connection to. We can take justifiable pride in the fact that we conceived and developed the idea of this nearly miraculous machine. But we should not forget that, in order to do this, we had in some sense to reduce ourselves to the machine’s level—to imagine it and mime it within ourselves—until we achieved such a clear, internal expression of it that we could build it in the world. In particular, we had to enter into our own potentials for programmed, automatic thought and action before we could build automatons of silicon, plastic, and metal.

But these potentials are not the only potentials human beings have—and certainly not the highest or most delightful. And so Talbott is concerned that we not re-imagine our own identity after the image and likeness of this miracle working machine—a habit common to idolators of every age.

A different angle of vision considering education is offered in *The Future of Christian Learning: An Evangelical and Catholic Dialogue* (Brazos Press, 2008). The partners in this dialogue are two brilliant historians, Mark Noll and James

Turner, Evangelical and Catholic respectively, both now at Notre Dame, and both keen analysts of American cultural and religious history. Noll's essay has a very un-Evangelical title: "Reconsidering Christendom?" He argues that Christian education has been most creative and fruitful when it has been an expression of a vision for the comprehensive consequences of Christian knowledge and practice. Christian movements or communities that promote a merely personal faith are unlikely to commit themselves to serious Christian learning.

Near the end of his essay, Noll suggests that if Christian learning in the United States is to flourish, it will be led by two kinds of individuals. The first are Catholics or older confessional Protestants (who are in many ways more like Catholics than Evangelicals) "who have been touched spiritually by the charismatic movement, by intense personal engagement with the scriptures, or by reconnection to one of Catholicism's own traditions of intense personal devotion," but who have not lost "the assumptions of comprehension, community, proprietorship, and universality of Catholic Christendom at its best."

The other kind of individual likely to succeed in promoting robust Christian education is one from Evangelical or Pentecostal roots who has "come to recognize the docetic, gnostic, and Manichaen tendencies of their evangelical and fundamentalist traditions," and who has embraced that "Christendom" vision with its comprehensive and public ramifications without losing the inner, personal fire kept alive in the communities in which they grew up.

Where Noll focused on how much Catholic and Evangelical educators need the respective strengths of each others' traditions, James Turner focuses on the differences between them, especially how different theological emphases have led to differences in practice and mentality. There is a brief but provocative discussion of the tragedy of the specialization of academic disciplines, a loss—

among Catholics, Evangelicals, and secularists—of an abiding confidence in the unity of knowledge. This is a subject Turner has addressed elsewhere with great insight (see his collection *Language, Religion, Knowledge: Past and Present* [Notre Dame, 2003] as well as *The Sacred and the Secular University*, co-written with Jon H. Roberts [Princeton, 2000]).

Finally, a recent book that does not deal explicitly with education may be the most helpful of this lot, and also the most challenging. James R. Peters's *The Logic of the Heart: Augustine, Pascal, and the Rationality of Faith* (BakerAcademic, 2009) might be assumed—because of its subtitle—to be a work of apologetics, simply defending the claim that we have good reasons to believe. It is that, but it is more fundamentally an examination of the matter of what would constitute "good reasons." Rather than simply defend Christian belief as rational, Peters insists (following in the footsteps of Augustine, Pascal, and others) that Christian belief properly *defines* rationality. Peters summarizes the argument of his book in Chapter One:

Ultimately, in the Augustinian tradition, the proper function of reason is not merely to make true judgments concerning a world of neutral, nonmoral facts, but to enable the rational individual to make proper contact with reality, a state of being that requires not only 'true belief,' but the transformation of the will and affections needed to put us in touch with—to align up fully with—reality. Assisted by divine charity, the proper function of reason is thus both cognitive and unitive. The perfection of reason requires our being transformed into the kind of persons we are designed to be—persons who are able not only to describe but also to affirm and become united with the God of love.

Peters insists that this Augustinian understanding of knowledge is vastly superior to and more humanizing than its allegedly enlightened

alternative. The consequences for educators are significant. As an epigram to Chapter One, Peters cites a 1984 essay by Wendell Berry, who describes the pedagogical effects of the modern view of knowledge, according to which “real” knowledge requires that the knower has to be entirely disengaged from that which is known. As a result, Berry writes, “Objectivity, in practice, means that one studies or teaches one’s subject *as such*, without concern for its relation to other subjects or to the world—that is, without concern for its truth. If one [by contrast] is concerned, if one cares, about the truth or falsity of anything, one cannot be objective: one is glad if it is true and sorry if it is false; one believes it if it is judged to be true and disbelieves it if it is judged to be false.”

Where Klassen and Zimmermann called for a passionate intellect, Peters similarly champions a “passionate reason.” Reason has its proper ends

in the love of God because this is the created *telos* of humanity. Human reason is not a detachable capacity, a “piece of heartless technology,” properly functioning when detached from ultimate human purposes. It is instead one of the ways in which our humanity fulfills (or denies) itself.

This is not the understanding of reason that prevails in the modern West. But the dispassionate reason championed by Descartes, Locke, Kant, and others has led us not to enlightenment but darkness. Christian educators have the wonderful opportunity to confer to their students an alternative attitude toward the meaning of knowing. Books such as these are instructive reminders of what is at stake.

*Ken Myers is a journalist and the founder of Mars Hill Audio. A former arts editor for National Public Radio’s Morning Edition, Myers produces creative audio resources to encourage Christian growth.*

## PRE-CONFERENCE SPEAKER ~ JUNE 23, 2010

# KEN MYERS

## Education, Imagination, and Training the Affections



Ken Myers is the host and producer of the Mars Hill Audio Journal, a bimonthly audio magazine that explores the significance of major cultural trends for Christians who are striving to be in the world but not of it. He was formerly editor of *The World: A Journal of Religion and Public Life*, a quarterly journal whose editor-in-chief was Richard John Neuhaus and of *Eternity*, the Evangelical monthly magazine. For eight year, Mr. Myers was a producer and editor for National Public Radio, working much of that time as arts and humanities editor for the two news programs, *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*. A graduate of the University of Maryland and of Westminster

Theological Seminary, Mr. Myers serves as a contributing editor for *Christianity Today* and has served on the Arts on Radio and Television Panel for the National Endowment for the Arts. Learn more about Mr. Myers at [www.marshill.org](http://www.marshill.org).

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# Barzun Setting Things Right

by Erin Valdez

“... *I* do not think there is any need to emphasize how much better it is to absorb the best models, and how hard it is at a later stage to eradicate the faults which have once become ingrained, because this puts a double burden on the teachers who take over, namely that of unteaching, which is a heavier task than teaching, and has to be given priority.” *Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria*, 2.3

Quintilian goes on to argue that the best teachers should teach beginning students. This sound belief is as counterintuitive in Roman times as in ours. Then as now, the issues were 1) egotism on behalf of teachers and 2) parsimoniousness on behalf of parents. Teachers of primary and secondary pupils often have cause to cling jealously to some perceived scrap of dignity, while parents often attach vicarious fantasies to their tuition dollars.

Classical schools, like all institutions of education, flirt with (in weak moments, even embrace) utopian thinking. Teachers and administrators often need fellow travelers to secure us to mastheads, and Jacques Barzun is such a reliable shipmate. To these self-aware souls, I commend his trenchant and oracular survey, *Teacher in America*, first published in 1944. Weary teachers will find passages which refresh and invigorate like a granulated ice fortified beverage.

It could be misleading to select single quotes from the book (quotable as it is), as the topics Barzun illuminates range from the practical burdens of teachers at all levels to the role of history (properly taught) in developing true tolerance and humility. Teachers of math and science, who often feel their disciplines neglected in ‘classical

education’ circles will find in Barzun an eloquent advocate.

He encourages all teachers to remember that their role in the education of a pupil is to supply the innocent with memory and precedent. The chapter entitled “The Human Boy” is worth a thousand jargon-laden classes on “child development.” Likewise his analysis of the increasingly superstitious demands upon and correspondingly messianic claims of institutions of learning is convincing evidence in itself of the value of historical sense. The G.I. Bill had just been passed in the summer in which Barzun published this volume, yet he had already grasped and found undesirable the trend towards treating wide-spread higher education as an economic and cultural panacea.

Quintilian’s wisdom and generous spirit infuse every page of Barzun’s writing. If Quintilian was right in saying that core knowledge is best taught by masters, teachers who desire to “absorb the best models” should begin by soaking up the writings and example of one of the great traditional thinkers of the past century.

*Erin Valdez teaches Latin at Hill Country Christian School of Austin, Texas.*

# The Next Reading War

by Daniel B. Coupland, PhD

## *T*he First Reading War

Early in our nation's history, most children learned to read phonically. They first learned the alphabet and a common corresponding sound for each letter. Then, they practiced reading simple two-letter combinations such as ma, me, mi, mo, and mu. Next, children learned to decode actual words by contiguously sequencing the sounds associated with the letters. Reading sentences of increasingly greater length and complexity would then follow. This general pattern was the basic outline for such notable American reading instruction books as the *New-England Primer* (first published in 1690), Noah Webster's *Blue Back Speller* (1783), and William McGuffey's *Eclectic Readers* (1836).

The move away from phonics-based reading instruction began in the mid-1800s when educators began to take note of learning processes rather than the content to be learned. These reformers began attacking the traditional forms of teaching and learning. This was true of reading instruction. Even Horace Mann, the father of the U.S. public school system, was an early critic of phonics-based reading. He argued that learning the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds was heartless drudgery.

Influenced by the educational reformers of the day, Mann championed the more modern approach to reading instruction that encouraged beginning-reading students to focus on comprehension by teaching them to recognize whole words, rather than connecting specific sounds to letters. While many grammar school teachers of this era rejected the whole-word method, this *progressive* approach to reading instruction spread like wildfire in the newly minted teacher-training schools. By the

1920s, the whole-word method was fully entrenched in America's teacher preparation programs. In most of the colleges and departments of education of that time, teaching students to read by attaching sounds to particular letters was regarded as absurd as teaching that the world was flat.

The new whole-word orthodoxy received its first significant blow in 1955 when Rudolf Flesch published *Why Johnny Can't Read*. In scathing tones, Flesch ripped apart the whole-word method of reading instruction, insulted those who promulgated this process approach, and called for a return to phonics-based instruction. While most educationalists rejected Flesch's critique, he received considerable attention from the public and the book became a best-seller.

In 1967, Jeanne Chall published a more scholarly review of early reading instruction. It supported Flesch's overall conclusion: most children, especially those who traditionally struggle in school, learn to read much more quickly when they receive explicit, systematic phonics instruction. Chall's superior scholarship had a greater impact on changing hearts and minds within the field of education than Flesch's work.

One reason for Chall's success may have been her ability to avoid over-generalizations. Chall, the godmother of phonics-based instruction, warned that taking any method of reading (even phonics-based instruction) too far was dangerous. She argued that in addition to the explicit instruction in the sound-spelling relationship, teachers need to expose students to quality children's literature as soon as possible. In the early stages of learning to read, teachers should read these stories aloud to students. Once students learn to read on their own,

they can practice their reading on these same types of stories.

Even with Chall's landmark study, the first reading war was far from over. Rather, it was just heading into its most volatile stage. Since the 1960s, the war has raged, with each side winning minor conflicts and temporarily gaining influence in the schools. The conflict has been ugly at times, with each side demonizing the other with unfair characterizations: phonics as boring "drill-and-kill" instruction and whole-word instruction as therapeutic "fuzzy reading." Both characterizations are false, but the heated exchanges provided for incredible drama. Sadly, a generation or two of students suffered in the crossfire.

In 2000, phonics-based reading instruction received a significant boost with the publication of the National Reading Panel's report, a rigorous review of research on reading and reading instruction. This report, commissioned by the U.S. Congress, supported Chall's conclusion from more than 30 years before: most children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with learning difficulties, learn to read much more quickly when they receive explicit, systematic instruction in phonics. The National Reading Panel report later provided the framework for George W. Bush's Reading First program, a significant part of the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002.

Even with the National Reading Panel's clear advocacy for explicit, systematic phonics instruction, the first reading war raged on. Whole language and so-called "balanced" reading instruction advocates tried to discredit the Reading First program and phonics-based instruction in general, not by attacking the results of this rigorous research report, but by digging into the personal and professional conduct of those who administered the program. Scared of being tainted by accusations of scandal, many of Reading First's most strident supporters abandoned the program and pulled back their support for phonics-based reading instruction.

This is not to suggest that these one-time supporters of phonics have lost faith in its effectiveness. Instead, they have concluded that Reading First is politically toxic and have gone to great lengths to distance themselves from it. Sol Stern recently documented these attacks on the Reading First program and their impact on reading instruction in a report titled "Too Good to Last: The True Story of Reading First." Stern's depressing description of Reading First's rise and fall provides a glimpse of how politically charged early reading instruction can be. His sad tale shows us that the first reading war rages on with little end in sight. As a result, many teachers and administrators, who had once been empowered by federal and state governments to teach early reading through phonic-based instruction, now feel as though they have been abandoned.

### **The Next Reading War**

As the first reading war continues, a different conflict has arisen. This battle has the potential to be equally as vicious. Interestingly, this war makes allies of enemies from the first conflict. Reading educators who disagree vehemently about how children learn to read find themselves agreeing on how to teach reading comprehension.

Before exploring the conflict further, it seems necessary to define the word "reading." Educators use this term in at least two broad ways. First, reading can refer to the process of decoding text, or deciphering the string of letters on a page. Teachers in early elementary grades spend a great deal of time teaching their students this decoding process.

The word can also be used to describe the application of the acquired skill. Reading in this sense refers to the act of acquiring meaning from a text. For example, last year I read *Prince Caspian* aloud to my six-year-old son. As I was about to start reading a new chapter, my son asked if he could read a little. Thrilled by his request, I handed him the book and he began to read the text aloud

with only a few minor errors. Halfway through the page, he handed the book back to me and asked me to start from the beginning. “But you already read that part,” I replied. “I know,” he said, “but this time I want to understand it.”

Now, I am confident that my son caught some of the story as he read, but he was expending so much mental energy decoding the text, that he was unable to focus on its intended meaning. At that time, he was still “learning to read” (definition #1), and was not quite “reading to learn” (definition #2). This is important because the first reading war rages over how to teach students to decode text, whereas the next reading war is being fought over how to develop students who can comprehend texts of greater and greater complexity.

In 1972, Mortimer J. Adler lamented the lack of attention on what he called “the higher levels of reading.” When he wrote *How to Read a Book*, both sides of the first reading war had spent a great deal of energy fighting over how to teach children to decode. Adler would most likely be pleased by all the attention that reading comprehension has received in the last decade. Indeed, studies on reading comprehension and reading-comprehension instruction have been the point of convergence for an increasing number of research projects in recent years. Many in the education establishment have put their hope in what are called literacy strategies.

Literacy strategies are formalized reading techniques that students can use to comprehend the various texts that they encounter in life. These strategies go by a variety of clever names (e.g., Sketch-to-Stretch, Open-Mind Portraits, Gallery Walks, Double-Entry Journal, and ReQuest) or acronyms (e.g., DR-TA, QtA, QAR, SQ3R, and SPAWN). Publishers of educational materials have capitalized on the literacy-strategy craze. On my bookshelf, I have a spiral bound book from a prominent publishing company that contains 50 literacy strategies targeted specifically at adolescent

readers. Next to this, I have a similar volume with an equal number of strategies designed for upper elementary students. State departments of education have also jumped on the literacy strategies bandwagon. The State of Michigan, for example, requires all secondary-level teachers to complete a reading class prior to initial certification. No less than 33 state standards mandate the specific content for this single class. The words “strategies” and “techniques” are prominent throughout these standards.

The literacy-strategies movement received support from, of all places, the National Reading Panel. In the section of the report titled “text comprehension instruction,” the panel identified seven categories of literacy strategies that showed promise in helping students to comprehend texts. These categories include comprehension monitoring, cooperative learning, use of graphic and semantic organizers, question answering, question generation, story structure, and summarization. Reading educators, many of whom ignore the National Reading Panel’s phonics results on early literacy, readily embrace its conclusions on reading comprehension.

But not everyone has been bitten by the literacy-strategy bug. Dan Willingham, a cognitive psychologist at the University of Virginia, has been a leading critic of the literacy-strategy movement. Willingham consistently points to the differences between learning-to-read and reading-to-learn. The first kind of reading (decoding) is a formalized skill that, once learned, can be applied to almost any text the reader encounters. The second kind of reading (comprehension), however, is not a formalized skill. Willingham claims that comprehension requires “domain knowledge.” In other words, the reader must already have some knowledge on the subject in order to comprehend what he is reading. Indeed, the author assumes that the reader’s prior knowledge will fill in gaps that are critical to the text’s meaning. The more

knowledge of the text's subject that the reader has, the greater the likelihood that the reader will comprehend the text.

E. D. Hirsch, the author of *Cultural Literacy* and founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation, has a great example for the importance of domain knowledge. Consider Hirsch's classic example sentence:

*Jones sacrificed and knocked in a run.*

Almost any fluent reader of English would have little trouble using this string of letters to come up with an accurate pronunciation of the text. However, understanding the meaning of the sentence is quite different from being able to pronounce it accurately. A reader with extensive knowledge of baseball comprehends this sentence. In order to do this, the reader draws upon his knowledge from the domain of baseball to understand the meaning of the sentence. The more experiences that this reader can recall, the easier it is for him to think of examples where he has seen a similar or related event.

Alternately, a reader with little knowledge of baseball might grasp some aspects of the text, but the overall meaning might trip him up. However, for the reader who has virtually no knowledge of America's pastime, the intended meaning of the text is lost entirely. Therefore, while all three readers may have no trouble decoding the sentence, they most certainly vary in their ability to comprehend the text.

Willingham argues that literacy strategies can be of some use to readers. His review of the research shows that fluent readers often experience an initial boost from newly acquired strategies. Willingham also maintains, however, that the power is not necessarily in the strategies themselves. He suggests that many of these strategies simply serve as a reminder to the reader that he needs to be more active in his reading. Willingham equates the usefulness of these strategies to checking one's work in math class to

see if the answer makes sense.

Willingham further argues that once students are fluent at sounding-out words (typically around the 3rd or 4th grade), teachers should avoid spending too much precious class time teaching strategies. Instead, they should work on developing students' knowledge in a variety of domains so that they will be able to draw upon this knowledge when they encounter texts on a variety of topics. As Willingham likes to say: Teaching science, history, math, literature, music, and art is teaching reading.

Many in the education establishment reject this knowledge-based approach to reading instruction. They use the "if-you-give-a-man-a-fish" argument against knowledge-based reading instruction. They see knowledge-based instruction as limited because building knowledge in so many domains takes too much time. They conclude that there is insufficient time to provide the kind of knowledge that students will need to be good readers. Instead, they argue that if we teach the students the process or technique of reading comprehension, then they will be able to read "for a lifetime."

It seems to be a case of the tortoise and the hare. Those who promote a literacy-strategies approach to reading comprehension instruction, see the opportunity for a quick boost in reading comprehension. Those who support a much more knowledge-based approach to reading instruction recognize that it takes time – perhaps, a lifetime – to develop good readers, and, in the end, those students who have a breadth of knowledge will ultimately become better readers.

### **Knowledge is Controversial**

The education establishment may be avoiding knowledge-based reading instruction for another reason entirely. In order for schools to provide knowledge-based instruction, those in charge of curriculum and instruction first have to identify

what students should know. In designing the curriculum, school authorities would have to select literature pieces, historical events, scientific experiments, and mathematical proofs to be part of what all students would encounter in the school's curriculum. Whether these school representatives would admit or even realize what they were doing, they would ultimately be making a claim about what constitutes knowledge in that school. As soon as the school made this decision, it would open itself up to criticism and controversy. Regardless of the headline-grabbing stories in newspapers (e.g., sex education classes or prayer at graduation), most schools make a concerted effort to avoid controversy at every turn. Controversy is risky and can be expensive. This is especially true when it comes to designing a curriculum.

In *The Language Police*, Diane Ravitch describes the great lengths to which many school boards, administrators, publishers, and others in the educational establishment go to avoid controversy. Ravitch says that educational publishers strip the curriculum of solid content because someone connected to the school might be offended. In stripping away solid content and producing "value-neutral" literature, however, the publishers have robbed the curriculum of anything that might be interesting and inspiring to the students. Ravitch calls the end of this curriculum sanitation process "thin gruel."

What does this have to do with literacy strategies? Well, remember that these strategies are reading techniques or skills. If knowledge is controversial and schools must avoid it to limit risk, a concentration on skills seems to be a logical alternative. After all, the curriculum must contain something. Unlike knowledge, skills are inherently uncontroversial. Skills show us how, not what. Skills do not put teachers, administrators, school districts, and state departments of education at risk. Skills are safe.

Problem is, besides an initial boost, literacy

strategies do not help students to become competent life-long readers. The analogy of the man looking for his keys under the streetlight comes to mind. Though the man lost his keys in a dark place down the street, he wants to look under the streetlight because it is easier to see. The same may be true for reading instruction. We will not create better readers by attending exclusively to skills, but it will be easier for schools to avoid controversy if they keep away from knowledge-based reading instruction and teach reading strategies and skills instead.

### A Classical Response

A classical curriculum is a knowledge-based curriculum. Classical schools find their footing in the liberal arts. This tradition is dedicated to the idea that students should be liberally educated in a wide variety of interconnected subjects so that they will have a broad understanding of what it means to be free. Such an understanding develops as students pursue the good, the true, and the beautiful. Therefore, classical educators are rightfully skeptical of an over-emphasis in the classical school curriculum on *techne*, specialized skills that equip the individual for narrow lines of thought, inquiry, and work.

But are we not obligated to teach students the "tools of learning"? Can we ignore the skills that students will need to become life-long learners? Is not classical education different from the back-to-basics educational philosophies that load their students with large quantities of unconnected information to be memorized, only to regurgitate facts on Friday's test?

These questions bring up one of the most important qualities of a classical education. Yes, classical educators must help students develop academic skills for later study. And, yes, the classical curriculum is grounded in the pursuit of truth. In other words, classical educators teach the skills of learning within a strong knowledge-based

curriculum. What this means is that teachers use these truths as the substance on which students will learn, practice, and perform their skills.

How does this relate to reading comprehension instruction? Teachers need first to select quality content for their students to read. They then need to model the kinds of reading skills that students will need in order to understand these materials. Mortimer J. Adler demonstrates a classical approach to reading instruction in *How to Read a Book*. The book's title gives away its practical perspective. However, if you know anything about Adler, you know that he believed very strongly in the pursuit of great ideas (knowledge) through the pages of great books.

*How to Read a Book*, has over 400 pages developing the good habits of "active reading." Students can acquire these habits by following a set of basic rules or steps that ask the reader to do a number of things, including asking and answering questions; locating the text's structure; identifying key words, sentences, paragraphs, and passages;

and looking for problems with the argument presented in the text. True to these principles, of course, it illustrates the habits of active reading on some of the greatest works in Western Civilization. This book suggests that just as a skier will begin to forget the explicit rules of basic skiing once the habits of good skiing develop, so too will the rules of basic reading comprehension fade once the student becomes an active reader.

Classical educators should be explicit about the habits of active reading. They should model the reading skills necessary for a liberal education. But classical educators also need to commit themselves boldly to the fact that truth, beauty, and goodness exist, and, as God allows, we can know them. If we shy away from this bold proclamation, we will lose who we are as classical educators and doom our students to lives of servitude.

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### 🌀 "Books," from page 7

some of the finest books around, and if you do not receive their catalog, you might consider doing so ([www.isi.org](http://www.isi.org)). They have recently published *The Wreck of Western Culture: Humanism Revisited* (ISI, 2008). Like Jacques Barzun's *From Dawn to Decadence: 1500 to the Present*, Carroll's study covers the last 500 years of western culture. Carroll suggests that humanism—to the extent that it did not give attention to the necessity of theological and religious realities—cannot be meaningfully sustained.

In a somewhat similar category, Michael Allen Gillespie of Duke University has written *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (The University of Chicago Press, 2008). Gillespie posits that modernity is one long attempt to work through the questions of (and relations of) God, man and

the world—once "nominalism" is victorious over "realism." Worth careful reading, but Gillespie is stuck because he cannot construe how divine omnipotence and meaningful human action can meaningfully co-exist.

Louis Dupre, in his *Religion and the Rise of Modern Culture* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), is also concerned to think through the rise of modernity and the ways in which "religion" and "culture" were ultimately set at odds with each other during and after the Enlightenment.

Certainly there is no end to the writing (and reading) of books.

*Brad Green teaches theology at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, where he also serves on the board of The Augustine School.*

# Can Conversation Lead The Way?

by Stanley J. Ward

*I*ronically named, physicist David Bohm (1917-1992) worked on the Manhattan Project. During his later years, he conceived of dialogue groups as a way to deal with problems threatening mankind.

David Bohm's *On Dialogue* is not merely about talking; it is about thinking. More to the point: it is thinking about thinking. Not only does Bohm contemplate the nature of how thought affects both human awareness and human behavior, but he also argues that individuals need to be aware of how they are thinking. He calls this process "propsioception." This self-aware thinking is needed because many of society's problems are rooted in its patterns of thought. During propsioception one is aware of his thoughts, but not necessarily judging or resisting those thoughts. Negative thoughts and emotions are witnessed, but there is no attempt to interfere with them. This kind of thinking makes genuine dialogue possible.

The dialogue process that Bohm suggests begins with a large group of people (at least 20) who meet together for an extended period of time and agree to one simple purpose: to talk with each other. A true dialogue session according to Bohm's method has no other purpose. Dialogue is not a debate – it has no winner or loser. Neither is it pragmatic in the normative sense. Its purpose is two-fold: to make one listen, *really listen*, to the ideas of others while also requiring one to be aware of one's own presuppositions. Like Steven Covey, Bohm wants people to seek first to understand, then to be understood. The hope is that this process has a synergistic power that allows all who participate to become part of a group mind – aware of the ideas of the other party and not emphatically defending one's own ideas. Dialogue is Bohm's suggested

response to increasing societal fragmentation. In addition, dialogue groups have the potential to birth genuinely new ideas.

Certainly there is a real benefit in being aware of one's mental and emotional state. The person who practices propsioception when angry will discover that simply being aware of one's anger has an ameliorating effect. What Bohm proposes has a therapeutic dimension, but that is not the main point of the exercise. In spite of its benefits, certain pragmatic questions about propsioception need to be answered. For example, meta-thinking can become a sort of infinite regression. Does one need to be self-aware of the propsioception process? To Bohm's credit, his concern with thinking is correct. Human thought patterns do seem to have a certain destructive bent. Consider the near unbroken chain of wars throughout human history, or even the trend toward individual greed for the sake of personal peace and prosperity at the exclusion of others.

In spite of its potential benefits, the book still lacks an important practical element. Bohm does not satisfactorily develop what to do after one is self-aware. He does encourage one to consider what root issues might be behind negative emotions, but he does not explain precisely how to do that. Indeed, though the original emphasis of the book is to create community by building dialogue groups, the propsioception process itself is highly individualistic.

Bohm's dialogue groups will not find a broad reception in a Western capitalist society. The policy makers and people managers of Western society do not have the patience to sit in a room for no other purpose than to talk with people of a

different mindset. However, a modified version of the Bohm dialogue group would work. In this model people would meet to discuss an actual issue, or attempt to solve a very real problem. Time and space would be set aside for real listening, with the hope of creating genuine understanding.

Bohm's concern for a society that has a sense of shared meaning is warranted. The growth of families choosing increasingly diverse educational programs for their children, the loss of a unifying metanarrative, and the growth of specialized media outlets continue to challenge the possibility of a democracy based on some common assumptions. This threatens more than social unity. How can an increasingly pluralistic (and even polarized) society be governed? The worst option: totalitarianism. Applications of Bohm's concepts

are necessary for democracy to thrive in America's increasingly diverse culture with multiple forms of media. Too often those media sources serve merely to reinforce presuppositions rather than to actually inform minds with new ideas.

Teachers who lead seminar discussions could use Bohm's principles to guide their student's conversations, with the modification that their particular dialogue will have a specific goal. This approach would be similar to Mortimer Adler's Paidea model. Anyone who desires to converse about ideas, and not simply argue their own point, can benefit from this brief text.

*Stan Ward teaches Bible and History at The Brookhill School in Bullard, Texas*

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# Words, Words, Words

by Marvin Padgett

*O*f the writing of books there is no end. Believe nothing you hear, half of what you see — how much of what you read?

Stories told by the ancients from one generation to the next became scratches on stones which became scratches on parchment which became ink lying on top of parchment which became ink scratches deepening into paper which became ink pressed by wooden blocks onto paper which became ink pressed into paper by lead which became little glowing things on screens and now . . . not so glowing things on electronic pads and magnetic “impressions” on metallicized pieces of paper. Where does it all end? Or not?

The primary vehicle for the transmission of all of the things we cherish is no longer the memories of our elders and patriarchs. Now we have electronic readers, electronic pads, and so on.

In the end the power of words remains the main thing in the transmission of culture. This is how we know where we—our culture—used to be. And where it may be now. What people like us thought, taught, and fought over. Without the “written” word we are profoundly lost. With the written word we are truly empowered to evaluate, to look around, to assess what the people and forces that surround us and attempt to dominate and bamboozle us really are.

Books, magazines, letters, etc., ultimately matter far more than the moving, talking images we see on our walls and screens. Here is the real meat of what our civilization stands upon. Without these simple hieroglyphics, we’re in big trouble.

Read, read, and read some more. Think, cogitate, ruminate about what others who are far

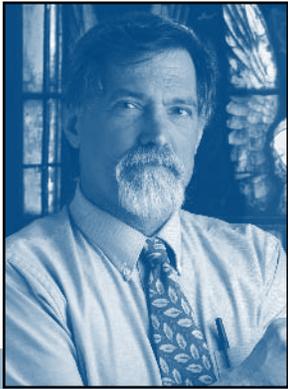
from your comfortable little setting think or have thought. Enjoy it.

Read novels to see how imagination can bring real light to our past and present. To what others might have thought and how they might have acted.

Now read carefully. Evaluate what you read. All of us have our cultural preferences and ideas, but by wide reading we can truly look around and ask “foolish” questions that may truly probe our immediate circumstances. Learn to read. Learn to do more than translate coded scratches on a page, whether that page is made from wood or by movement of electrons. Learn to probe.

*Marvin Padgett is the Editorial VP at P&R Publishing and father, father-in-law, and grandfather of fourteen avid readers. He and his wife, Jean, owned a Christian bookstore for twelve years.*

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Christian Kopff



Susan's most recent book for Norton, *The History of the Ancient World: From the Earliest Accounts to the Fall of Rome* (2007) is the first in a four-volume series providing a narrative world history. Her previous book, *The Well-Educated Mind: A Guide to the Classical Education You Never Had* (2003), is a guide to reading the classic works of fiction, poetry, history, autobiography, and drama. Norton also published *The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home* (with co-author Jessie Wise); originally published in 1999, this bestselling guide to education in the classical tradition was revised and updated in 2004. Susan has also written a four-volume world history series for children, is a contributing editor to *Books & Culture*, and frequently contributes to *Christianity Today*.

Susan Wise Bauer



Tracy Lee Simmons is the director of the Dow Journalism School at Hillsdale College, a program he founded. He describes himself as a literary and cultural journalist. He writes regularly for *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, *The New Criterion*, and others. He spent part of his childhood in England where he was taught Latin and Greek by reading classical texts in their original languages. He went on to receive his masters degree from Oxford. Mr. Simmons is the author of *Climbing Parnassus, A New Apologia for Greek and Latin*, which arose out of a challenge given to him by the late William F. Buckley, and he is currently working on two books about Thomas Jefferson.

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