



SOCIETY
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A conversation on education in the classical tradition



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ROBERT INGRAM, SCL CHAIRMAN

After several readings of each of the articles in this edition of the Journal, I now know better why James exhorts, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” (James 3:1)

James was not insinuating that God would judge teachers regarding their degree of compliance with accreditation standards or the thoroughness of their curriculum mapping. No, rather, God’s appraisal of our teaching, and hence his possible judgment, will be an ax laid at the root of the tree.

The root of the tree in James seems to be whether or not the teachers were addressing the more fundamental issues of how the affections were being cultivated in that community of believers. As Grant Horner states in his article, quoting Milton, “The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first Parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue.” In other words, we must cultivate the affections of our students. “The problem for us fallen creatures is that our affections and virtually all of our other emotions are disordered. We need to learn how to order them rightly,” observes Gene Veith in his article.

Is that not the problem James is confronting in his epistle? It is not whether teachers are transferring data at the highest possible level of efficiency. It is that “you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart (3:14); “that your passions are at war within you” (4:1); each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.” (1:14).

The “greater strictness” by which teachers will be judged may have everything to do with how directly and how well they help their students cultivate godly affections. We must learn to love what Christ loves, and to eschew what he hates. In addition, teachers must also model these virtues, being “doers of the word and not hearers only” (1:22).

Because for a teacher it is sobering to read James, it is encouraging to read each of the exceptionally fine articles in this edition of the *Journal*. Be reminded that teaching is a soulish endeavor, and we must cultivate “not just external knowledge but also the inner life” (Veith).

Rev. Robert Ingram

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Cultivating the Affections

by Peter H. Vande Brake

Our job would be easy if all we had to do was transfer knowledge. If a student really were like an empty bucket that merely needed to be filled in order to be “educated,” then the hardest part of our task as teachers might be deciding what the most appropriate “filler” would be. The rest would just be an uncomplicated task of filling the bucket. But, of course, it isn’t so simple because the end of education is not knowledge retention or even thinking; it is *acting* based on what we know. In other words, we want our Christian classical schools to produce discerning, virtuous students who will act in accordance with the Good. This can only happen when we cultivate the affections of our students.

Jonathan Edwards defines affections as “the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul” (Edwards, 24). So when we are talking about cultivating the affections, we are talking about reaching the wills of our students as well as their minds. Thus, as David Hicks rightly states, “The noble intention of [the great teacher’s] teaching, like that of all great literature and art, is the antithesis of pornography: to move his students to will a moral act, as opposed to an immoral one” (Hicks, 73). The question is how do we do this? How can we move a student to will a moral act? There is, of course, no fool-proof way to ensure that a student will act morally of his or her own volition, but if we are going to make any headway in this endeavor, then we must cultivate the affections; we do this by means of liturgy, love, and example.

We human beings are basically lovers, not knowledge receptacles. We are more apt to act on our affections than on our knowledge. We go with our gut. However, this does not mean that we are creatures that are entirely ruled by instinct. We are also creatures of habit. As James K. A. Smith has pointed out, we participate in various “cultural liturgies” that have the power to shape our desires. Smith has broadened the concept of liturgy to include any kind of formative practice in which we participate. To make this point in the introduction to his book, *Desiring the Kingdom*, Smith describes an outing to the mall in religious language as a form of a “cultural liturgy” in which many of us partake from time to time. He affirms the power of these kinds of liturgies in the following way:

Liturgies—whether “sacred” or “secular”—shape

and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world. In short, liturgies make us certain kinds of people, and what defines us is what we love. They do this because we are the sorts of animals whose orientation to the world is shaped from the body up more than from the head down. Liturgies aim our love to different ends precisely by training our hearts through our bodies. . . . In short, every liturgy constitutes a pedagogy that teaches us, in all sorts of precognitive ways, to be a certain kind of person. Hence every liturgy is an education, and embedded in every liturgy is an implicit worldview or “understanding” of the world. (Smith, 25)

Thus, our affections and desires are trained by our schedules and rituals. This is also affirmed by Hicks in *Norms and Nobility* when he says that “the purpose of education is not the assimilation of facts or the retention of information, but the habituation of the mind and body to will and act in accordance with what one knows” (Hicks, 20). Education is not merely the vehicle for training the mind but also the way in which we bridle the heart.

So then, the kinds of liturgies or rituals or habits in which we participate on a daily basis are important because they shape us in significant ways. Liturgies cultivate the affections. The ways we choose to spend our time shape our desires and affections. The liturgies we observe on a daily basis serve as a kind of practice or training for decision-making and living. There are times that we know what to do because we have been trained to do it. For example, players on a basketball team know which lanes to fill on a fast break because they have done it in practice hundreds of times. Soldiers on the battlefield follow orders to put themselves in harm’s way because they have been intensively trained to overcome fear and press forward into certain danger. They don’t have to think about it or debate it, they know what to do, and they act in accordance with what they know.

If we want students who will be servant leaders, then we need to train them through a liturgy of servant leadership. We need to give them the opportunities to

serve others. We need to find ways to help our students practice humility and instill a strong work ethic. We need to give students the chance to lead their peers in authentic ways. In order for students to act in accordance with what they know, they must be trained to know how to act. This involves the mind, but it also involves the will and the body. If our schools are only interested in training the minds of our students, then we are cheating them out of the most important facets of an education.

The second way in which we cultivate the affections of our students is by loving them. This love that we have for our students arises out of the task of mastering a body of knowledge together. This activity of learning provides a common ground of friendship for the teacher and the student while also accentuating their unequal status (Hicks, 40-41). The love that a teacher has for a student is personal and exhibits itself in genuine concern for the well-being and proper formation of the heart of the child.

This concept of love of a teacher for his or her students is almost incomprehensible to the modern person because of the frequent sensational stories of sexual scandals between teachers and students that are reported by the tabloid media. Most people in the age we live in are “unable to distinguish between the erotic and the pornographic, between the love that moves the spheres and enlightens men’s minds and a love kindled in the loins” (Hicks, 41). The proper love that a teacher has for his or her students is not sexual, but it is intimate because the concerns of classical scholarship are fundamentally human and normative concerns that touch people’s lives and prepare them to live more fully in all the domains of their lives—the individual, the social, the religious (Hicks, 41-42). Hicks describes the fitting progression of the relationship between the teacher and student in this way:

The pupil becomes a part of the teacher’s own studies, his intimate relationship with the school-teacher making him, perforce, even more than an observer—an assistant and participant in the ongoing inquiry. A lively dialectic arises, educating both. In truth, such mutual learning is the unavoidable, happy consequence of a profound and intimate relationship between the teacher and his pupil. (Hicks, 42)

The result of this relationship for the classroom is manifested in all students treating each other fairly and with respect. Students don’t put themselves or their own interests ahead of others, but they create an environment where

people can flourish. Love engenders trust. If a student trusts his or her teacher then the teacher can be much more effective as a guide and a mentor to the will of a student.

Finally, we teach our students to will moral choices by being an example to them. If we profess to teach the knowledge that makes a person virtuous and wise, then our lives need to illuminate our teaching (Hicks, 41). Our students learn more from our actions than our words. The commander who leads his men into battle cultivates their affections much more deeply than the one who calls in a plan of attack over the radio. A teacher who embodies humility and self-sacrifice will always have attentive pupils.

In *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis compares teachers educating children to grown birds teaching fledglings how to fly. The grown birds do this by example and by pushing the young birds out of the nest—beyond their comfort zone and beyond what they think they can handle. Lewis says that this kind of teaching is an act of “propagation.” It is the “transmitting of manhood to men” (Lewis, 23). This act of propagation is what gives shape and integrity to the “chest” or “middle element” between the cerebral man and the visceral man where the emotions are organized by trained habit into stable sentiments. He says that this middle element is where “man is man: for by his intellect he is merely spirit and by his appetite mere animal” (Lewis 24-25).

Cultivating the affections of a child by living as an example of virtue before him or her is propagating virtue in that child. It is teaching a child to will a moral choice instead of an immoral one. It is by this modeling and through the work of the Holy Spirit that the conscience is formed, and good choices are made.

Classical schools educators must not only strive to harness the power of the intellect but also to bridle the heart. Through cultivation of the affections, we help our students steer their desires in the right direction. Our work is much more agricultural than industrial in its nature. We need to think much more like farmers than factory workers. We cultivate, we sow, we weed, and we tend. In this way we form, direct, nurture, and grow the affections of the children that we love.

Peter Vande Brake is the former headmaster of North Hills Classical Academy (1998-2010). He is a leadership consultant for the CiRCE Institute and is working in the Mentorship Program at The Potter’s House School in Grand Rapids, MI. He is married and has two daughters.

When “Men Without Chests” Rule the World

by Linda Dey

Teaching young people to think rightly about themselves and the world is not enough. Ideas matter but they amount to little if the desires of one’s heart are pulling him in another direction. It is rare that someone chooses to act solely on the basis of a set of well-reasoned arguments; one’s desires and affections play a significant role in determining the shape of one’s life. Given the skill of our modern world’s appeal to the eye and to the heart, we should not be surprised that the heads and the hearts of many of our students are pulling in different directions.

This understanding is behind C. S. Lewis’s warning in *The Abolition of Man* that modern education is creating “men without chests”, that is, people without properly trained and ordered affections or desires. Lewis asserts, “Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism...The head [must rule] the belly through the chest - the seat...of the emotions organized by trained habits into stable sentiments.”

Lewis gives us the imaginative version of this argument in his novel *That Hideous Strength*. At the center of the story is a newly-married couple, both of whom have received modern educations, who live in a small university town which is undergoing enormous changes as the ideas taught in many classrooms of the university are being acted upon and taken to their logical conclusions by a small group of men called the “Progressive Element”.

Mark Studdock, the young husband and a fellow at the university, is being courted by this group of men to join their enterprise centered in an institution called the N.I.C.E., the National Institute for Coordinated Experiments. Mark is well along the road to becoming a “man without a chest”, and Lewis makes clear that his education has played a major role in this.

...in Mark’s mind hardly one rag of noble thought, either Christian or Pagan, had a secure lodging. His education had been neither scientific nor classical - merely ‘Modern’. The severities both of abstraction and of high human tradition had passed him by ... He was a man of straw, a glib examinee in subjects that require no exact knowledge...and the first hint of real threat to his bodily life knocked him sprawling.

No noble thoughts came to him at a moment of crisis because his education had been devoid of training in right sentiments.

In this fantasy in which images speak even louder than words, the institute into which Mark is being drawn is run by the disembodied head of a renowned scientist with a swollen brain protruding from its skull kept alive in a sterile lab by being connected with tubes to some complicated medical machinery. This vivid image of a “man without a chest” makes periodic pronouncements from its drooling mouth and supposedly presides over the institute’s project of taking over the human race and reconditioning it. The goal is to produce a Technocratic and Objective Man who will lead civilization into a new age. Mark must be trained to be like the Conditioners who do the Head’s bidding.

In *The Abolition of Man* Lewis says that modern educators have “misunderstood the pressing educational need of the moment. They see the world around them swayed by emotional propaganda...and they conclude that the best thing they can do is to fortify the minds of young people against emotion...[They don’t understand that] the right defense against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments. By starving the sensibility of our pupils we only make them easier prey for the propagandist when he comes. For famished nature will be avenged and a hard heart is no infallible protection against a soft head.” Mark’s earlier education had been along these lines and had prepared him for membership in the N.I.C.E.

Mark’s final training for acceptance into the institute consists of time spent in a place called the Objectivity Room the purpose of which is to destroy all natural human emotions and reactions in him and produce “objectivity”. This training is based on the premise that all natural feelings are subjective and are merely chemical phenomena. Mark’s trainer tells him:

Friendship is a chemical phenomenon; so is hatred... one must go outside the whole world of our subjective emotions. It is only as you begin to do so that you discover how much of what you mistook for your thought was merely a by-product of your blood and nervous tissue.

In the Objectivity Room Lewis gives us another vivid image of these ideas. It is a high, narrow, windowless room lit by a single bright cold light. It is ill-proportioned, lop-sided; there are no right angles and everything is a bit off. Hanging on the walls of the room are paintings which at a glance seem ordinary but which contain perverse or grotesque details such as a Last Supper with beetles crawling all over the table. Mark is to be left alone in this room for a prolonged period which will supposedly kill his affinity for harmony, balance, and order. One's ideas of beauty as well as goodness are meant to be written off as merely subjective.

Lewis points out in *The Abolition of Man* that once the Conditioners (such as those leading the N.I.C.E.) have moved everything that pre-modern man considered to be objective into the category of the subjective, there is really nothing left but the will of some to have power or control over others.

It is in Man's power to treat himself as a mere 'natural object' and his own judgments of value as raw material for scientific manipulation to alter at will ... The real objection is that if man chooses to treat himself as raw material, raw material he will be: not raw material to be manipulated, as he fondly imagined, by himself, but by mere appetite, that is, mere Nature, in the person of his de-humanized Conditioners.

His time in the Objectivity Room does not have the desired effect on Mark. His heart is not completely dead, and he finds himself reacting against "the built and painted perversity of this room" and longing for the "Normal", as he called it. "As the desert first teaches men to love water, or as absence first reveals affection, there rose up against this background of the sour and the crooked some kind of vision of the sweet and the straight." Enough humanness remained in Mark to save him and turn him around.

As the N.I.C.E. is pursuing its program to take over the university and the town, Mark's wife Jane is driven to seek safety among a very different community of people living together in a large manor house on a hilltop in a village called St. Anne's. In his portrayal of this community Lewis gives us a picture of the Normal, "the sweet and the straight". This house is surrounded by lush gardens and a stone wall. Whereas at the N.I.C.E. animals of all kinds are kept in pens to be used for experimentation, the animals at St. Anne's are cherished

"servants and playfellows". The beauty, warmth, and sheer homey-ness of this place is a welcome contrast to the sterile, cold, and ugly place called Belbury where the N.I.C.E. is housed.

This community is presided over by a very different kind of head, a Director who rules over others with full awareness that he is under the rule of Someone infinitely higher than himself and who knows that there are fixed realities both visible and invisible to which he and the rest of the company must conform. Jane meets with this man in the room where he is confined as an invalid. It is called the Blue Room and is a visual antithesis of the Objectivity Room. It has many windows that let in the light of day, and it is warmed by a fire on a hearth. Its predominant color is blue. There was a "clear beauty in the colours and proportions of the room" which had the effect of calming and comforting Jane who had arrived at St. Anne's in a state of extreme fear. She had come as well with a strong determination to stay in control of herself, not to be "taken in". But in this room before this kind, strong-hearted Director both of these states melt away; "her world was unmade."

In this room the reshaping of Jane's affections begins. Her modern ideas about marriage and equality are immediately challenged as the Director explains how little love and equality have to do with each other. As she lives in this company where obedience to something higher than oneself is taken seriously, she sees true equality in the absence of class distinctions and the willingness of each member to share in the work and serve the needs of others. She is at first taken aback by seeing her former charwoman Ivy in this company being treated as an equal by the others, and she discovers that she is not quite so modern as she thought she was. She eventually surrenders "that prim little grasp on her own destiny, that perpetual reservation, which she thought essential to her status as a grown-up, integrated, intelligent person," and she begins to experience delight and joy in a myriad of simple things outside of herself. Most importantly, she comes to see Mark and her marriage with new eyes, and when the two are reunited at the end of the story, their marriage begins anew on a much stronger footing as both have learned important lessons about the eternal verities to which one must conform in order to be fully human.

In this day many might consider the attempt to train the affections to be interference in an area of a young person's life that should be allowed to develop freely and naturally. This is, however, interference

which young people desperately need. It's what G.K. Chesterton had in mind when he said that education is interference. "Education is violent because it is creative," says Chesterton. "It is as ruthless as playing the fiddle; as dogmatic as drawing a picture; as brutal as building a house. In short, it is what all human action is: it is interference with life and growth." The old hymn reminds us that, just like a fiddle, our hearts need to be properly tuned: "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, tune our

hearts to sing Thy grace." Teachers and parents can participate in the task of tuning hearts by, among other things, filling the imaginations of those under their care with images of things that are truly noble and lovely, "sweet and straight." Who, having seen both, would choose Belbury over St. Anne's?

Linda Dey is the principal of the Imago School in Maynard, MA, and the associate editor of The SCL Journal.

pre CONFERENCE & PLENARY GUEST SPEAKER

Susan's parents taught her at home for most of elementary and middle school, and all of high school. She entered college at seventeen as a Presidential Scholar and National Merit finalist, and finished her B.A. in five semesters with a major in English, a minor in Greek and a summer spent studying twentieth century theology as a Visiting Student at Oxford. She went on to earn a Master of Divinity from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, an M.A. in English language and literature at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, and her Ph.D. in American Studies, with a major field in the history of American religion. She has been a member of the faculty at the College of William and Mary for fifteen years.

Susan's most recent book for W. W. Norton, *The History of the Medieval World: From the Conversion of Constantine to the First Crusade* (2010) is the second in a four-volume series providing a narrative world history. Her other books include *The History of the Ancient World: From the Earliest Accounts to the Fall of Rome* (W W. Norton, 2007); *The Well-Educated Mind: A Guide to the Classical Education You Never Had* (W. W. Norton, 2003), a guide to reading the classic works of fiction, poetry, history, autobiography, and drama. Norton also published the classic guide to home schooling *The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home* (with co-author Jessie Wise), now in its third edition.

Susan has written a four-volume world history series for children, *The Story of the World*, for Peace Hill Press. She is also the author of *The Complete Writer* and many other resources for parents and educators.

She has four home-schooled children, ranging in age from fourth grade to post-high school. Her oldest son is a sophomore at the University of Virginia, where he is studying drama and cinematography. Her second son just graduated from high school and is currently taking his gap year.



Susan Wise Bauer

See page 22 for titles and descriptions of Susan's Pre-Conference and Plenary sessions.

2012
SUMMER CONFERENCE

Birds of a Feather, or The True Meaning of Friendship

by Terrence O. Moore

“*B*irds of a feather flock together,” my mother told me over and over again while I was growing up. At first I had no idea what she meant. But gradually it dawned on me that the sorts of people I spent time with somehow had an influence on the sort of man I would become. If I wasted my time with ne’er-do-wells, I would become a ne’er-do-well. If I made friends with the studious and athletic types, I would most likely be both studious and athletic. Who knows? Maybe I could have a good influence on some poor, undirected child who didn’t know whether to listen to the devil on one shoulder or the angel on the other.

My sense is that sayings like these—and there used to be hundreds of them, for most every aspect of childrearing and life in general—have largely passed out of usage, though perhaps the parents who send their children to a classical school are more likely to cling to their grandparents’ old sayings, to say nothing of their guns and their Bibles. I suspect, though, that even in a classical school, teachers find that students are more influenced by the silly mantras of modern culture—at best empty clichés about “respecting others” now that the word respect has lost its original meaning and, above all, respecting others’ ideas, no matter how misguided or base. Modern culture, you see, urges less discrimination and judgment with regard to people’s character since being discriminatory and judgmental is about the only thing you are not allowed to be in the modern world. Yet if my mother’s maxim holds true, the lack of discrimination and judgment leaves children and young people morally vulnerable in a world where precious little moral instruction is offered. In fact, it abandons them to an adolescent ghetto, where the latest thing done or said by a rap star or Lady Gaga passes for the apogee of coolness. It would seem, then, that a classical school, as not only a place where children come to be instructed in the fundamentals of sound learning but also in the first principles of sound morality, should spend some time on the topic of friendship.

To help young people understand and indeed improve their friendships, teachers should, where appropriate in the curriculum, engage students in a

Socratic dialogue suited to their capacities. For example, while reading Tom Sawyer (usually in upper elementary or middle school), the teacher might ask, “Are Tom and Huck friends?” “Of course,” will be the answer. Here the teacher might play “stupid” for a moment. “So you all have friends, then? And you recognize that Tom and Huck are friends because you know what friendship looks like?” “Sure.” “And is friendship important, that is, is it important to have friends?” In fact, very little is as important to young people as having friends, and they will say so. “Okay, then, define what a friend is.” Now the plot will thicken a little. Most likely the students will say that a friend is someone you like to be with or to hang out with, or it is someone who has the same interests as you do or who knows you better than others do or someone “you can be yourself around.” The more thoughtful students will say that a friend is someone you can count on.

Then the question becomes whether a friend is a good person and whether friendship is a good thing. The students will answer universally “yes.” “A friend, then, is someone you want to have around and someone who wants the best for you?” “Of course.” “So, then, can bank robbers be friends?” Here the question gets a little tricky. If they say yes, then we must ask whether bank robbers can be good people and remind the students that we said friends are good people. Further, how could wanting your friend to engage in a life of crime and possibly be shot or put in jail for life be wanting the best for you? If the students say no—or come to that conclusion after some further questioning—then we have to figure out the flaw in our logic from the beginning. (Realize that bank robbers hang out together, have the same interests, and rely on each other. Yet bank robbers are not good.)

To solve this conundrum, we should consult the classical authors on friendship. (For younger students, the classical authors are a little hard to read, but students can certainly be told these things.) Cicero in his dialogue *De Amicitia* (On Friendship), a work that used to be widely read in upper schools, agrees with our own students in saying that friendship is an important human experience.

In fact, he regards it as “the greatest thing in the world.” Nonetheless, he defines friendship more exclusively than our students might. According to Cicero, “friendship can only exist between good men.” He further defines “the good” as “those whose actions and lives leave no question as to their honor, purity, equity, and liberality; who are free from greed, lust, and violence; and who have the courage of their convictions.”

Therefore, according to Cicero’s more exacting definition, bank robbers can never be friends. Cicero furthers says that a true friend will give good advice, even correct a person when he is doing something wrong. In other words, a friend is not just someone you “hang out with” but a person who urges you to do the good and prevents you from doing the bad. And if you were to persist in doing the bad, the friendship would have to cease. In modern parlance, the good person would “fire” you as a friend. The question now is whether the students really have friends or merely acquaintances: peers but by no means true friends.

St. Augustine reminds us in his *Confessions* that groups of young people do not always pursue the good. As a youth he and some other boys stole pears from a nearby orchard. He did not need the pears because he had plenty of his own. He did not eat the pears but instead threw them to the pigs. When he reflected on this event years later, he concluded that he only stole the pears because he was in the company of other “ruffians.” Had he been alone, he would have never done so. A few years later, Augustine spent his time with youth his age talking about girls. The subject was whether the boys had done such and such with this or that girl. Even when they had not done things, they would make up stories, so ashamed they were of having not done shameful things. That’s right! Locker-room talk in the fifth century, in which a future saint took part. How times don’t change! Were these boys friends? Later reflection led Augustine to the conclusion that they were not, though those attachments and his reputation among the boys meant a great deal to him at the time.

Students might be invited to reflect upon their own conduct. Whenever students break the rules in school or disrupt classes by whispering or note-passing, do they do so as lone individuals or in groups? When they get into trouble or do mischievous things outside of school (toilet-papering a house, for instance), do they do so on their own or as a group of conspirators? In fact, is not planning the conspiracy half the fun? Students must realize these small

partnerships in chaos are not groups of friends—at least not at that moment—but rather groups of wrongdoers. The essential question of friendship is whether your friends appeal to your baser or your higher passions, whether to the base or the noble.

Further insight into friendship can be found in Aristotle’s *Ethics*. In fact, it is worth noting that Aristotle devotes more time in the *Ethics* to friendship than any other subject, even justice. Aristotle, as we might expect, is a little more practical and offers less of an either/or than the combined force of Cicero and Augustine (though it is actually useful to begin with the clearer distinction). Aristotle classifies friendship into three types: those based on utility, those based on pleasure, and those formed by people “who are good and are alike in virtue.” An example of the first would be a business deal. The second type is very much like “hanging out,” as students put it. In fact, Aristotle states that friendship based on pleasure is most characteristic of young people. “But the friendship of the young seems to be based on pleasure, since they live in accord with feeling, and pursue especially what is pleasant to themselves and present at hand.” Here is the rub. Those kinds of friendships do not last very long. As soon as the friend is gone, that pleasure can be found with someone else. Or, to use the modern term, pleasure friendships are not very “deep.” Friendships between good people, whose purpose is often a mutual pursuit of the good (such as the good to be found in the life of the polis), have this characteristic: they last. Typically this is not the friendship of the young.

Armed with this understanding of friendship, we might return to our original question: Can Tom and Huck be friends? Presumably this question also has some bearing on the students’ own lives. Nevertheless it is a tough question to apply either to Tom Sawyer or to students. Tom and Huck, on our first meeting them, are having a conversation about curing warts with dead cats or with spunk water. Is that a case of utility or pleasure? Or might there be even some virtue in getting rid of “thousands” of warts? Further, young people (what we now call teenagers) are characters in the making. They are not as yet formed; they are serving an apprenticeship in humanity. So they can’t be said to be virtuous—not completely—before they have done anything, just as they cannot be considered citizens until they have voted and paid taxes. Further, most young people do not get together to discuss Plato; nor should they. Even Plato and Aristotle did not think young people should study philosophy.

This question is important since it causes us to reflect on the examples we can give students of the friendships they should long to have one day as well as the friendships they can attain right now. Once we know what friendship is, we cannot fail to realize the tradition of the West provides many examples of friendship in history and great literature: the Founding Fathers, the characters in Jane Austen novels, Henry V, to name a few. Our students should be required to see how important friendship was to these real statesmen or to these compelling characters and how, without friendship—without love—their ventures would have come to naught. At the same time, we must treasure those books (not really found among the ancient classics) that shed light on human beings in the making, the incipient efforts of young people to develop friendships based on virtue, that is, based on a good bigger than themselves. Recently, I wrote a book in which the protagonists (heroes, I would claim) are thirteen years old. I had to struggle with creating dialogue that was both plausible for adolescents and yet somehow aimed at times toward the good. This exercise made me realize how hard

a task it is to offer good accounts of young heroes in the making and thus why we should treasure such classics as *Tom Sawyer*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Franklin's *Autobiography*, and Churchill's *My Early Life*. Nor are these books to be read and enjoyed only by children. A truly great children's book should shed light on the whole scope of human life. Further, such books lead students to question whether they are on the right trajectory to do the good and to do the good—as they must—with other people whom they will call friends. The ancients and the Founding Fathers, you see, knew that friendship is about the most powerful force in the world. By the way, if you think Tom and Huck's friendship ends with curing warts and trading ticks for lost teeth, read on.

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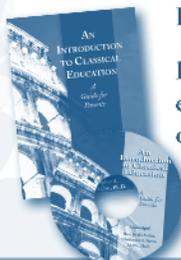
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James K.A. Smith is professor of philosophy at Calvin College where he also teaches in the department of congregational & ministry studies and serves as a research fellow of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Jamie is an award-winning author whose books include *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?*; *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*; *Letters to a Young Calvinist*, and most recently, *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning* (co-edited with David Smith). His writing has also appeared in magazines such as the *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, *Christian Century*, *First Things*, and *Books & Culture*. He and his wife, Deanna, have 4 children and are committed urban dwellers who make their home in the East Hills neighborhood of Grand Rapids, MI. Learn more about Mr. Smith at www.jameskasmith.com.



James K. A. Smith

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 years, 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.



Ken Myers

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The Greatest of All Things

by Andrew Kern

“As the Hart panteth after the water-brooks,
so panteth my soul after Thee, Oh God.” Psalm 41:1

A friend of mine posted on Facebook a picture of his high school-aged daughter and some of her friends who attended a private school together. He mentioned how different these girls were from the ones he knew in his public school experience. It reminded me of an experience I had about ten years ago. I was leaving Boise, ID, where I had for five years the immeasurable joy of teaching a group of home school students in a Humane Letters tutorial.

We spent one year studying the Greeks, one year on the Romans, one year on Shakespeare, one year on the Middle Ages, mostly in Dante, and one year on American history beginning with the ancient Hebrews. A few of these students were with me for four years, a few more for three. They were unique students, impressively free and open with each other. Now they are unique and wonderful adults. Partly because I was able to spend so much time with them, teaching them may well be the highlight of my professional life.

Then one day my family and I decided to move to North Carolina. The Boise students and families gathered for an end-of-the-year picnic that summer, and I found myself in a conversation with one of the mothers of my students. I remember it going something like this:

Me: “I have never seen such amazing friendships among teenagers in my life. Is it because they had determined not to date while they were in high school?”

Mother: “That probably had something to do with it, but you played a role, too. You fed their souls by discussing great books and great ideas with them. So their souls grew. A bigger soul makes one a better friend. So their friendships are deeper because you fed their souls.”

I’ve long cherished both my friendships with those students and these words from one of their mothers. They remind me, in turn, of Augustine’s words in his *Confessions*: “Narrow is the mansion of my soul; enlarge Thou it, that Thou mayest dwell therein.”

My friend’s daughter and her friends were admirably different from those in a conventional school.

My friends in Boise had richer friendships. St. Augustine became a habitation for the Spirit of God. Why? Because their souls were fed.

Even the best and noblest public schools operate within a system that works against the soul if only because they do not deliberately and consciously nourish it. Unfortunately, most private schools learn to teach and drink at the same wadis as the secular schools. The result is what C. S. Lewis warned us about in his 1943 book, *The Abolition of Man*: a post-human world in which students’ souls are famished and unable to find the springs for which they yearn.

We do our students a disservice when we concern ourselves so much with the tangible, the “practical,” and the measurable that we neglect to attend to their souls. In fact, not only do we neglect to cultivate healthy affections, we actively cultivate disordered affections by teaching them on the naturalistic patterns of the conventional school. We must redirect our attention to the health of their souls.

This redirection changes everything, including how we teach, what we teach, and the atmosphere in which we teach. It changes everything because what is good for the soul often conflicts with what is good for worldly gain, which is the object of conventional education. The body needs clothing, food, and drink. The soul needs what is true, just, noble, pure, lovely, virtuous, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). These are the standards that guide us when we decide what to think about with our students.

How do we teach differently? I can think of no more concise and vivid description of the role of the Christian teacher than that provided by Charlotte Mason in the synopsis she wrote near the end of her long contemplation of education. She said that, because the child is a person, “we are limited to three educational instruments—the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit, and the presentation of living ideas.”

We don’t populate the atmosphere with twaddle or vacuous misrepresentations of Bible stories. Instead, we order it by and fill it with what is noble and praiseworthy. We don’t indulge their appetites; instead, we discipline their habits through drills, narrations, copy work, carefully

passionate discussions, and self-governed expression. We don't deluge them with meaningless, disconnected bits of information; instead, we arouse their minds to engage living ideas.

We also teach different matter. Who cares if Jane runs? I sure don't. But everybody wants to know whether the ants should have fed the grasshopper, whether Caesar should have crossed the Rubicon, and whether Odysseus should have slaughtered the suitors. These things matter because they arouse the right questions. They help students clarify their thoughts about what is just and fair, what is wise and prudent, and what is noble and honorable. Classical teachers have found for centuries that children care deeply about these questions.

One of the most frequently taught and best loved books of the classical curriculum has long been Cicero's *On Friendship*. It's not academic and it isn't particularly practical, unless, like your students, you think friendship is practical. But it is a soul-transforming, affection-refining book. I have a copy in which I preserve a rose two of my students gave me way back in 1995, when, for the first time, I read it with a class (I believe it is the only flower I have ever been given).

Together as a class we discussed words like these:

- Such is the pleasure I take in recalling our friendship, that I look upon my life as having been a happy one because I have spent it with Scipio.
- All I can do is to urge you to regard friendship as the greatest thing in the world; for there is nothing which so fits in with our nature, or is so exactly what we want in prosperity or adversity.
- Friendship can only exist between good men.
- Virtue... is the parent and preserver of friendship, and without it friendship cannot exist.
- Nature being incapable of change, it follows that genuine friendships are eternal.
- Another good rule in friendship is this: do not let an excessive affection hinder the higher interests of your friends.

What silly adult determined that children would be happier, not to mention better, reading inane stories about "relevant" issues? We become what we behold. Our duty as teachers is both to give

our students true and noble things to behold and to teach them how to behold those things.

The Psalm quoted at the top of this article refers to a "hart." Not just any old deer, the hart is a small, hyperactive deer that continuously runs itself ragged and consequently needs to stay near the water brooks. What a perfect description of our students' souls. How can we neglect to take them to the fountain that flows with and the many cisterns that hold the true, the good, and the beautiful? How can we train them to be satisfied with the inconsistent wadis and the mud puddles of conventional schooling?

Here's a stream I like to drink from: "One piece of advice on parting. Make up your minds to this. Virtue (without which friendship is impossible) is first; but next to it, and to it alone, the greatest of all things is friendship." Cicero.

Andrew Kern is president and founder of the CiRCE Institute.



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John Milton, Proaeresis, and Education

by Grant Horner

John Milton's *Areopagitica* stands utterly alone in the great Western intellectual tradition. It was central to the rights of freedom of thought and expression in America's founding and is the single greatest anti-censorship argument ever penned. But in that same summer of 1644, Milton also wrote a much shorter, less-known work. *Of Education*, like *Areopagitica*, stands alone. Today, it still occupies primacy of place in arguments for a classical Christian education—and with good reason.

The Puritan John Milton has been called the greatest genius of the seventeenth century—the “century of genius.” This is the age of Shakespeare, of the greatest Puritan theologians, and of Francis Bacon's invention of inductive rationalism: the scientific method. Milton attended Saint Paul's School in London, where the classical curriculum and intense study of the Bible and ancient languages prepared him not only for Cambridge University but also for a long life as one of England's most-beloved poets and most-hated political polemicists—and, perhaps, its deepest thinker about Christianity and culture. Milton mastered about a dozen languages and had facility in several others, was said to have his Homer and his Bible “by heart,” and, by all scholarly account, apparently read everything available in the seventeenth century. He is best known for his epic *Paradise Lost*, but his staggering output fills a sizeable shelf of poetry and prose, theology and politics, history and cultural critique. A major intellectual force in the Commonwealth government both before and after the beheading of Charles I, he wrote extensively supporting that first toppling of a European king; his first publication—a poem on Shakespeare—came at the tender age of 23 in the second edition of Shakespeare's works; and he befriended the most famous “religious prisoner” in Europe: Galileo. And, yes— he looked through that very first telescope. Milton hardly fits the stereotypical image of a Puritan.

Then, if you can imagine such a disaster for a brilliant scholar, whose lives are their eyes: in his early forties at the height of his fame and influence, he went blind.

What he produced—his greatest long poems and many other works—after his blindness is indeed staggering and shows the power of a great mind dedicated to God.

Of Education lays out his views on classical Christian education. It is essential reading for those involved in the current revival of the ancient model.

Milton begins with one of his most famous lines¹: “The end then of Learning is to repair the ruines of our first Parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true vertue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection.” The goal of learning, for a Christian, is to begin the process of recovering from the damage of the Fall. Milton does not believe that education removes or alters the fallen nature. But ignorance is a costly way to live, and education should always teach us about ourselves, our world, and our God. It thus has the possibility of making us better people who live more wisely in this world and who love God more and more.

The problem according to Milton is that languages and other disciplines are taught poorly and unwisely. Most students have a disastrous experience: “So that they having but newly left those Grammatick flats and shallows where they stuck unreasonably to learn a few words with lamentable construction, and now on the sudden transported under another climate to be tost and turmoil'd with their unballasted wits in fadomless and unquiet deeps of controversie, do for the most part grow into hatred and contempt of Learning ... while they expected worthy and delightful knowledge.” Students are dragged, unready, into deep, complex issues before they can even parse sentences. As a result, they grow weary and contemptuous of learning.

Milton has a plan. “I shall detain you no longer in the demonstration of what we should not do, but strait conduct ye to a hill side, where I will point ye out the right path of a vertuous and noble Education; laborious indeed at the first ascent, but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospect, and melodious sounds on every side, that the Harp of Orpheus was not more charming.” A truly virtuous and noble education is difficult at first, yes, but his metaphor of ascending a hill is perfect. The first steps are painful, but, as we warm to the work, our pace quickens,

¹Milton's 17th century spelling is retained throughout this article.

our view widens, and we gain new prospects from higher positions with each passing day. Learning, instead of drudgery, becomes a thrilling adventure of exploration, challenging the mind and satisfying the soul.

Milton's full curriculum and pedagogy is beyond the scope of a short essay, but his text, though dense, is not long. He delineates a strong course of study grounded in the humanities and languages, rounded out with science, mathematics, and athletics -- including wrestling and swordsmanship! Intense reading, writing, and Socratic discussion are designed to form a critical, discerning mind. The teacher's qualities are crucial: "he who hath the Art, and proper Eloquence to catch them with, what with mild and effectual perswasions, and what with the intimation of some fear, if need be, but chiefly by his own example, might in a short space gain them to an incredible diligence and courage: infusing into their young breasts such an ingenuous and noble ardor, as would not fail to make many of them renowned and matchless men." The teacher must be someone worth imitating in both life and thought.

Milton comes to the crux of his curriculum, however, with the vexed issue of significant texts containing good and containing evil. The truly educated Christian must neither remain provincial nor bask in filth. How to strike the balance? *Areopagitica* famously argues against censorship: all minds must be free to choose what they accept or reject as wise, true, and valuable; otherwise virtue, being unexercised, will wither. But in *Of Education* his tactic is somewhat different. *Areopagitica* is a recommendation for a grown-up world of ideas; *Of Education* is about preparing young Christian minds for service.

So, after leading the students through the best that has been said and thought, Milton comes to the dangerous arena of risky material: "By this time, years and good general precepts will have furnisht them more distinctly with that act of reason which in Ethics is call'd Proairesis: that they may with some judgement contemplate upon moral good and evil." Somewhere around the age of 13 or 14, students are finally exposed to morally problematic texts: Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*; the plays of Aristophanes or much of Shakespeare; Dido and Aeneas in the cave; and most dangerous of all—the pagan philosophers and their views on matters of morality and truth. All of these cultural objects will deviate more or less from the tenets of Scripture, and, because they will do so interestingly, beautifully, and persuasively, the teacher must be extraordinarily diligent: "Then will be requir'd a special

reinforcement of constant and sound endoctrinating to set them right and firm, instructing them more amply in the knowledge of Vertue and the hatred of Vice: while their young and pliant affections are led through all the moral works of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Plutarch, Laertius, and those Locrian remnants..."

A child can be educated without experiencing the complex and often tempting moral dilemmas found in many "adult" texts; but an adult cannot be educated without grappling with these ideas at a certain minimal level. Children can be taught Aesop's fables as well as the Biblical Proverbs. But they do not yet need to read Plato's *Republic* or *Euthyphro*, or Boccaccio's *Decameron* or Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*. They are incapable of the kind of subtle moral reasoning required for and created by reading such works. But the shift from puberty to adolescence changes everything. Education should produce adults by slowly and with great care walking them through the moral complexities of the fallen world. It takes mature judgment to contemplate evil and to reject it. But that is what virtue is.

The skill that is introduced and developed at this age is called *proaeresis* and is first found in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. It could be transliterated "divide before" and is etymologically related to the word "heresy." Its semantic range includes the ideas of moral choice, will, and character. In Milton it means making moral distinctions regarding ideas, actions, or objects. It means dividing between good and evil by assenting to or rejecting what is at hand. This skill can only be learned by having the opportunity to make a mistake, or a bad decision. It is thus inherently dangerous.

How does the teacher develop *proaeresis* in the student without leading him or her into moral destruction? By the classical—and also biblical—method of comparative reading and discernment. Hebrews 5:12-14 reads: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." While the subject here—strong meat versus milk—is mature theology as opposed to infant theology, the principle of learning and discernment is

☞ See "Milton," continued on page 19

Learning to Like What Is Good

by Gene Edward Veith

“I don’t like Jane Austen, but I do like those *Twilight* novels about vampires in love.” “I don’t like Bach. He’s boring! I like rap music a lot better.” “I really liked that movie, especially the part when the slasher cut off the girl’s head with a chainsaw.” Hearing students talk like that makes teachers cringe and stirs thoughts of going into another line of work. How can they be so impervious to what is true and good and beautiful? How can they take such pleasure in absolute dreck? And how can they be so arrogant and so shallow and so narrow-minded as to judge the whole world according to the wholly subjective standard of whether they “like” something or not?

The problem goes beyond the education of children. In our postmodern climate, objective considerations hold less sway than subjective considerations. As a result, “likes” and “dislikes” take the place of reason (so much for truth), moral obedience (so much for goodness), and aesthetic reflection (so much for beauty). We say, “I really like that church,” rather than, “I believe what that church teaches.” “I got a divorce and abandoned my family because I no longer loved my spouse and I fell in love with someone else.” “I enjoy just vegging out in front of the TV, so leave me alone.”

Today we are surely more pleasure-centered than we should be. The answer, though, is not to deny pleasure altogether. Aristotle said that virtue in regards to pleasure, along with other feelings, involves learning “to feel these emotions at the right times, for the right objects, towards the right persons, for the right motives, and in the right manner.”¹

That is to say, we must cultivate our affections. It is certainly good to have affection for things. “Liking” is a form of “loving.” The problem for us fallen creatures is that our affections and virtually all of our other emotions are disordered. We need to learn how to order them rightly. That is, we need to come to the point of “liking” (subjectively) what is “good” (objectively).

Cultivating the affections has always been a key goal of classical education and Christian discipleship. An education in the liberal arts is designed to “form” a free human being. This involves orienting the child’s affections to what is true, good, and beautiful. This goes beyond the knowledge of truth, goodness, and beauty. The child also must learn to love them.

The Apostle Paul says that a leader in the church should be “a lover of what is good” (Titus 1:8; NKJV). This also entails feeling revulsion for things that are not good. “Abhor what is evil,” says the Apostle to all Christians; “Cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9; NKJV). This has to do with developing a moral sensibility, but Paul also goes beyond that:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8; ESV)

These are not the “whatevers” of the bored, apathetic student. These “whatevers” open up the Christian to “excellence” of every kind, wherever it may be found.

So how can the affections be rightly ordered? Not everyone takes pleasure in truth, honor, justice, purity, or loveliness. Others may commend something and recognize its worthiness, but how can we teach others—not to mention ourselves—to join in the praise?

Learning to love what is lovely is the work of a lifetime, but schools can play a critical role. Most helpful, in my experience, in cultivating this growth are the arts in general and literature in particular.

It is impossible to browbeat someone into loving something, and frontal attacks on what someone already loves simply provokes defensiveness and resistance. My own practice is to build on what the person already “likes” as part of my strategy to direct the affection to a more worthy object and to deepen the shallow affection into love.

¹ Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics,” Book I, Chapter 5. Quoted from Aristotle: *On Man in the Universe*, ed. Louise Ropes Loomis, (Roslyn, NY: Walter J. Black, 1943), p. 107.

“You don’t like Shakespeare?” I might say. “Do you understand him?”

“Well, no.”

“So you really don’t know whether you like him or not.” Knowing that my students “like” sports, I will help them see that in order to enjoy football, they need to understand the game, and that the *more* they understand it—its rules and strategies, its different plays and the techniques necessary to execute them well—the *more* they enjoy it. The same is true for literature, music, or any of the arts. The more you know about them—the rules and conventions of art form, the strategies and techniques of the artist—the more you will find to enjoy.

I will explain that some books you can just enjoy on your own without any help. You already understand the *Twilight* vampire novels, so there is no need to study them. Other books, though, are more challenging. You need help with them. But when you *do* understand them, you will find that there is even more to like than in the easy books.

I will go off on tangents like this: “Everybody likes fast food. Grease, salt, and sugar taste good. But compare a McDonald’s Meal Deal to your mother’s Thanksgiving Dinner. Notice the turkey, the dressing, the cranberry sauce, the pumpkin pie, and all the rest do play off those basic tastes. But there are so many other tastes going on at the same time: not just salt but sage and rosemary; fruit confections that are simultaneously sweet and tart; multiple levels of flavor; symphonies of different textures that play in your mouth.

“Classical music is like that, with lots of melodies and rhythms and layers of sound going on at the same time. And Shakespeare is like that, with every character having a story, with themes and ideas and images woven together in many different configurations, and yet they come together into a whole.”

I am trying to teach my students how to appreciate complexity and the aesthetic principle of unity in variety.

I also try to teach them about literature as a whole, including the simple literature they already like. This will include helping them see when literature violates its own principles.

“Every story, whether in a book or a movie or a TV show, has to have some kind of conflict.” They give me examples. The most common, of course, will be between good guys and bad guys slugging it out.

“How can you tell who is good and who is bad?” Bad guys are usually ugly. “Is that how it is in real life?” No. “So the ugliness is symbolic. The story uses superficial appearances to create a meaning and an effect, to make evil unattractive.” Then I will point out how literature today often does the reverse, making evil attractive and making goodness repellent. Classic comedy ridicules vice; modern comedy often ridicules virtue. This can lead into discussions of how storytellers, including filmmakers, present what happens through the point of view of different characters, and how artists can manipulate readers’ responses.

I then show how some of the greatest works show human beings in their complexity. Shakespeare’s “good guys,” like Hamlet or Lear, may have a streak of badness inside, a tragic flaw; and his “bad guys,” like Macbeth or Claudius, may well have some admirable qualities. They are complex and conflicted, like us. The most profound conflicts are those that take place within the human heart. What I am doing through all of this is teaching my students how to critique works of art, both aesthetically and morally.

I also try to make them see the distinction between the statement “I like this,” and “this is good.” That you like it tells us something about yourself. That this is good tells us something about the work. We can like something for many different reasons—because something in a story reminds us of someone we know or conjures up some fantasy that we have had or an emotion that strikes a chord with us. And, yes, liking varies from one person to another. To say a work is “good,” though, means that it was made with skill, that it fulfills its purpose, that it has qualities that are worthwhile, etc., etc.

I make my students realize that we can like something that is not good. Fast food is not “good for us” in the way that mom’s home-cooked meal will be. We can get a kick out of an inept movie like *Plan Nine from Outer Space*. Much popular art, I will show them, cares *only* about whether people “like it.” The success of a television show depends exclusively on ratings; movies have to score a big box office; pop music producers care only about selling records. The artistic merit of the work is secondary and sometimes gets in the way—as the artists themselves are always complaining!

One way to make large groups of people “like” a movie or other work and so to spend money on it is to put in sex, crude violence, and other appeals to our vices.

That is much easier than creating a work of art that is actually “good.” Work that is “good” may well deal with sex, violence, and vice—Shakespeare certainly does—but the good work will typically do so in a way that does not provoke the “sin in the heart” that Scripture warns us against. Rather, it sheds light into these darker regions of the human heart, often helping us realize why they are so twisted and redirecting our affections to what is good, not just artistically but morally and spiritually.

A Hollywood sex comedy and the King Arthur saga both deal with adultery. The Hollywood version may make the viewer *want* to commit adultery. The story of Lancelot and Guinevere shows how their adultery—for all of its passionate romantic love—destroyed their families, friends, and their civilization itself. No one would want to commit adultery after that, and the characters themselves, standing as virtually the sole survivors in the rubble of Camelot with now no obstacles to their love, respond by repenting of their sins and entering the cloister.

What I want to do with my students is to help them grow in their tastes. Yes, tastes differ, but that is not a reason to shut down a conversation about aesthetics. Developing good taste can be defined as learning to take (subjective) pleasure in what is (objectively) good. So helping students—and adults for that matter—grow in their tastes is an important educational purpose.

I am not so naïve as to assume that aesthetic taste always translates into moral or spiritual growth.

Education itself, even classical liberal arts education, has its limits in how well it can create virtue. Plato was surely wrong when he taught that to know the good is always to do the good. One of Socrates’ best students was Alcibiades, who betrayed Athens first to Sparta and then to the Persians. Students need the grace of God and the disciplines of the Christian life to order their affections in the fullest sense.

But education has its part to play. And educators—whether teachers or parents or pastors—must remember to cultivate not just external knowledge but also the inner life. That is the realm of emotions, the will, and the imagination. Literature, as well as the other arts, engages all of these and can become the occasion to meditate upon and to talk about the whole spectrum of life.

We classical educators often speak of our subject matter in terms of the true, the good, and the beautiful. They all have to do with love. Love of truth is what motivates the quest for knowledge. Love for others is at the essence of moral goodness. Aesthetic delight is love for the object. In a sense, then, cultivating the affections—that is, cultivating love—is for education both the motivation and the end.

Gene Edward Veith is the provost and professor of literature at Patrick Henry College, the director of the Cranach Institute at Concordia Theological Seminary, and the author of 18 books on different facets of Christianity and culture.

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☞ “Milton,” from page 15

transferable. Maturity comes not from remaining in an infantile state of cloistered seclusion from error but rather from learning to recognize it as error. The senses must be “exercised” in order to learn how to discern.

And what is the key, the necessary ingredient to rightly guide the impressionable mind of young adults as they learn to practice discernment in the real world? Milton’s reading program has its grounding, not in the pagans, though they make up a significant part of the curriculum by necessity. But after they study the works of man each day, all that they have learned is “still to be reduc’t in their nightward studies wherewith they close the dayes work, under the determinate sentence of David or Salomon, or the Evanges and Apostolic Scriptures.” In other words, read what men have to say — then compare it diligently with Scripture. Let the wisdom of Solomon, the worship of David, the hope of the gospels, and the theology of Paul “reduce” or “boil down” mere human texts to whatever truths the pagans may have produced. The word of God is a sharp sword (Hebrews 4:12), very handy for paring down the works of men, which are always shifting, irresolute, filled with attractive error mixed with some goodness and beauty. The Scriptures are instead called the “determinate sentence”; they are the final word, the ultimate arbiter of everything, the comparative text of the Absolute.

It is worth noting that *proaeresis* is always linked in

classical thought and many early Christian theologians with the move from puberty to adolescence. This is not insignificant. Pagans and Christians have always noted a crucial change in moral awareness as a child becomes an adult; our social and legal systems reflect this, as do personal expectations. I would argue that this spiritual/psychological/ethical development is organically linked with the primary physical change of adolescence: our new ability to make fine moral distinctions parallels our new ability to make another human being, another *imago dei*. At this crucial moment, human accountability before God and man comes fully to fruition.

Cultivating the affections through wisely managed cultural exposure with an eye towards biblical-critical discernment has a significant effect on the moral compass. This is the end, the purpose of Classical Christian education. It is inherently risky. And there are no other options.

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Grant Horner is a professor of Renaissance and Reformation Studies at The Master’s College, Santa Clarita, CA.



FRANCIS MARION
HOTEL

A Review of James K.A. Smith's *Desiring the Kingdom*

Review by John Heaton

In 2009 shortly after taking office, President Obama appointed Arne Duncan as Secretary of Education. After only two months on the job Mr. Duncan announced that up to 82% of America's public schools could be failing under the standards of the No Child Left Behind Act. He argued for immediate changes to the law and initiated the "Race to the Top" to encourage innovation in the public sector of education.

Simultaneously, a less-noticed project, but one of vastly greater importance to Christian educators, arrived from James K.A. Smith. I picked up a copy right away, and I've since been savoring it privately and with my faculty. No "race to the top" here; if anything, it's a race to the past, in a vein classical educators should relish. As we often muse in classical, Christian circles, most of what we teach is not new, though nearly all of it seems revolutionary.

The burden of *Desiring the Kingdom* (DTK) is to explore the relationship between learning and worship, and the book is organized neatly into two sections around this theme. Dr. Smith challenges the notion that learning is merely cognitive, an assertion with which we would readily agree, but which, as he points out, we often fail to recognize in practice. Because cognitive learning takes place in the context of a set of pre-cognitive, affective dispositions, the learner possesses a whole web of desires that constitute the pre-conditions of learning. Those desires are rarely, if ever, addressed through cognitive methods teachers learn in undergraduate majors such as education or even early childhood development. Rather, affective desires are shaped by habits, practices and influences, some of which are experienced unconsciously. Even those that are recognized are rarely comprehended as having anything to do with learning.

In short, "...because our hearts are oriented primarily by desire, by what we love, and because those desires are shaped and molded by the habit-forming practices in which we participate, it is...rituals and practices...that shape our imaginations and how we orient ourselves to the world"(25). This assertion finds broad support in Aristotle and in St. Augustine, and, as such, it is neither new nor innovative. It does answer the nagging question that makes teachers scratch their heads about why Johnny can't read (Latin). It's not that he can't. It's that he won't. He doesn't want to do that or many other

challenging inclusions in the classical, Christian curriculum because so much of his basic desire is bent in other directions by a hundred influences that put downward pressure on Latin.

Thus, Dr. Smith moves us from the modern and reductionist view of man, *homo sapiens* (thinking man), to the more robust view, *homo liturgicus*, or worshipping man (39). It is here that DTK is most relevant, taking aim squarely at "world-view talk in its distorted form" (63). I understand his argument as offering a much needed corrective to the deficiencies that have developed in the evolving concept of "worldview."

With the broad influence of C. S. Lewis and to a narrower degree, that of Francis Shaeffer, Christian educators have become increasingly sensitive to the fact that our presuppositions are the primary drivers that determine how we make sense of our world and inform our worldview. To give due credit, we have to admit that it has been those in the reformed tradition that have led in shaping our awareness, not to mention our understanding of this important fact. Though he doesn't say so directly, Dr. Smith, who teaches at Calvin College, seems to be conducting an intramural critique of this 50-year old worldview project, which has been influenced by a (narrowly) resurging Calvinism. Classical, Christian educators, many of whom share the reformed tradition, have good reason to pay attention. The overt emphasis upon rationalism is evident in the literature of this tradition, and it is not an overstatement to suggest that a straight line exists from reformed theologians to the centrality of logic in the classical curriculum.

While this is by no means a critical error, Dr. Smith argues that it is incomplete. The "social imaginary," as he puts it, "is an affective, non-cognitive understanding of the world. It is described as an *imaginary* (rather than a theory) because it is fueled by the stuff of the imagination rather than the intellect" (68, emphasis his). Love or desire is a "structural feature of the human being" (51) and as such it aims at a vision of the good life, turning on the "the fulcrum" of habits.

This brings us to the most compelling feature of DTK, which is the attention given to "embodiment" in learning. This theme is woven throughout the first section and leads to his discussion of practices which he helpfully

describes as “thick” and “thin” (82). That is to say, many of our habits, such as brushing our teeth, are inconsequential insofar as they do not shape identity—they are thin. Our vision of the good life, however, is shaped by the “thick” habits that are “rituals of ultimate concern” (86), like going to church, engaging in daily prayer. But meeting regularly with two or three friends for breakfast might fall into a thick habit, if it contributes to and expresses our sense of community and identity in relation to others (83)

Alert educators do well to reflect upon the many rituals of day-school education, testing them along the lines of this matrix. For example, a school might establish the ordered habit of having students stand when an adult enters the classroom, a thick habit that fosters respect. That same school might discover upon reflection that the lunchroom is pure chaos between 11 and 12:30 pm, assuming that how we eat is a thin habit that can be ignored. Habits are uneven and often work at cross purposes to one another.

In Part 2 Dr. Smith takes up the specific question of worship and its relevance to the educational endeavor. He admits that many attempts at formative influences in the affective domain are not explicitly religious. Noteworthy is the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, which overtly borrows religious architecture for an overtly secular purpose. Nevertheless, such influences are implicitly religious insofar as they mimic religious worship in their power and invitation to a way of being. Christian worship therefore should be considered as a precursor to education, if not its mainspring. At this point, many K-12 educators in classical, Christian schools will find DTK less helpful, but only because they may labor in contexts in which worship is excluded from the weekly or daily regimen of their independent, Christian school. DTK does not assert that chapel should be in your program. More broadly, he maintains that if man is fundamentally *homo liturgicus*, then what we worship—and most importantly—*how* we worship moves front and center and should not be overlooked.

This leads to a lengthy evaluation of worship in general, and, judging from the context, reformed worship in particular, although this may be misstating the case. Drawing upon diverse sources that form a broader historical point of view (Alexander Schmemmann’s *For the Life of the World*, for example), Dr. Smith clearly advocates a return to an overtly sacramental view of worship and the world, which those of us in the Anglican tradition, myself included, or other liturgical traditions, would welcome.

The project weakens at this point, however, for, in spite of its length, his treatise on worship is less coherent than the first section. There is plenty to tweak the

sensibilities of those in the reformed tradition, whom he assumes will not only be unfamiliar with the terminology, but experientially removed and, therefore, resistant to his liturgical proposals. Those in Orthodox, Anglican, or Catholic traditions—all of which are represented on the faculties of classical, Christian schools—will applaud the effort but leave feeling that the book only makes a good start in the right direction.

These are mild criticisms to which I would add that the book is written to the educated reader, and some will find it unnecessarily complex. While the writing style is clear, it often feels like driving down a washboard dirt road. It is heavily footnoted to the extent that the fine print is almost a book within a book. At times the attempts at emphasis or clarity bleed into redundancy. At other times it seems that the harder word could be replaced with the simpler one with a salutary effect.

Finally, there are oblique references to a variety of issues that are in current debate in the author’s circles, which may or may not attract attention from a casual reader. Nevertheless, they may clang on some ears. Two are worth mentioning, as in the reference to “the minister [who] raises *her* hands, and we stretch out ours to receive (emphasis mine)” (207). Okay, maybe in his church *she* is the minister and that’s normal; it’s not in mine. Dr. Smith is not even arguing the point, but one wonders at whom he is throwing the elbow. Perhaps more serious is the following explanatory comment which really doesn’t explain: “I don’t mean to communicate an alarmist fear of culture in the spirit of the ‘culture wars’ (which, by the way, I think are often tilting at windmills rather than targeting the real, substantive threats to Christian discipleship—fixated on gay marriage but eagerly affirming capitalism)” (126). This reviewer doesn’t think that opposing gay marriage is tilting at windmills or that it is such a great trespass to affirm free markets.

No author expects that you will agree on every point, even in serious matters. In DTK, Dr. Smith has given voice to what many classical, Christian educators have been thinking for a long time. Education is not merely the transfer of information from teacher to student, but the shaping of a whole person. If you wish to reflect on how that process might proceed, DTK is a very good place to begin the conversation.

The Rev’d John Heaton is a minister in the Reformed Episcopal Church. Since 1998 he has served as the headmaster of New Covenant Schools, a classical, Christian school with 375 students in K-12 in Lynchburg, VA. He is a former board member and past chairman of the Society for Classical Learning. He is married to Heidi and has four children in grades 3,5,7, and 9.

Pre-Conference

with **SUSAN WISE BAUER**

9:00 am - 9:30 am

Why Writing Programs Fail: How to Teach Writing in the Classical Tradition

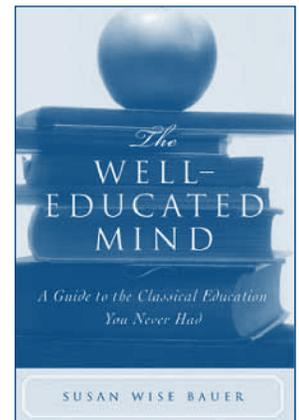
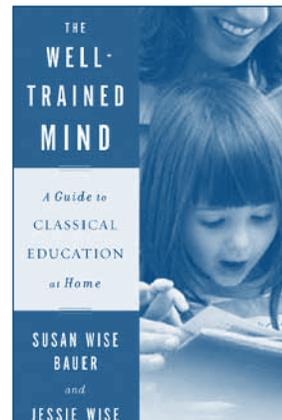
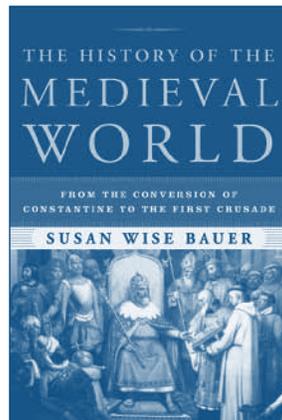
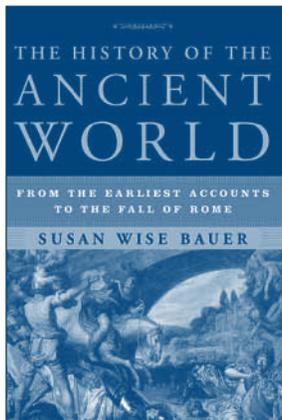
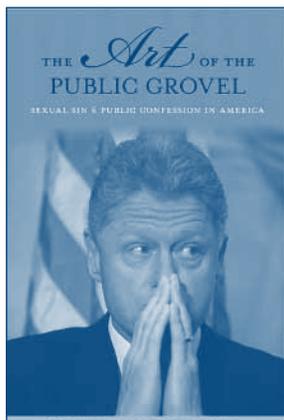
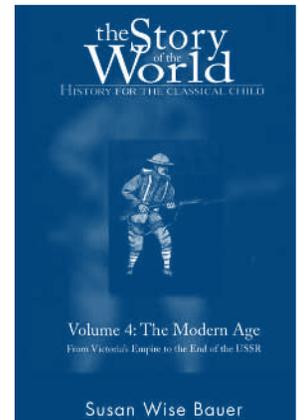
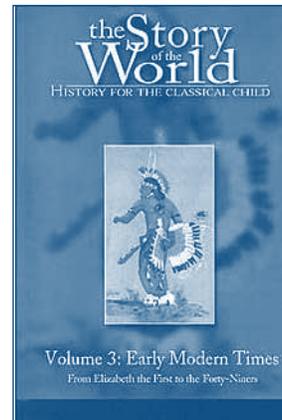
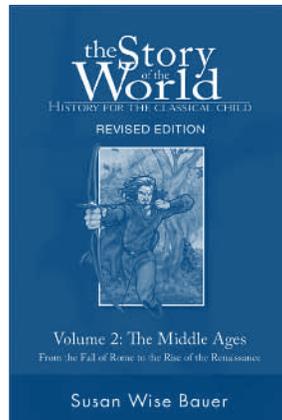
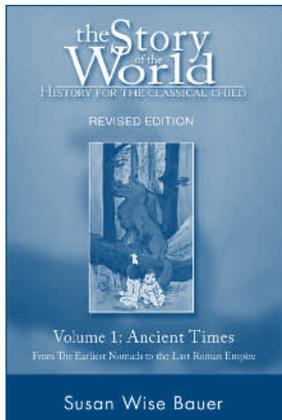
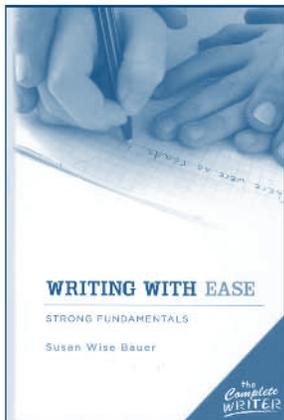
This introductory workshop explains why so many contemporary methods of teaching writing produce students who cannot organize their work, think through a written argument, or hear the rhythm and sound of their own written words. The solution lies in ancient principles of classical composition, adapted to modern times. Drawing on her extensive study of classical sources as well as over fifteen years of experience in teaching writing, Susan Wise Bauer lays out a carefully designed sequence that will teach every student to put words on paper with skill, grace, and style.

9:30 am - 10:30 am

Writing With Ease: Classical Composition for the Elementary Years

The foundation of classical composition is a careful, thorough grounding in the skills of copywork, dictation, and narration. This session explains why these three practices are essential for upper-level writing; covers in detail how to teach them in both an individual and classroom setting; makes concrete suggestions about how to incorporate them into writing practice across the curriculum; and gives guidance in using them for remedial work with older reluctant writers.

10:30 am - 11:00 am Break



11:00 am - 12:00 pm**Writing With Skill: Classical Composition for the Middle Grades**

This workshop offers very specific guidance in how to teach middle grade (logic-stage) students the skills of constructing an argument, outlining and writing from an outline. Includes training in outlining, writing from an outline, basic Socratic dialogue, and evaluation and grading. Susan will also address use of the progymnasmata exercises in the middle grades.

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm**Writing With Style: Classical Composition for the High School Years**

This seminar covers the use of the progymnasmata exercises for high school writers and includes extensive discussion of their place in the modern curriculum. Drawing on over ten years of teaching writing at the College of William & Mary, Susan will also discuss the forms of writing that all high school students should learn before entering the freshmen year of college: response papers, summaries, and critical essays across the curriculum.

12:00 pm - 1:30 pm**Lunch****2:30 pm - 3:00 pm****Q&A**

Plenary Session

with SUSAN WISE BAUER

Educating Our Minds

When we teach children, we also teach ourselves. And that means gaining confidence in our own intellectual abilities—rather than relying solely on “experts.” Come discover a plan for self-education in the classical tradition, including scheduling for busy adults; setting up a reading plan that involves understanding, analyzing, and discussing literature; and mastering the skills needed for reading classic fiction and nonfiction.

What Is a Classical Education?

What makes a classical education? Is Latin necessary? What is the difference between classical and neoclassical education? How does this change the way we teach? Susan Wise Bauer will discuss the distinctives of classical education and the methods that classical educators should adopt—as well as those that should be avoided. Includes Q&A.



Susan Wise Bauer is the author of several books including The History of the Medieval World: From the Conversion of Constantine to the First Crusade (2010); The History of the Ancient World: From the Earliest Accounts to the Fall of Rome (W. W. Norton, 2007); and The Well-Educated Mind: A Guide to the Classical Education You Never Had (W. W. Norton, 2003) to name a few. Susan has written a four-volume world history series for children and is also the author of The Complete Writer and many other resources for parents and educators.

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