

CLASSICAL AND CHRISTIAN *PAIDEIA* ACCORDING TO SAINT CHRYSOSTOM,  
SAINT BASIL, AND SAINT AUGUSTINE

By

Nathan D. Carr

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## ABSTRACT

In the minds of the ancient Greeks, education was a holistic endeavor seeking to form the morals, values, and knowledge of the young to prepare them for citizenship, a process bound up in the word *paideia*. In his speech before his accusers in Acts 7, Stephen uses the word *paideia* to describe Moses's education in Egypt, an education that prepared him to do mighty things for the people of God. After the Christianization of the Roman empire, Christian bishops took the idea of *paideia* and used this model of education for use in the church, for catechesis.

Although this holistic model of education was used for centuries, Christians have in recent times abandoned it. Therefore, it is vital that we look at the writings of the early Christians, acquaint ourselves afresh with their reasons for transforming this Greek concept for use by the church, and work to restore this model so crucial to the spread of the Gospel in the early church. In looking at John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, and Augustine, all of whom wrote specifically about education in the fourth century, we seek to greater understand their convictions regarding Christian education as bound up in the term *paideia*.

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## CHAPTER 1

### *PAIDEIA* DEFINED

#### Introduction

In 1947, at a vacation course in education in an auditorium of her alma mater, Oxford University, Dorothy Sayers read a paper entitled “The Lost Tools of Learning.” It was her commendation of and call for the restoration of the increasingly unpopular disciplines in which she had been trained—the seven liberal arts. As she fully anticipated, very little came of her talk at that time, as is obvious from the caveat she listed in her opening: “It is in the highest degree improbable that the reforms I propose will ever be carried into effect.”<sup>1</sup> The paper was then laid to rest for some twenty-six years until an American publisher picked it up and reprinted it in *National Review*.<sup>2</sup> One *National Review* subscriber in particular remembered Sayers’ article from his days in the Navy. Now with a young family in the late ‘70s, Douglas Wilson sought to find and reread “The Lost Tools of Learning” as he considered providing a classical education for his children in Moscow, Idaho.<sup>3</sup> The result was not only the founding of Logos School, a classical, Christian school in Moscow; Wilson’s action sparked a nationwide, if not worldwide movement. Ten years after Logos School opened its doors Douglas Wilson

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 145.

<sup>2</sup> The magazine piece was later published as a book: Sayers, Dorothy, *The Lost Tools of Learning* (New York: National Review, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Wilson, *A Case for Classical Christian Education* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 87.

sat down to write the story in his book *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, first printed in 1991. With a title obviously given in tribute to Dr. Sayers, Wilson’s book was the impetus for the formation of the Association of Classical and Christian Schools (ACCS), a network of institutions that teach under the Sayersian banner.

Sayers shared much the same concern as her friend and fellow writer, C.S. Lewis, who expressed his own anxiety over English education in his *The Abolition of Man*, which began as a series of radio talks and was later published in 1943. But Sayers’ book was different in that it offered a prescription for the art (Greek *techne*) of teaching. Lost were the days of using education to foster moral formation and the love of wisdom (Greek *philosophia*) so often associated with the classics. Indeed, a philosophy of education including an actual classroom craft (what Cicero would call ‘strategy’ in *Ad Herennium*)<sup>4</sup> had been long since abandoned. Wisdom, virtue, and eloquence were in need of recovery, but before the pursuit of these ideals—which Werner Jaeger credits as the basis of civilization<sup>5</sup>—could be realized, a recovery of more fundamental behaviors in education needed to be laid. Modern Western man needed a basic pedagogy that supported this overall purpose (Greek *telos*). Specifically, the art of teaching needed some correspondence with and transference of what Sayers calls “the art of learning.”<sup>6</sup> She writes, “Is it not the great defect of our education today that although we often succeed in teaching our pupils ‘subjects,’ we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think? They learn everything, except the art of learning.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1954), 171.

<sup>5</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*, (New York: Oxford University, 1969), 1: xiv.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, 149.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

Since the formation of ACCS, an association which largely attracts Christians of the Reformed theological persuasion, this renaissance of the classics and its corresponding pedagogy has primarily drawn upon the spiritual heritage of the Reformation forward for its synthesis of that which is Christian with that which is classical. And while several of the major figures of the Protestant Reformation were steeped in the classics (i.e. Calvin<sup>8</sup>), the fifteen hundred years of history prior to the Reformation represent an oft forgotten period of classical, Christian fusion to which men like John Calvin and Thomas Cranmer were indebted. Whether John in the first century, Clement in the second, Boethius in the sixth, or Thomas Aquinas in the eleventh, each Christian century boasts its Christian philosophers.

### History of *Paideia*

Perhaps the most fruitful season of the careful harmonization and outworking of a distinctively Christian classical educational philosophy was in the fourth century, an era famous for Constantine's conversion to Christianity and his subsequent funding of the Council of Nicea, where the theological formulation of the Trinity reached its pinnacle. Among the many faithful bishops and presbyters of this unusual time in Christian history, three stand out with regard to the development of a classical Christian educational philosophy: Chrysostom with his *On Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children*, Basil the Great with his *Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature*, and Augustine with his *On Christian Teaching*. Each represented a different approach and fusion of this surprising union of Hellenic language, customs, and

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<sup>8</sup> David C. Steinmetz, "Calvin as Biblical Interpreter Among the Ancient Philosophers," *Interpretation* 63, 142-153.



categories with that of the Christian thought. Together, they clarify a varied and yet complete picture of the many-sided panorama of Christian *paideia*.

### Pagan Roots

The word *paideia*, of course, is not original to Christianity, nor do we have complete record of its history in ancient Greece. What we do know is that the word, underwent considerable development, ranging in meaning from “child rearing” in its most primitive usage,<sup>9</sup> to “enculturation” or “cultural initiation” in its later usage.<sup>10</sup>

*Paideia* defies a comprehensive definition, much like our word “culture,” due to its use as an umbrella concept. Should the word “education” be the closest English translation, as Werner Jaeger and others have argued, then *paideia* might best be understood as “the process by which a community preserves and transmits its physical and intellectual character.”<sup>11</sup> Regardless of what a complete definition might otherwise include, the fact that *paideia* was used comfortably to describe Greek educational model is sufficient for our present concern with its Christian metamorphosis, which started in the teachings of the Apostles.<sup>12</sup> Jaeger further describes this unusually freighted word:

Originally the concept *paideia* had applied only to the process of education. Now its significance grew to include the objective side, the content of *paideia*—just as our word *culture* or the Latin *cultura*, having once meant the *process* of education, came to mean the *state* of being educated; and then the *content* of education, and finally the whole *intellectual and spiritual world* revealed by education, into which any individual, according to his nationality or social position, is born. The historical process by which the world of culture is built up culminates when the ideal of culture is consciously formulated. Accordingly it was perfectly natural for the Greeks in and after the fourth century, when the

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<sup>9</sup> Jaeger, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., xiii.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 7:22

concept finally crystallized, to use the word *paideia*—in English, *culture*—to describe all the artistic forms and the intellectual and aesthetic achievements of their race, in fact the whole content of their tradition.<sup>13</sup>

One of the most vocal proponents of Greek *paideia* was an emperor against whom many of the fourth-century bishops fought, despite the fact that some of them were educated alongside him. His name was Julian, and his highly ethical formulation of *paideia* included, according to William Malley, the development of “an individual into a noble, serious and free person.”<sup>14</sup> It “consists then in making a person better through teaching him to distinguish with a sound mind good from evil and the beautiful from the ugly.”<sup>15</sup> *Paideia*, for the unoriginal Julian, was finally, in William Malley’s description,

the formation of the Hellenist. It made use of all the rich wisdom and resources of Hellenic literary heritage, and had as its aim to develop a person to maturity so that he could relate properly both to the gods and his fellow men.<sup>16</sup>

#### Christian Understanding of *Paideia*

Christians understood this goal as bound to the formation of a person—a whole person. God was a being to be related to, as were those created in his image, and aberrant forms of thought that come from darkened understanding or from systematic neglect of the mind were rejected. Christians wanted the formulation of a Christian, rather than a Hellenist, and *paideia* served as a societal category to inject with catechesis.

David Kelsey writes of Plato’s influence over the term that had become so important to both Christian bishop and apostate emperor alike, “The goal of *paideia*,

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<sup>13</sup> Jaeger, 303.

<sup>14</sup> William J. Malley, *Christianity and Hellenism* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1978), 114.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

which is the cultivation of the excellence or *arête* of the soul, consists not in acquiring a clutch of virtues but in knowledge of the Good itself.”<sup>17</sup> He continues,

The Good is not only the underlying essence of the moral and intellectual virtues; it is the highest principle of the universe. It is the divine. Plato came to be understood as the founder of a religion, and *paideia* was understood to be an education whose goal was in some way religious as well as moral.<sup>18</sup>

Plato’s ‘religion’ shared much with traditional religion including a communal life as outlined in *The Republic*: the societal cultivation of the virtuous citizen.

But because Plato’s definition of *paideia* had its stability and perpetuation placed squarely upon the “climate and nutrients”<sup>1</sup> that only a thoughtful *polis* can provide its citizens, the idea of *paideia* as transformed by Plato was collective. And while *paideia* did develop into a more individualized concept of personal enlightenment after the fall of the stable Republic, it never quite shed its communal flavor, particularly when the Christians renewed the term for their own purposes during the birth of the eastern monastic movement of the fourth century.

As early as 90 A.D., Clement was using the cultural momentum behind this word to describe Christian catechesis as the “*paideia* of Christ,” the church in large part embodying that catechesis:

There can be no doubt that what he (Clement) takes over in his letter from a great philosophical tradition and from other pagan sources is included by him in this comprehensive concept of the divine *paideia*, for if this were not so, he could not have used it for his purpose in order to convince the people of Corinth the truth of his teachings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1961), 25.

Plato was not the first—he was squarely between two other confluences of cultural and religious life viewed as one in the same: “Before the sophists, there was none of the modern distinction between culture and religion in ancient Greek education: it was deeply rooted in religious faith.”<sup>3</sup> The later recovery of this Homeric/Platonic fusion of culture and religion would be among the Christians, following the example they found in the Hebrew Scriptures, encompassing the Kingdom of God (*polis*) and its cultural expression, the church. The process of Christian *paideia*, therefore, practiced over generations, ensured the preservation of the spiritual and intellectual character in one’s children. George Lindbeck describes how this manifests itself in the Christian approach to doctrine,

The function of church doctrines that becomes most prominent in this perspective is their use, not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as *communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action*. This general way of conceptualizing religion will be called in what follows a “*cultural-linguistic*” approach, and the implied view of church doctrine will be referred to as a “regulative” or “rule” theory.<sup>4</sup>

George Lindbeck points out the obvious role that doctrine has in maintaining culture-building, culture-preserving authority within the life of the church, as well as that of normative linguistics that dictates patterns of societal action—patterns that preserve a way of life well beyond the viability of the individual. This is the purpose of *paideia*.

Plato’s language invites a further synthesis of Hellenistic thought with Christian thought when he uses what Jaeger calls “*paideia* as conversion.”<sup>5</sup> Let us consider his relaying of Socrates’ famous parable of the cave, which begins, “And now compare our

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<sup>3</sup> Jaeger, *Paideia*, 1:301.

<sup>4</sup> George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 18, emphasis added.

<sup>5</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*, (New York: Oxford University, 1969), 2:295.

nature, from the point of view of *paideia* and lack of *paideia*, to an experience like this.”<sup>6</sup> The parable begins with shackled men in a dark cave whose understanding of reality is shaped only by the shadows formed from the fire and the sounds from behind. “Now,” retells Jaeger, “if one of them were released from his chains and compelled to climb up and look towards the light, he would not be able, because of the dazzling brightness,” until he had experience and practice in the sun-lit world above the cave.<sup>7</sup> This process of being unshackled and practicing sight is Socrates’ analogy of education—a long and arduous conversion to the pathway of wisdom representing the soul’s ascent to God (the blinding sun).

#### *Paideia* as Inheritance

According to Edwin Hatch, “It was thus that the men of old used to call those who had this good kind of education—men with manly souls, and educated as Herakles—sons of God.”<sup>8</sup> Conversion being a central tenant of the Christian understanding of salvation, Plato’s description of the “repentance” of the darkened eye of the soul leading to its intended ability to later discern the world outside of the cave has the overtones that make for easy employment in the service of the church. The *paideia kyriou* (“instruction of the Lord”)<sup>9</sup> places Christ as the object of our repentance and restoration of sight, and of our casting off of the blindness of our enslaving sins. The crucial difference between the two conversions, despite their simple comparison, is that of faith. Plato attempts to ground the entirety of his conversion in so-called objective reality, whereas the Christian

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 291-292.

<sup>8</sup> Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 34-35.

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 6:4

unashamedly joins this “objective” reality to that of faith. Robert Gregg describes the delicate balance between these two worlds of thought:

Greek culture is the cooperative and foundational preparation for Christian truth. The Christian *paideia* supersedes Hellenic wisdom but does not supplant it—fulfills but does not abandon it. Culture, no less than the ‘old man,’ is being made new.<sup>10</sup>

Try as one may, *paideia* resists any attempts at shedding its etymological history, even as it comes into its inevitable Christian fulfillment. The inner competition of this evolving word, should one be perceived to exist, does not lie between its Hellenistic import and its Christian fulfillment—both prevail. As Gregg conclude,

To the view that Christianity infused ‘the sclerotic arteries of Hellenistic tradition with fresh blood’ not all commentators add so judiciously as W. Jaeger the correlate truth that the early church required the language and thought of Greek civilization as the instruments by which it understood itself and found a voice for its proclamation.<sup>11</sup>

This description of *paideia* shows Christianity to be the heir of the greatest civilization of its day, and the resulting educational force that had both come of it and created it. While Christians were meticulous in sorting out those things worthwhile in the culture around them, they took their cues from the poets as well as from the Scriptures, considering that the former merely served the interests of the latter. Christopher Hall refers to this conditioning as “classical ear-training”; the outcome of a classical education which included the reading of either Virgil or Homer, resulting in one’s increased ability to find the allusions and allegories in Scripture as it shaped Christian *paideia* through symbols, liturgies, doctrine, and community. Longinus describes how Plato shows the power of imitation and inspiration:

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<sup>10</sup> Robert C. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy* (Cambridge: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd, 1975), 128.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-130.

We may learn from this author [Plato], if we would but observe his example, that there is yet another path besides those mentioned which leads to sublime heights. What path do I mean? The emulous imitation of the great poets and prose-writers of the past. On this mark, dear friend, let us keep our eyes ever steadfastly fixed. Many gather the divine impulse from another's spirit, just as we are told that the Pythian priestess, when she takes her seat on the tripod, where there is said to be a rent in the ground breathing upwards a heavenly emanation, straightway conceives from that source the godlike gift of prophecy, and utters her inspired oracles; so likewise from the mighty genius of the great writers of antiquity there is carried into the souls of their rivals, as from a fount of inspiration, an effluence which breathes upon them until, even though their natural temper be but cold, they share the sublime enthusiasm of others.<sup>12</sup>

### The Current Need for *Paideia*

If *paideia* could be described as an educational process, Longinus shows us that it is a process that is rooted not in the mere assimilation or memorization of facts. *Paideia* constantly eludes modern people with proclivities in their understanding of education toward quantification of data. *Paideia*, rather, is described using metaphors such as power, impregnation, eloquent emulation, and conversion. Christian thinkers do not merely find such metaphors attractive and workable within their own religious context, but they shape the very way that the apostle Paul presents his gospel to the Gentiles of the Roman world. Paul knew that the Greek educational system was different than all others in the world, for it sought to shape the soul—it contained what Jaeger refers to as an “absolute ideal.”<sup>13</sup> But Paul also observed how Rome undermined its own educational mechanism in *paideia*, and he took the opportunity to fill up what is lacking with Christian doctrine. He used it for the purpose of the Kingdom, and in so doing, placed it forever in the service of the church. As Douglas Wilson comments:

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<sup>12</sup> Longinus, H. L. Havell, and Andrew Lang, *Longinus On the Sublime*, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1890), 13.2.

<sup>13</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*, (New York: Oxford University, 1969), 3:314.

By the first century, the inadequacy of the autonomous *paideia* also had begun to dawn on the pagans themselves. This is one of the reasons that the Christian faith was preached with such success. The autonomous *paideia* was for the ancients an idol that had failed them. Or, to use a different analogy, it was a house built on sand. The idolatrous assumptions of paganism could not support the weight placed upon them. Christopher Dawson comments: ‘From the time of Plato the Hellenic *paideia* was a humanism in search of a theology, and the religious traditions of Greek culture were neither deep nor wide enough to provide the answer.’

To return to Sayers as representative of our present concern, the success of the Christian faith is not as obvious as it once was—the “borrowed capital”<sup>32</sup> of past Christian eras does not last forever:

The combined folly of a civilization that has forgotten its own roots is forcing them [modern educators] to shore up the tottering weight of an educational structure that is built upon sand. They are doing for their pupils the work which the pupils themselves ought to do. For the sole end of education is simply this: to teach men how to learn for themselves; and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain.<sup>33</sup>

Education is in need of resurrection and reform, which is a fresh call for the *paideia* of classical, Christian education. Assuming that Luke’s usage of the word in the book of Acts<sup>34</sup> is a favorable endorsement of its overall meaning for a society (i.e. the church), and realizing the somewhat arbitrary nature of choosing but three texts from among countless treatises, this paper nevertheless seeks to discover, at the very least, the specific content and shape of what previously was an educational tool of the entire Western world.

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<sup>32</sup> Cornelius Van Til refers to post-Christian societies as functioning on the “borrowed capital” of Christian truth.

<sup>33</sup> Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, 164.

<sup>34</sup> Acts 7:22



## CHAPTER 2

### *PAIDEIA* IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

#### Introduction

The fourth century represents a particularly fruitful time in history with regard to the interaction of ideas between the classical and Christian traditions. Indeed, “synthesis” may be the most apt word for describing the cooperation seen between Greek philosophy and Christian thought. Thomas White explains why this may have been the case:

Christian culture has need of philosophy to articulate truths of reason that overlap with truths of revelation, a fact that shows the compatibility and harmony of biblical revelation and natural reason. Philosophy can demonstrate the well-founded character of. . . core religious aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

As to why synthesis prevailed over much dissonance and antithesis, many would point to the towering fourth-century figures who still cast their shadow over the Christian centuries today. Among them are Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Athanasius, Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome. As for the Christian contribution, a lengthy introduction will follow; but some suggest the synthesis could not have been the product of Christian culture alone. Jaroslav Pelikan, in his *Christianity and Classical Culture*, comments that “the Roman-Byzantine

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Joseph White, “Whether Faith Needs Philosophy,” *First Things* 215 (August/September 2011), 49.

emperors Constantine, Julian, and Theodosius”<sup>2</sup> represent the most “overt forces determining the synthesis.”<sup>3</sup> Constantine stands out for his Christianization of the empire: “no single human being in history has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the conversion of so many to the Christian faith.”<sup>4</sup> Julian is remembered for gracing the Roman throne once again with philosophical brilliance. Theodosius provided oversight during the “total extirpation”<sup>5</sup> of Paganism, described by Edward Gibbon as the only example of a complete dismantling of popular superstition that represents “a single event in the history of the human mind.”<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime, the golden age of Christian rhetoric, the installation of the first Christian emperor (Constantine), the flowering of a Christian Rome (Constantinople), and the resulting triumph of Christian culture marked the actualization of the ideal of *paideia* since its conception and development in the fourth century B.C. It is as if divine providence had arranged for over a thousand years of Greek investment to set the table for the overcoming of the world’s system of education.

Of the aforementioned bishops of the one unified church, we set our sights upon three: John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, and Augustine of Hippo, all of whom wrote specifically about the education of children during what scholars refer to as the Third Sophistic—a period during the fourth and fifth centuries in which Christian rhetoric came into its own.

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<sup>2</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University, 1993), 169.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

## John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom, one of the most prolific of the early ecclesiastical writers, was a presbyter of Antioch as well as the Archbishop of Constantinople from 398-404. Known for his homilies, Chrysostom was classically educated under the masterful rhetorician Libanius of Antioch before entering the priesthood. Following his formal education in literature, grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and theology, Chrysostom moved to Athens to continue on in more advanced studies, since Athens was still the “most important center for philosophical and literary learning.”<sup>7</sup>

Chrysostom’s impact as a representative of the classical-Christian synthesis was supremely manifested in the conversion of Anthemios, priest of the temple of Athena on the Acropolis who had the reputation as the wisest man of Athens—the embodiment of classical *paideia*. Demetrios J. Constantelos explains that, “Chrysostom’s learning and eloquence, as well as his piety and prayers, contributed to the conversion of Anthemios, who received baptism along with all the members of his family.”<sup>8</sup> Anthemios then became an example for many in Athens to follow. Anthemios’s conversion draws our attention not just to Chrysostom’s Christian piety or classical learning, but to the convergence of the two influences in having an apologetic impact on an entire family and an even wider impact on a city.

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<sup>7</sup> Demetrios J. Constantelos, “John Chrysostom’s Greek Classical Education and Its Importance to us Today,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 36 (1991), 111.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

## Instruction to Parents on Child-Rearing

Chrysostom's homily, "An Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children," also displays the effectiveness of the classical-Christian synthesis. Glanville Downey describes this treatise as "a characteristic understanding of what was involved"<sup>9</sup> in the education of a child for civic duties, albeit from a distinctively Christian perspective. Theodoros Zisis goes even further,

It is a systematic exposition of Christian education; one of the most enlightening fruits of the Greek Christian soul, based not only in the Holy Scriptures, but also in the psychological and pedagogical teachings of the ancient Greeks, as well as experience.<sup>10</sup>

Several have pointed out that the homily assumes its recipients are educating their children in the basic Greek *paideia* of the fourth century.

The address begins in rhetorical fashion with a burning question: "Has any man done what I asked? Has he prayed to God on our behalf and on behalf of the whole body of the Church for the quenching of the conflagration, the begotten of Vainglory, which is bringing ruin on the entire body of the Church and is tearing the single body asunder into many separate limbs and is disrupting love?"<sup>11</sup> Before writing a single word about education, Chrysostom spends fifteen chapters painfully describing the way "Vainglory" has been ravaging the Christian church. This "wild beast" with "foul teeth" and "poison"<sup>12</sup> has torn the church asunder through the ornamentation of effeminate children, the flattery and spectacle of the theatre, and the insatiable desire for greater wealth and

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<sup>9</sup> Glanville Downey, "Education in the Christian Roman Empire: Christian and Pagan Theories Under Constantine and His Successors," *Speculum* 32 (1957), 48.

<sup>10</sup> Protopresbyter Theodoros Zisis, "Raising Children According to Saint John Chrysostom," Orthodox Christian Information Center, [orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/raising-children-according-to-saint-john-chrysostom.aspx](http://orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/raising-children-according-to-saint-john-chrysostom.aspx) (accessed March 12, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> M. L. W. Laistner, trans., *John Chrysostom's Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children*, (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1951), 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

the accoutrements of carnal desire. This is the “fruit of Sodom,”<sup>13</sup> writes Chrysostom, a fruit whose beauty lasts only as long as it remains untouched. But touch the rind, and the fruit turns to “dust and ashes.”<sup>14</sup>

Chrysostom’s introduction leads directly to his description of the Christian alternative and exhortation to the Christian parents in view. In an extreme example, Chrysostom describes those who waste away with hunger while clinging unyieldingly to their earthly possessions as they exclaim, “I must keep my place.” Chrysostom responds, “What place, O man? Place does not make a man’s character. . . . Place consists not in wearing good raiment but in being clad in good works.”<sup>15</sup>

Chrysostom is then ready to set his sights upon the coming generation as he transitions to an exhortation on child-rearing. The remaining chapters (16-90) outline his vision of a distinctively Christian *paideia*, even as it builds upon and absorbs the preceding classical *paideia*. Zisis succinctly summarizes Chrysostom’s central thesis when he writes, “Society does not suffer from a lack of shrewd businessmen or from a lack of literate and educated. It suffers from a lack of virtuous men.”<sup>16</sup>

### A View to the Soul

In this section, Chrysostom describes the souls of children as soft, impressionable, and malleable; choosing the metaphor of wax to describe their formation. He calls upon the parents to be artists of the greatest skill and precision:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>14</sup> Laisner, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>16</sup> Zisis, 3.

Like the creators of statues do you give all your leisure to fashioning these wondrous statues for God. And, as you remove what is superfluous and add what is lacking, inspect them day by day, to see what good qualities nature has supplied so that you will increase them, and what faults so that you will eradicate them.<sup>17</sup>

Chrysostom then moves into the most memorable and lengthy part of his discourse—his discussion of “the soul of thy son; for the soul is in truth a city.”<sup>18</sup> He names each of the child’s senses as a gate to the city of the soul, and then describes the care with which the parents should keep and protect those gates. As the rulers of the city, it is their responsibility to set up the right kind of laws to ensure good polity for the life of the city. The gate of the tongue, when properly guided, will be made “not of wood or iron but of gold,”<sup>19</sup> but with “precious stones set in deeply instead of merely laid on the surface.”<sup>20</sup> The “bolt of these gates shall be the Cross of the Lord.”<sup>21</sup> He then proceeds to describe the faculty of hearing, focusing on the importance of what passes through the ear gate:

when the boy takes relaxation from his studies—for the soul delights to dwell on stories of old—speak to him, drawing him away from all childish folly; for thou art raising a philosopher and athlete and citizen of Heaven. Speak to him and tell him this story; “Once upon a time there were two sons of one father, even two brothers.

### The Use of Biblical Narrative

Parents should dramatically describe the tales of Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, the patriarchs, tales of divine punishment, and most importantly of all, “Let him hear the whole story of Joseph continually.”<sup>22</sup> The third gate does not open and close, as does the

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<sup>17</sup> Laistner, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 20.

mouth; it is rather like hearing: “It appears to be closed, yet it is, as it were, open and sends within whatever comes.” Chrysostom is referring to touch, and reminds us that the Christian “athlete” is to be disciplined.

Before proceeding, Chrysostom takes pause to assess and clarify some conclusions—what the rhetorician might call “division” of the argument. He begins this brief section with a reminder of the components of the Platonic soul: “The seat and habitation of spirit, we are told, are the breast and the heart within the breast; of the appetitive part of the soul, the liver; of the reasoning part, the brain.”<sup>23</sup> How shall the various components of the child’s soul be ruled by the kingly father? “If the laws are transgressed, he will be stern and unyielding; if they are observed, he will be gracious and kind and will bestow many rewards on the boy. Even so God rules the world with the fear of Hell and the promise of the Kingdom. So must we too rule our children.”<sup>24</sup>

The account that follows is one of many that have made Chrysostom popular as a social activist. In wanting to teach the child to be “strong and simple and courteous,”<sup>25</sup> he admonishes the father to instruct the son to “dispose his spirit to gentleness and bid him treat his servants like brothers.”<sup>26</sup> Slavery is born of sin, Chrysostom explains, and a Christian youth who is considerate toward slaves will in turn be beloved by them.

This leads Chrysostom to what may be the most significant quotations in the work—one that Downey finds particularly telling with respect to the seriousness of Chrysostom’s attempt at establishing a Christian *paideia* is concerned:

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<sup>23</sup> Laistner, 21.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Toward the end of the work, Chrysostom describes in painfully familiar terms the way in which children become fractious over incidents which seem quite trivial to their parents, such as the loss or breaking of a writing implement. Chrysostom gives expert advice on dealing with such crises, and then breaks off and exclaims, “I am not speaking of trifles; we are discussing the governance of the world.”<sup>27</sup>

In assessing the important classical elements in Chrysostom’s homily, one could dissect the text in search of its Hellenistic parallels. For example, one could describe the overall rhetorical content of the speech as product of Chrysostom’s classical education, as we have briefly done in the paragraphs above. Constantelos cites Isidore’s description of classical qualities in Chrysostom’s writing, including the “purity of his discourse, his natural thought, his style, his superb imagination and figures of speech—all qualities of a person excellently educated in the Greek classics.”<sup>28</sup> Constantelos concludes, “John’s language is music which tames wild beasts and human beings, and makes wolves cohabit with lambs.”<sup>29</sup> Or, one could point to chapter four of the address, in which Chrysostom denounces the theater, and demonstrate the several pagan writers who did the same, such as Aristides and Libanius. Likewise, one could point to language that he’s obviously borrowing from the pagan culture around him—such as the metaphorical use of the word *athletes* (“athlete”) to describe the Christian life (a commonplace for pagan authors as well), or his technical uses of words like *peripeteia*, which refers to a sudden reversal of fortune in Greek tragedy. But these peripheral observations miss the core content of Chrysostom’s overlapping of classical and Christian *paideia*.

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<sup>27</sup> Downey, 48.

<sup>28</sup> Constantelos, 110.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.



## Discipleship

In chapter 79 of the address, Chrysostom writes, “And let us guide the conversation to the Kingdom of Heaven and to those men of old, pagan or Christian, who were illustrious for their self-restraint. Let us constantly flood his ears with talk of them.”<sup>30</sup> Here, Chrysostom betrays his distinctively Christian variation on a pagan theme—*education is primarily about moral formation*. Dr. Laistner comments, “the moral purpose of education is more important than anything else. So he can, like Justin or Basil, quote historical examples from the pagan world that are worthy of emulation—Diogenes, Aristides, and Archelaus, the teacher of Socrates.”<sup>31</sup> Virtue will be cultivated both by story, and emulation; although Chrysostom says in chapter 77, “Nothing, yea nothing, is so effective as emulation.”<sup>32</sup>

Chrysostom is not proposing that the details of Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, or even Joseph for that matter as fact-finding activities for the biblically illiterate, though the details certainly facilitate his greater purpose. The life of Joseph exists to transform the passions of young men into the ‘self-restraint’ befitting of one in search of the Kingdom of Heaven. In fact, Chrysostom ends his address with yet another reference to Joseph, as well as Daniel, Jacob, Solomon, and Samuel. Each is an example of the duty of a lad “to pray with great fervor and contrition.”<sup>33</sup> He then unites these two exhortations—both emulation and prayer<sup>34</sup>—in a single summary sentence: “Let the boy be trained to pray with much contrition and to keep vigils as much as he is able, and let the stamp of a

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<sup>30</sup> Laistner, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

saintly man be impressed on the boy in every way.”<sup>35</sup> Herein lies at least one of the distinctively Christian innovations on classical *paideia*—prayer. Classical *paideia* may cultivate a respectable Hellenist through a kind of habitually built virtue, but Christian *paideia* cultivates a loving disciple through the spiritual habits of prayerfully sought after wisdom.

Other ascetics like Chrysostom speak of the teacher/pupil relationship in the same way, which shows that the monastic understanding of mentorship flavored more than simply the bishop’s celibacy. For those bishops writing about education, the monastery was truly the most robust manifestation of Christian *paideia*, and all other education should mirror it as much as possible. Amma Theodora, who lived during the same century as Chrysostom but more than likely never read his treatise, nevertheless encapsulates its overall teachings:

A teacher must be a stranger to love of power, untouched by vainglory, far from pride, not deluded by flattery, not blinded by gifts, not enslaved to the belly, not held in thrall by anger, but longsuffering, forbearing, and above all humble. He should be discerning and patient, exercising the care of a guardian and loving the souls of his pupils.<sup>36</sup>

Stelios Ramfos summarizes the thrust of Amma Theodora as well as that of the other desert ascetics when he writes, “The principle of the teacher’s authority leads not to be a kind of education which is overbearing and domineering, but to an education by example.”<sup>37</sup> The bishops and desert fathers alike share this in common with classical

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<sup>35</sup> Laistner, 25.

<sup>36</sup> Stelios Ramfos, *Like a Pelican in the Wilderness*, (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000), 210.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

*paideia*, even while reconstituting its basis—“[Education’s] main concern was with the moral dimension of life.”<sup>38</sup>

### Basil the Great

Yet another bishop of the same century and friend to John Chrysostom put his hand to the same task—that of turning the “theoretical education of classical antiquity into the ascetical education of practical life.”<sup>39</sup> Educated in Caesarea, Constantinople, and Athens, Basil was respected as a distinguished and brilliant scholar in rhetoric, grammar, philosophy, astronomy, geometry, and medicine. The son of Christian parents, the academic life and his successes there held some appeal that was further fueled by his sense of independence. His sister Macrina is credited for his final return to the Christian ways of his parents, committing the rest of his life to the monastic movement that he now viewed as the true expression and fulfillment of Christian *paideia*.

### Learning from the Mentor

Basil, one who realized that the Christian “concept of education was broader than the pagan, in that it had a new dimension, that of the Spirit,”<sup>40</sup> wrote a familiar treatise entitled, “Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature.” The name alone shows its affinity to our concluding remarks about Chrysostom’s treatise, and the sentiments of the desert mothers and fathers. Clearly, Basil, in his opening remarks, is

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>40</sup> Elias Matsagouras, *The Early Church Fathers as Educators*, (Minneapolis: Light and Life), 21.

occupying that place of teacher or mentor—what in the desert community would be called “abbot”—and stands ready to be emulated in his opening remarks:

Many considerations, young men, prompt me to recommend to you the principles which I deem most desirable, and which I believe will be of use to you if you will adopt them. For my time of life, my many-sided training, yea, my adequate experience in those vicissitudes of life which teach their lessons at every turn, have so familiarized me with human affairs, that I am able to map out the safest course for those just starting upon their careers. By nature’s common bond I stand in the same relationship to you as your parents, so that I am no whit behind them in my concern for you.... Now if you should receive my words with gladness, you would be in the second class of those who, according to Hesiod, merit praise; if not, I should say nothing disparaging, but no doubt you yourselves would remember the passage in which that poet says: “He is best who, of himself, recognizes what is his duty, and *he also is good who follows the course marked out by others*, but he who does neither of these things is of no use under the sun.”<sup>41</sup>

*Paideia* seeps into Basil’s opening assertion that pupils should follow the “course marked” by Basil himself, and this affects even our reading of books.

Sherman Garnett comments on Basil’s first instinct: “To seek a teacher means to seek a ruler,”<sup>42</sup> and to the degree that the teacher’s reign in the lives of his pupils direct their hearts and minds to the things of this world alone, he is unworthy, for as Basil writes, “we place our hopes upon the things which are beyond, and in preparation for the life eternal do all things that we do.”<sup>43</sup>

### The Place of Pagan Literature

Life eternal is the subject of the sacred Scriptures, and their profundity and depth are begotten of the divine nature of its source, subject, and words. “But so long as our

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<sup>41</sup> Basil, “Address to Young Men on the Right Use of Greek Literature” in *Essays on the Study and Use of Poetry by Plutarch and Basil the Great*, 99-120, (New Haven: Yale Studies in English 15, 1902). Emphasis added.

<sup>42</sup> Sherman Garnett, “The Christian Young and the Secular World: St. Basil’s Letter on Pagan Literature,” *Greek orthodox Theological Review* 26 (1981), 214.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

immaturity forbids our understanding their deep thought,” writes Basil, “we exercise our spiritual perceptions upon profane writings, which are not altogether different, and in which we perceive the truth as it were in shadows and in mirrors. Thus we imitate.”<sup>44</sup> Insofar as classical *paideia* is found in the writings of pagan authors, young Christian men may benefit from them. This recommendation corresponds to an earlier assertion that Christian *paideia* flows out of, while all the while absorbing, classical *paideia*. Basil finds the old Greek poets in particular to be a spiritual precursor to the full understanding of the Divine Scriptures.

Basil has an almost equal ability to that of Chrysostom in illustrative power:

Just as dyers prepare the cloth before they apply the dye, be it purpose of any other color, so indeed must we also, if we would preserve indelible the idea of the true virtue, become first initiated in the pagan lore, then at length give special heed to the sacred and divine teachings, even as we first accustom ourselves to the sun’s reflection in the water, and then become able to turn our eyes upon the very sun itself.<sup>45</sup>

Many of the classical authors use analogy to demonstrate their philosophical points, since nature has a correspondence to the principles and ideas which underlie it and give it a rationality and knowable connection. Naturally, this is due to the fact that the *Logos* of God underlies both the world of nature and the world of ideas.

### Biblical Examples

Basil then offers an example of his overall thesis, which we will consider in greater depth later. He finds two examples of Old Testament prophets whose training in pagan cultures was put into the service of the Kingdom. Comparing the Sacred

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<sup>44</sup> Basil, 99-120.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Scriptures to that of fruit and the pagan writings as a protective and ornamental leaf surrounding it, he writes,

Moses, whose name is a synonym for wisdom, severely trained his mind in the learning of the Egyptians, and thus became able to appreciate their deity. Similarly, in later days, the wise Daniel is said to have studied the lore of the Chaldaeans while in Babylon, and after that to have taken up the sacred teachings.<sup>46</sup>

But Moses and Daniel did not use the *paideia* of the Egyptians and Babylonians indiscriminately. Basil employs another brilliant analogy in describing the discretion necessary for Christian scholars, “For just as bees know how to extract honey from flowers, which to men are agreeable only for their fragrance and color, even so here also those who look for something more than pleasure and enjoyment in such writers may derive profit for their souls.”<sup>47</sup>

He mentions further that just as a bee makes no effort at carrying away the flower as a whole, leaving behind what is not necessary to its mission, the Christian reader should do likewise. Still more, the Christian should have a transformative approach to even the familiar texts that have ambiguous morals, or at least fall short of eschatological fulfillment within the Greek system.

In chapter five, Basil mentions a familiar passage in Homer about a naked Odysseus confronting a princess, but without the shame otherwise expected, “since virtue served him as a garment.”<sup>48</sup> Sherman Garnett points out that, “Basil ignores Odysseus’ cleverness and the possibility that such an encounter might lead to seduction; he abstracts completely from the erotic nature of the body and presents nakedness...where the naked

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<sup>46</sup> Basil, 99-120.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

body signifies innocence and virtue.”<sup>49</sup> Garnett concludes, “The teacher is not interested in accurate literary criticism, but in disciplining the young from what they are most inclined to pursue.”<sup>50</sup> Such transformative reading lacks the political correctness and so-called academic responsibility that anyone outside of the *paideia tou kyriou* could understand or respect. The lens through which classics are read is irrevocably distorted with a Christological retina in search of eschatological fulfillment in all moral examples.

Basil does not stop with the extolling of virtue, but insists on the “indivisible link between study and action.”<sup>51</sup> In doing so, he “restores the connection between imagination and life.”<sup>52</sup> Because wisdom has a practical shape, Basil’s emphasis on practiced virtue as a paideic principle leads to yet more of the desired wisdom. Carefully selected books are therefore the basis for this imaginative life, or what in the monastery might be called the contemplative life. The intellectual freedom, or liberal education, that can be so valuable, can only come to those who are willingly temperate and habitual. Basil warns of a virtue that is merely theoretical when he writes, “Such a man will seek the appearance of virtue rather than the reality. But to seem to be good when one is not so, is, if we are to respect the opinion of Plato at all, the very height of injustice.”<sup>53</sup> Extolling not a few of the virtuous acts of classical heroes, Basil appears to be setting the pupil up for his final preparations regarding an understanding of the sacred writ, “The ground has been carefully prepared for the introduction of Scripture by the habituation of self-control and the practice of doing good.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Garnett, 217.

<sup>50</sup> Garnett, 217.

<sup>51</sup> Garnett, 219.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Basil, 99-120.

<sup>54</sup> Garnett, 219.

## The Training of Desire

As Basil draws his address to a close, he begins to drive lessons home for the young men he is addressing. Without mentioning the bees themselves, he seems to return to the bee illustration, warning that “we should not accept everything without discrimination.”<sup>55</sup> He references the inversion of values that many moderns would recognize as their own tendency—the shameful practice of concerning oneself more with the avoidance of unhealthy foods than with the nourishment of our souls. Turning to an athletic metaphor, he urges that those who make ready in both athletic and musical contests, do so with great practice—even to the enduring of “great hardships beyond number.”<sup>56</sup> Basil then employs the rhetorical question, “Will it then be possible for us, to whom are held out rewards so wondrous in number and in splendor that tongue can not recount them, while we are fast asleep and leading care-free lives, to make these our own by half-hearted efforts?”<sup>57</sup> His examples serve as a segue into the development of bodily habits that support his overall system of education. Young men are to make the “body superior to passion”<sup>58</sup> through the obsessive avoidance of food delicacies, excessive concern over one’s hair and clothing, and the pampering of the body, giving only “so much care to the body as is beneficial to the soul.”<sup>59</sup> This would include aspects of the body that others see or echoing Chrysostom’s emphasis on the senses as gateways to the soul. Even sweet-smelling perfumes do not fair well with Basil, since they make the soul

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<sup>55</sup> Basil, 99-120.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



a servant to the body as with an animal. The student is now liberated from the desire for illicit wealth, which exists only for the procuring of the objects of desire.

Basil concludes that, “It is incumbent upon us, for the present, to trace, as it were, the silhouette of virtue in the pagan authors. For those who carefully gather the useful from each book are wont, like mighty rivers, to gain accessions on every hand.”<sup>60</sup>

Garnett reminds us that “The teacher places himself and his tradition as a screen before the pagan texts; everything they say appears in a different light.”<sup>61</sup> Basil is suited to the task, not only because his model can outlive its writer, but because Basil’s own education was a variation on this model. He could now employ the full force of his gifts, training, and eloquence in service to the gospel of Christ. His training now clarified by the Scriptures, Basil became the most formidable of apologists and Christian doctors in his opposition to the popular heresies and pagan attacks of the time. His two-fold education made him fearless.

### Augustine

No less formidable a witness for the faith, Augustine, the renowned western doctor and bishop of Hippo Regius, wrote extensively of education in a number of different works. For example, W. H. Semple writes of his *Confessions*, “The cultural background of the *Confessions* is the ancient system of education, which lasted since the beginning of the Empire practically unchanged in form and content.”<sup>62</sup> No less important are his *De magistro* and *De civitate Dei*. His most popular educational treatise, however,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>61</sup> Garnett, 233.

<sup>62</sup> Semple, 136.

is the succinct work, *De doctrina Christiana*. Behind each of these works lies the backdrop of his own education as clarified by his conversion to the Christian faith.

### Augustine on Education

Receiving a “commonplace”<sup>63</sup> education in grammar in Tagaste, where the curriculum itself was the real substance of the education, “Augustine’s imagination responded directly to the poetry of the *Aeneid*.”<sup>64</sup> He was trained in Latin, including not only Virgil, but Cicero, and while learning the basics of Greek, he never became so well versed as to read the same Greek texts that Chrysostom and Basil no doubt would have known almost by heart. “He contrasts the pleasure he got from reading Virgil with the torture he suffered in trying to read Homer: all the charm of Homer was spoilt by the difficulty of mastering Homer’s language: and he wistfully supposes that perhaps Greek boys endured the same anguish if ever they had to read Virgil.”<sup>65</sup> Once his grammar school years were complete, his parents decided to allow their gifted son better training in rhetoric than he had enjoyed in grammar school, and he was sent to Carthage. By age twenty, he was not only trained in classical *paideia*, he was now one of its guardians as a professor at Carthage. After a short teaching post in Rome, Augustine moved to Milan where he met Bishop Ambrose. Ultimately, his relationship with Ambrose led him back to the faith of his prayerful mother after a memorable and now famous conversion.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>66</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions*, (New York: Vintage, 1998), 168.

There are certain things that are not properly possessed unless they are given away, and if that were true for loaves and fishes in the mind of Augustine, then it has to be true of Christian doctrine. This principle is where Augustine begins; it forms the basis for all teaching, for all doctrinal enterprise, for all catechesis. From this starting point it quickly becomes clear that when Augustine writes of *doctrina*, the term “cannot be narrowly interpreted as (meaning) ‘doctrine’ or ‘teaching,’ but means ‘culture’”<sup>67</sup>—educational culture, or *paideia*. The pagans, of course, knew of the grammar, logic and rhetoric that Augustine transforms in this treatise. They were also familiar with the power of myth, which might be the most brilliant use of *paideia* of all. But Augustine is taking the *paideia* in which he was trained and purifying its soul, as it were. Even if the Christian faith presupposes human secular culture (like learning our ABC’s), its final purpose is far different than the end for which Rome ruled the world. In fact, for Augustine Christian culture, Christian doctrine, and Christian theological understanding are the only hope for human culture, since they restore human culture. Augustine makes his point quite clear—his exodus from the pagan city is substantial, and his spoils from her make the exodus all the more stark.

### Language as Shared Tradition

In the midst of this vision of Book I of *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine enters comfortably into a discussion of language theory, a popular conversation of the fourth century. And Augustine’s discussion of language—*signa data* (given or conventional signs)—shows the way in which human understanding of anything, especially theology,

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<sup>67</sup> Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 77.

cannot be understood in mere individualistic terms. Words mean nothing if agreement, whether tacit or verbal, is lacking; therefore all of thought and of language is a participation. Language is a shared tradition—a common *sense*. Thus novelty, which Augustine calls a lust— whether linguistic, theological, liturgical, ethical, or educational—has no place in the Church, since lust is defined as “the habits and inclinations of a soul to enjoy what is inferior.”<sup>68</sup> He would contrast this tendency with an *ordo amoris*—an “ordered love”:

The person who lives a just and holy life is one...who has ordered his love, so that he does not love what it is wrong to love, or fail to love what should be loved, or love too much what should be loved less (or love too little what should be loved more), or love two things equally if one of them should be loved either less or more than the other, or love things either more or less if they should be loved equally.<sup>69</sup>

Lust, or ill-directed affections, are the lie of popular culture for Augustine—the shriveled wineskin of wayward imagination. Far from being the fullest expression of imaginative thought, he considers it the failure of the God-imaged imagination. It is the foolish rejection of the hard task of thinking someone else’s thoughts after them, whether a pagan author or the Holy Scriptures themselves, which is a shared moment. If God himself—absolute, uncaused, ever-being essence—is in loving conversation within the persons of the Godhead, shall the Christian pupil leave their growth in grace up to the silence that a lack of spiritually-directed reading leads to? Augustine agrees with Paul in the exhortation: *do not be children in understanding* (I Cor. 14:20).<sup>70</sup>

### The Priority of Love

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<sup>68</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, (New York: Oxford University, 1999), 19.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>70</sup> Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version.

But this is not Augustine’s highest goal. Were we to review his four-book treatise without somewhere mentioning love, we would not have done our due diligence in thinking his thoughts after him. In Augustine’s thought, love is a propensity toward valuing what is actually valuable—according all things their proper amount of devotion or love. This is because, “Scripture enjoins nothing but love, and censures nothing but lust, and moulds men’s minds accordingly.”

In his pursuit, penitence is essential, because love can only be properly ordered when one submits in humility to learn from the Incarnate Word of God—faith seeking understanding looks a lot like repentance; or to apply Augustine’s academic metaphor—faith seeking understanding looks a lot like education in the great school of the church—Augustine’s understanding of Christian *paideia*.

Only in the school of the church does love begin its work in engendering the fear of the Lord—the kind of fear that is conscious of the sinfulness of the flesh and the need to nail our “presumptuous impulses”<sup>71</sup> to the cross. Only in this school does love’s tutelage in holiness begin to take root, so that gentleness—a certain teachableness—comes that prevents Christians from reveling in controversy.<sup>72</sup> Only in this school does love then lead the Christian to first things—to knowledge, to the demands and exhortations of Scripture, and to the realization that worldly love—Augustine’s “lust”—is afar off from the “double love”<sup>73</sup> of God and of neighbor. Further, it is only in this school that by the Spirit’s work knowledge does not lead to despair alone, but to a fortitude that brings a “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matthew 5:6), an

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<sup>71</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

extrication of oneself “from all the fatal charms of transient things”<sup>74</sup> and a movement toward a love for the Trinity. And when our Christian pupil “beholds this light,” as Augustine says, “shining as it does even into remote places, and realizes that because of the weakness of his vision he cannot bear its brilliance, he is at the fifth stage”<sup>75</sup> of the believer’s heavenly climb—“the resolve of compassion.”<sup>76</sup> Only in this school does the loving resolve of compassion lead to any recognizable form of purity—whether purity of eye or of heart or of mind—Augustine’s requisite for the seventh and final stage of wisdom, the goal of all Christian *paideia*, a deep, theologically-informed, doctrinally-shaped communion with God. The moral primacy of love in Augustine’s—and Scripture’s—scheme of values makes it the key to the whole of our sanctification. Love gives the believer sensibilities for discerning mystery rather than approaching education as one approaches quadratic equations.

The love that moves the Christian student from faith to understanding “is not simply an intellectual process,”<sup>77</sup> as Andrew Louth so beautifully argues,

it is a matter of realizing one’s participation in Christ. This of course has a dogmatic dimension, and this is the first to be developed; but these dogmas are not lifeless propositions: they disclose to the pupil the very lineaments of the mystery of Christ—a mystery which draws the student into itself; a mystery that invites a response. This mystery becomes the fact that transforms the whole of history: the summit of history, the fact of Christ presupposed history, and its radiance transfigured history.<sup>78</sup>

Included in Augustine’s vision of transfigured history is any truth that may be recovered even from pagans:

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Louth, 120.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

We were not wrong to learn the alphabet just because [the Greeks] say that the god Mercury was its patron, nor should we avoid justice and virtue just because they dedicated temples to justice and virtue and preferred to honour these values not in their minds, but in the form of stones. A person who is a good and a true Christian should realize that truth belongs to his Lord, wherever it is found, gathering and acknowledging it even in pagan literature, but rejecting superstitious vanities and deploring and avoiding those who “though they knew God did not glorify him as God or give thanks but became enfeebled in their own thoughts and plunged their senseless minds into darkness.”<sup>79</sup>

Augustine also rejects basic forms of ignorance that a simple course in classical grammar would remedy, such as lack of familiarity with words, expressions, “qualities of animals or stones or plants,”<sup>80</sup> and “ignorance of music.”<sup>81</sup> Each of these basic areas of knowledge is more than a mere human construct, and ignorance of these will damage the reader’s ability to interpret Scripture. What Augustine says of logic applies also to the increasingly abused subject of rhetoric: “The validity of syllogisms is not something instituted by humans, but observed and recorded by them, so that the subject may be taught or learnt.”<sup>82</sup>

### Classical Paideia Transformed

To summarize his teachings on the use of pagan *paideia*, Augustine finally employs his famous biblical analogy:

Any statements by those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonists, which happen to be true and consistent with our faith should not cause alarm, but be claimed for our own use, as it were from owners who have no right to them. Like the treasures of the ancient Egyptians, who possessed not only idols and heavy burdens, which the people of Israel hated and shunned, but also vessels and ornaments of silver and gold, and clothes, which on leaving Egypt the people of Israel, in order to make better use of them, surreptitiously claimed for themselves

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<sup>79</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 47. The biblical quotation is from Rom. 1:21.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

(they did this not on their own authority but at God’s command, and the Egyptians in their ignorance actually gave them the things of which they had made poor use) [Exod. 3:21-2, 12:35-6]—similarly all the branches of pagan learning contain not only false and superstitious fantasies and burdensome studies that involve unnecessary effort, which each one of us must loathe and avoid as under Christ’s guidance we abandon the company of pagans, but also studies for liberated minds which are more appropriate to the service of the truth, and some very useful moral instruction, as well as various truths about monotheism to be found in their writers.<sup>83</sup>

In “spoiling the Egyptians, “ however, Augustine warns of a possible negative outcome reminding his readers of Paul’s warning that, “knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (I Cor. 8:1). Gregory of Nyssa, brother of Basil the Great, also employs an allegorical hermeneutic to this passage:

Our guide in virtue commands someone who “borrows” from wealthy Egyptians to receive such things as moral and natural philosophy, geometry, astronomy, dialectic, and whatever else is sought by those outside the church, since these things will be useful when in time the divine sanctuary of mystery must be beautiful with the riches of reason. Those who treasured up for themselves such wealth handed it over to Moses as he was working on the tent of mystery, each one making his personal contribution to the construction of the holy places. It is possible to see this happening even now. For many bring to the church of God their profane learning as a kind of gift: such a man was the great Basil, who acquired the Egyptian wealth in every respect during his youth and dedicated this wealth to God for the adornment of the church, the true tabernacle.<sup>84</sup>

Augustine closes Book 2 using the interpretive principle of allegory learned from classical *paideia*, in hopes of reminding the reader that the Scriptures have no comparison. Commenting on Ephesians 3:17-18, where the Apostle prays that believers may comprehend the breadth, length, height, and depth of God’s love, Augustine elaborates:

This refers to the Lord’s cross. The breadth is the crossbeam, on which the hands were stretched out; the length is the part from the ground to the crossbeam, to

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>84</sup> Kenneth Stevenson and Michael Glerup, eds., *Acts*, vol. 5, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 79.



which is fixed the whole body and the hands downward; the height is the part from the crossbeam up to the top, to which the head is attached; the depth is the hidden part, firmly set in the ground.”<sup>85</sup>

Augustine then proceeds with books 3 and 4 to finish his instruction on biblical exegesis as an outflow of a distinctively Christian *paideia*.

Augustine’s emphasis on words cannot be understood apart from his specific doctrine of Christ’s incarnation; nor can it be understood apart from his training in both Plato and Cicero. With regard to the doctrinal side of Augustine’s understanding of language, David Chidester writes, “The most crucial and central epiphanies of the sacred in the tradition are embodied in synesthetic<sup>86</sup> language characterized by the convergence and interpenetration of auditory and visual modes.”<sup>87</sup> The interpenetration of the two senses involved in language are comparable to the mystery of the two natures of Christ. This constitutes the richest experience of so-called “learning,” since it is sacramental. Augustine envisions an intersection of word and light not unlike the creation event itself. To elaborate, the same principle working in the incarnation is working in the mythic reenactment of the incarnation’s power through the sacraments, all the way down to the whole of Christian *paideia*, since the same symbolization of interpenetration takes place in the use of language. Christ is the visible Word, the sacraments are also visible words; and these along with all other true words give birth in our hearts to light, which in turn begets understanding and wisdom. This is the goal of Christian *paideia* as seen in Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine*.

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<sup>85</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, 66.

<sup>86</sup> “Synesthetic” language is language in which one of the senses stimulates another.

<sup>87</sup> David Chidester, “The Symbolism of Learning in St. Augustine,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 76, 78.

Plato and Augustine both view learning as the “transformation of human consciousness from time to eternity.”<sup>88</sup> However, they understand this process in distinctively different ways. Chidester notes that “It has been said that Augustine’s doctrine of illumination is intended to take the place of Plato’s theory of reminiscence as a means of explaining the process of learning.”<sup>89</sup> In Plato, learning is some function of memory from our pre-embodied existences. For Augustine, however, the purification of the eye of the soul that constitutes Christian learning stems from illumination by the Spirit of God.

Cicero sees education as existing “to free the student from the tyranny of the present. The study of the liberal arts—the particularly Roman combination of philosophy and literature, which was to have such a controlling influence on the development of Christian education—provided a means of transcending the temporal limitations of ordinary experience and a way of connecting the student with a living tradition.”<sup>90</sup> Cicero differs from Plato not so much in the goal of education as in the means. Neither Cicero nor Plato have a doctrine of creation that informs the rest of their educational philosophy.

### Education as Illumination

By contrast, creation is, for Augustine, the symbol for Christian *paideia*, as the light of wisdom—God’s word—is formed in the hearts and minds of Christians. While he closely associates God’s words and human speech, Augustine carefully distinguishes

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 79.

between the two, finding the ideal of effective communication not in Cicero but in Scripture. As a rhetorician, Cicero is ultimately bound to the finest forms of education coming from the clearest use of human language. Augustine, however, finds human language to be a mere activator: “Knowledge is, therefore, accessible to the learner, not through words, but through seeing the thing itself. This is, for Augustine, the symbolic basis of all knowledge. ‘I shall learn the thing I did not know, not by means of the words spoken, but by seeing it.’”<sup>91</sup> Thus for Augustine, education, or *paideia*, is a transformed vision, and the light is God Himself.

As was seen in Basil and Chrysostom both, Augustine inevitably shares categories, analogies, disciplines, and language with the pagan world; and consequently carries the thousand-year import of classical *paideia* into any discussion of its Christian counterpart. But the synthesis that leads to true transformation lies not in his references to the classical cultural around him, but in carrying forward *paideia*'s longstanding reputation of soul-transformation. Augustine is able to find a verbal agreement with the pagan goals of education; but he transcends secular education when he describes the shaping of the soul in a transfigured Platonic seven-step ladder that involves the inner illumination of the Spirit which initiates the Christian student into the life of wisdom that is from above.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 86.

CHAPTER 3  
CLASSICAL-CHRISTIAN SYNTHESIS

Introduction

Having established the function of *paideia* within a Christianized Roman empire, we now turn to establishing the admissibility of this portion of the Christian project. Due to the overlap of discipleship and education, it was unavoidable that the Christian faith lay eventual claim to the academic establishment. And so all three of the Christian bishops discussed in the previous chapter present us with a critical question: is a synthetic relationship between the Christian faith and its surrounding culture a legitimate pursuit? Christians have long held to the Pauline mandate to, “be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). It is difficult for the modern reader to understand why this relationship between classical and Christian culture was so taken for granted, much less endorsed by such towering Christian figures.

Werner Jaeger credits the Apostle John for initiating this enduring union:

The Stoics had taught that the divine principle and cause of the world was the Logos, which penetrated all that exists. This Logos, which Socrates had partly anticipated, had taken on human form in Christ, as the fourth gospel says, for Christ appears as the creative power of the Word through which the world was made.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia*, (Cambridge: Belknap, 1961), 28.

The Pythagorean mystery word *logos* was no longer an ethereal divine principle—it was a “he,” and He had even taken a human name—*Jesus of Nazareth*. But Jaeger goes even farther back in history in his attempts to find a basis for the natural synthesis observed in Jewish-Christian monotheism:

Indeed, when the Greeks met the Jewish religion for the first time in Alexandria in the third century B.C., not long after Alexander the Great, the Greek authors who give us their first impressions of their encounter with the Jewish people, such as Hecataeus of Abdera, Megasthenes, and Clearchus of Soli on Cyprus, the pupil of Theophrastus, invariably speak of the Jews as a “philosophical race.”<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, Church Fathers from the first century on use philosophical arguments to defend the faith, just as Socrates had done when martyred for his teachings against the Greek cult of the gods in favor of a “purer concept of the Divine.”<sup>3</sup> The Apostle John, the radical, incarnational monotheist; had co-opted one of the most important philosophical term of the Greek Stoics and sages, and transfigured it in a way so as forever alter its original use.

#### Apologetic Use of *Paideia*

For the same reason, first and second century Apologists and Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr, routinely employ this philosophically loaded term in their defenses of the Christian faith and letters of encouragement to Christian brethren. The vehicle of the Christian gospel was the Greek language, and therefore the merger of Greek associations with Christian doctrine was implicitly sanctioned for the Christian when the Apostle wrote these words in Greek: “But when the *fullness of the time* was come, God sent forth his Son” (Galatians 4:4). John’s understanding of God’s

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 28.

providence mandated that the criticism of Greek culture be held in tension with an appreciation for God's perfect timing for the perpetuation of his gospel through the language of the same.

When one considers John's use of the *logos* symbol, therefore, the significance of this his gospel for the Christian transformation of culture should not be underestimated.

Its sister concept *paideia* is uniquely suited to characterize the same transformation:

If *paideia* was the will of God and if Christianity was for the Christian what philosophy was for the philosopher, according to Plato—assimilation to God—the true fulfillment of the Christian ideal of life was one continuous and lifelong effort to achieve that end.<sup>4</sup>

In the Christian community, the transforming synthesis reached even deeper, comparing the philosopher's lifelong process of *paideia* to the purifying contemplation of God known as the life of faith, or the *imitatio Christi*.

The resemblance is again deepened with curriculum. Literature is consonant with cultural initiation insofar as it carries the normative features of its values, ends, and understanding of human flourishing. "The formative mold of early Greek *paideia* was Homer, and as time went on that role was extended to Greek poetry at large. In the end, the word *paideia* meant Greek literature as a whole."<sup>5</sup> The corresponding norm for Christian *paideia*, of course, the Bible. But even the retained cultural trappings of the Romans avoid degenerating into actual entrapment when basic societal structures are

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<sup>4</sup> Jaeger, 89-90. "Effort," here, need not be viewed in the post-reformational sense, which could be read as excluding faith; the Fathers see faith as crucial to the effort of working out one's salvation, or "assimilation to God."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 91.

glorified to Kingdom use through the wisdom of the Holy Scriptures and the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Example of Thomas Aquinas

Basil shows an interesting application of this theological trend when he proposes the use of the Psalms—“the most read portion of the Scriptures in the Christians daily life and ascetic practice”<sup>6</sup>—as a new *Nicomachean Ethics* for Christianity. In fact, ethics prove to be one of the chief battlefields for working out the intentional transformative principle of *paideia*, as one can see in the later works of Thomas Aquinas, renowned for his fusion of Aristotle’s thought with Christian theology:

The early Church was not indifferent to the arguments of the Greeks but took over this classical form of thought and developed it, as thinkers like Augustine and John Damascene made ambitious use of the philosophical argumentation of Aristotle and Plato. Of course Scholastics like Bonaventure and Aquinas mastered the disciplines of this classical heritage, placing philosophical realism in the service of the Christian faith.<sup>7</sup>

We saw earlier how Augustine used the Israelites’ “plundering” of the Egyptians during the exodus as a metaphor for constraining the elements of pagan culture into the service of God. An examination of Thomas’s application of this plundering principle might prove helpful to show continuity from the Apostle Paul up through the fourth-century bishops and beyond; for as Thomas Joseph White has commented, “John Henry Newman famously argued that, when an idea is essential to the Christian religion, we see

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Joseph White, “Whether Faith Needs Philosophy,” *First Things* 215 (August/September 2011), 48.

it continually reasserted through time in the doctrinal life of the Church as it undergoes development of expression in consistent ways.”<sup>8</sup>

### The Four Cardinal Virtues

Thomas finds in Aristotle four cardinal human virtues endowed by God upon mankind that serve to categorize those things that are in accordance with basic human nature for the preservation of human culture and values—the purpose of *paideia*. That human minds would be ordered rightly and in accordance with reasonable patterns of thought, Thomas commends the virtue of *prudence*. That our minds would then order those things around us—society, home, work—in accordance with this reasonable life of the mind, Thomas commends the virtue of *justice*. Further, that the appetites of the flesh would be governed and properly suppressed so as to afford societal harmony, Thomas asks us to allow, for the sake of argument, the virtue of *temperance*. And finally, for the moments in which fear tempts us away from the dictates of natural reason, Thomas commends *fortitude*.

### The Three Theological Virtues

To the basic human virtues mined from Aristotle, Thomas adds three theological virtues, biblically prescribed in a number of places, and not acquirable in any form apart from the Divine imposition of a supernatural order. *Faith*, says the great logician, is not the decision to believe the demonstrable, but is the compelling and inducing result of an interaction with those things that beget belief. This belief is not without reference point,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



for it has the truth as its proposed object, and hence it qualifies as a virtue. *Hope*, for Thomas, joins that great longing for truth with an equally worthy longing for Christian happiness—especially that of heaven. Because it orients the Christian toward true and eternal happiness, it is an asset that leads to the crowning virtue of charity.

Finally, Thomas endeavors to explain the great mystery of man’s apprehension of God in any kind, and, beyond mere apprehension, man’s friendship and communication with the infinite God. That Christ would call us friends has such depth and meaning that he can find but one word in Scripture to describe the whole of it—*charity*.

### The Seven Virtues Taken Together

It is, therefore, within these seven virtues—cardinal and theological alike—that Thomas would have us find the summary of Christian living and piety. The first four are inherited from Aristotle, the moral theologian for classical *paideia*’s guardians and mentors. The latter three, however, illuminate the four and give an eschatological tenor to the seven that stands in stark contrast to the temporal nature of the original four.

Thomas is careful to show the co-dependence of the four cardinal virtues as much as their distinction. Prudence, being set apart by its reference to reason in its purest essence, is acted upon and participated in by use of the other three. This triad of the remaining “active” virtues, then, is governed, guarded, and backed by the substance of which they give rise. Thomas quotes Gregory the Great’s explanation: “There is no true prudence unless it be just, temperate and brave; no perfect temperance that is not brave, just, and prudent; no sound fortitude that is not prudent, temperate and just; no real

justice without prudence, fortitude, and temperance.”<sup>9</sup> Gregory’s exposition shows, as Thomas would say, how each virtue is “qualified” by the others “by a kind of overflow.”<sup>10</sup> Yet prudence is the preeminent virtue in terms of its origin and authority over the others.

The Epistle of James uses a similar kind of logic when it says, “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” (James 3:2). Clearly the body is qualified by the tongue in a kind of overflow in which the tongue either supports or hinders moral living.

Before moving into further analysis, it might be helpful to briefly describe the origin of Thomas’s use of virtue. Most notably quoted throughout his section on virtue are Aristotle and Augustine. For Aristotle, virtue was regarded as at least a seeded potential within human nature to want to find and act upon the “mean” or balance that is found between two opposing extremes—a process formed only by habit and understandable only by skill:

I am referring to moral virtue: for it is moral virtue that is concerned with emotions and actions, and it is in emotions and actions that excess, deficiency, and the median are found. Thus we can experience fear, confidence, desire, anger, pity, and generally any kind of pleasure and pain either too much or too little, and in either case not properly. But to experience all this at the right time, toward the right objects, toward the right people, for the right reason, and in the right manner—that is the median and the best course, the course that is a mark of virtue.<sup>11</sup>

That skill is referred to as “practical wisdom” or what in Thomas is referred to as

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<sup>9</sup> Anton C. Pegis, ed., *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, (Random House: Indianapolis, 1945), 2:470.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 471.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, 1999), 43.

“prudence.” Here, Aristotle does not depart significantly from his forerunner and teacher Plato, although Aristotle does discuss other moral virtues—friendship being an interesting addition as a would-be substitute for the need for justice. Thomas, though, is safely within the Aristotelian tradition.

### Thomas References Augustine

Augustine also speaks of the virtues, unworthy on the one hand as handmaidens merely of pleasure:

Pleasure sits like a luxurious queen on a royal seat and all the virtues are subjected to her as slaves, watching her nod that they may do whatever she shall command. She commands Prudence to be ever on the watch to discover how Pleasure may rule, and be safe. Justice she orders to grant what benefits she can, in order to secure those friendships which are necessary for bodily Pleasure; to do wrong to no one, lest, on account of the breaking of the laws, Pleasure be not able to live in security. Fortitude she orders to keep her mistress, that is, Pleasure, bravely in her mind, if any affliction befall her body which does not occasion death, in order that by remembrance of former delights she may mitigate the poignancy of present pain. Temperance she commands to take only a certain quantity even of the most favourite food, lest, through immoderate use, anything prove hurtful by disturbing the health of the body, and thus Pleasure, which the Epicureans make to consist chiefly in the health of the body, be grievously offended. Thus the virtues, with the whole dignity of their glory, will be slaves of Pleasure, as of some imperious and disreputable woman.<sup>12</sup>

He continues:

Wherefore it is unworthy of the solidity and firmness of the virtues to represent them as serving this glory...but he who, with true piety towards God, whom he loves, believes, and hopes in, fixes his attention more on those things in which he displeases himself than on those things, if there are any such, which please himself.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin, 1984), 214-215; emphasis added.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

The virtues, then, are worthy of God alone as the only Supreme Good—the result, again, of a *paideia kyriou*. Notice Augustine’s biblical corrective for a misuse of the so-called cardinal virtues—“true piety towards God, whom he *loves, believes, and hopes* in”—the theological virtues! Thomas is Augustinian in his formulations, and maybe not so innovative after all in his understanding of the real differences between the City of Man and the City of God. Perhaps his emphasis alone is the real novelty of his approach.

Misunderstandings are sure to arise anytime an idea is imported into the Christian faith from the pagan world, and the virtues are no exception. Thomas is the first in line to denounce the cardinal virtues as “cast out by sin,” and he insists that it is “therefore...not in man by nature”<sup>14</sup> to follow them. He does allow, however, that the cardinal virtues are natural to man’s composition in terms of aptitude, though he is not able to fulfill them perfectly. In fact, he anticipates the Reformation outcry against the use of the virtues, ‘Whether any virtue is caused in us by habituation from our acts?’ Thomas lists the following objections to the notion that virtue can be inculcated by force of habit:

Objection I. It would seem that virtues cannot be caused in us by habituation from our acts. For the Gloss of Augustine, commenting on Rom. Xiv. 23 (All that is not of faith is sin) says: ‘The whole life of an unbeliever is a sin, and there is no good without the highest good. Where knowledge of the truth is lacking, virtue is a mockery even in the most excellent behavior.’ Now faith cannot be acquired by means of works, but is caused in us by God, according to Ephes. II.8: By grace you are saved through faith. Therefore no virtue can be acquired by us through habituation from our acts.

Objection II. Further, sin and virtue are contraries, so that they are incompatible. Now man cannot avoid sin except by the grace of God, according to Wis. VIII.21: ‘I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it.’ Therefore neither can any virtues be caused in us by habituation from our acts, but only by the gift of God.

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<sup>14</sup> Pegis, 481.

Objection III. Further, actions which are without virtue lack the perfection of virtue. But an effect cannot be more perfect than its cause. Therefore a virtue cannot be caused by actions that precede it.<sup>15</sup>

### Nature and Reason

Then in classic Thomistic fashion, he gives a two-fold answer: he first answers according to man's nature and reason, and then in accordance with divine law. He makes careful separation between the two and ensures that the things pertaining to salvation and revelation are never conflated with the habitual: "virtue which directs man to good as defined by the divine law, and not by human reason, cannot be caused by human acts, whose principle is reason, but is produced in us by the divine operation alone. Hence Augustine, in giving the definition of this virtue, inserts the words 'which God works in us without us.'" "The good toward which cardinal virtue works, apart from saving grace, is a subspecies of the true good.

Thomas's understanding, to use an overly simplistic example, affords the chainsaw operator the potential to improve his usage of the saw in accordance with a human being's natural aptitude to develop skills. Thomas protects us, however, from then concluding that our operator, at the end of his training and familiarity with the tool, is then functioning at the level of human perfection, somehow appropriating heavenly temperance and fortitude in his usage of it. It follows, therefore, that these habitual virtues likewise never lead to a claim upon grace or salvation or perfection of any kind. This shows the limited nature of classical *paideia*. "Paideia-theology,"<sup>16</sup> however, suffuses the old with a paradigm-bursting transformation of the Spirit, leading to kingdom enculturation. Thomas's *paideia*-theology overcomes the limitations of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 477.

<sup>16</sup> Jaeger, 96.

classical *paideia*, offering a model for plundering the pagan world to discover God's truth wherever it may be found.

CHAPTER 4  
BIBLICAL *PAIDEIA*

Example of Moses and Daniel

In the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Stephen, in condemnation of his murderers, is delivering his epic interpretation of the Old Testament as it leads to Christ. After a careful emphasis upon the patriarchs, he moves to the Exodus and writes the following: “And Moses was learned (*paideuo*) in all the wisdom (*sophia*) of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds” (Acts 7:22). Following the example of Moses, we contend that the people of God should *properly* benefit from the surrounding culture and education.

Reformed commentators have not failed to appreciate Moses’ secular training. John Calvin writes, “Whereas Luke reporteth that he was taught in all wisdom of the Egyptians, he putteth that in his commendation as a point of excellency.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, Calvin sees Moses’ training as part of the plan of God, who did “frame both the mind of Moses and all other things to finish his work.”<sup>2</sup> Both Calvin and Matthew Henry mention astronomy as one of the “liberal arts”<sup>3</sup> in which Moses was trained, and Henry surmises

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles*, (Baker: Grand Rapids, 2003), 268.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

that it included “polite literature, particularly philosophy and...hieroglyphics.”<sup>4</sup> “Moses,” Henry continues, “having his education at court, had opportunity of improving himself by the best books, tutors, and conversation, in all the arts and sciences, and had a genius for them.”<sup>5</sup> He then adds a necessary qualification that applies broadly to a transformative classical, Christian *paideia*, “Only we have reason to think that he had not so far forgotten the God of his fathers as to acquaint himself with the unlawful studies and practices of the magicians of Egypt, *any further than was necessary to the confuting of them.*”<sup>6</sup>

The proper appropriation of pagan culture can also be seen in the life of Daniel. Daniel is described with his other captured friends as, “children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.”<sup>7</sup> Calvin places Babylonian culture above his own in making this choice:

we observe, that learning and the liberal arts were not then so despised as they are in this age, and in those immediately preceding it. So strongly has barbarism prevailed in the world that it is almost disgraceful for nobles to be reckoned among the men of education and of letters! The chief boast of the nobility was to be destitute of scholarship—nay, they gloried in the assertion, that they were “no scholars,” in the language of the day; and if any of their rank were versed in literature, they acquired their attainments for no purpose than to be made bishops and abbots: still, as I have said, they generally despised literature. We perceive the age in which Daniel lived was not so barbarous.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew Henry, *An Exposition, with Practical Observations, of the Acts of the Apostles*, (Peabody: Hendrickson), 66.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., emphasis added.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel 1:4.

<sup>8</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Daniel*, (Baker: Grand Rapids, 2003), 90-91.



Calvin then makes the same comparison between Daniel and Moses as does Basil in his “Address to Young Boys”: “Daniel, therefore, might have learned these arts; that is, astrology and other liberal sciences, just as Moses is said to have been instructed in all the sciences of Egypt. We know how the Egyptians were infected with similar corruptions; but it is said both of Moses and of our Prophet [Daniel], that they were imbued with a knowledge of the stars and of the other liberal sciences.”<sup>9</sup> Not unlike Joseph and Moses before him, Daniel slowly climbed to being second in command over the Babylonians due in part to his learning, from which he could intercede as both prophet and witness to the true God for both the salvation of God’s people and the condemnation of God’s enemies. Since his wisdom was ever adorned with prayer, Daniel stood as yet another representative of transformative *paideia* that was recognized as supernatural by the various kings of Babylon under whom he served. His education served to make him a Christian philosopher, of sorts, mighty in word and deed.

### Appropriation of Pagan Culture

The level of cultural engagement seen in the training of both Moses and Daniel, and the theological principle that accompanies it provides a model for the Christian in at least two specific ways: first, we learn to discredit the unfiltered pagan culture that militates against God’s kingdom; and second, we learn to appropriate from the surrounding culture any elements of truth that properly belong to God and his people.

Thomas Joseph White applies this principle to our own age:

Western Europe and to some extent North America continue to secularize dramatically. Christian recovery of the classical philosophical heritage will help

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 92.

us address the truth challenge of our age: the effective communication of the one Christian faith in the face of the questions and problems of our contemporaries. We should look forward to the task with hope. It has been done before, and, with the help of God, we can do it again. The classical philosophical heritage offers us a powerful resource. It has been tested by the fires of time, and its wisdom endures through the ages. If we engage with it intelligently, this tradition will cast intense light even into the heart of our contemporary world, inviting it to turn away from the irrational shadows of secularism and toward the mystery of God.<sup>10</sup>

But how may the North American *Christian* properly benefit from Western culture through a careful exercise of Christian *paideia*? Alan Jacobs, in his book *A Theology of Reading*, cites Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* to begin clarifying a rubric for appropriating pagan learning. It begins and ends with love exercised through faith: "The universal applicability of Jesus' twofold commandment (double love of God and our neighbor) makes Augustine's charitable imperative just as relevant to the interpretation of epic poems or national constitutions as it is to the reading of Holy Scripture."<sup>11</sup> Jacobs continues,

Jerome also, and with greater emphasis, provides a thorough justification for the reading and use of the pagan writers: He quotes Paul's assertion that "all things are clean to the clean" (Tit. 1:15) and provides a detailed account of the ways in which Christian readers can despoil the literary Egyptians of their precious gold.<sup>12</sup>

Jacobs then describes how Jerome uses an allegorical interpretation of Deuteronomy 21: 10-13, which describes a captive woman being purified, shaved, and washed before she is taken as a wife, to teach a similar principle to Augustine's metaphor of plundering the Egyptians. Application of this principle can have its difficulties, though. A tension that surfaces again and again is that of faith's relationship to reason.

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Joseph White, "Whether Faith Needs Philosophy," *First Things* 215 (August/September 2011), 51.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading*, (Cambridge: Westview, 2001), 11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Robert Wilken speaks of the interaction of faith and reason in the exercise of *paideia*:

In an individual believer, faith can exist without reason. God does not measure out the supernatural gifts of grace according to IQ. Yet, as a community, the Church needs reason to give faith cultural heft and the density of varied expression in language, whether it be the disciplined, imaginative reasoning that poetry requires, or the elementary, conceptual reasoning of grammar. Reason, for its part, needs faith because the natural powers of the human intellect easily lose sight of their goal, which is the fullness of truth, and can become susceptible to various forms of authoritarianism and intolerance.<sup>13</sup>

Faith and reason are, of a sort, sisters: given of the same Father, employed by the one church.

But there is a one striking difference between faith and reason. Recapturing the words of Augustine, Anselm notes the difference in his *Proslogian* through the phrase, *fides quaerens intellectum* (“I believe so that I can understand”). Faith has the upper hand in at least two ways: 1) she is the older sister, and thus forms the basis and condition for the right use and appropriation of the other, and 2) she can, even if rarely, function entirely on her own merit. The church’s exception clause is therefore not given for the use of faith or reason per se. Wilken’s qualification is given to draw a distinction between the community of the church and the individual. Single persons may not exercise a full expression of reason in the life of faith, but the historic church as an abiding presence in human culture does.

Armed with this historic conviction, the Christian arrives at the first difference between his own use of the classics and an uncritical approach toward cultural engagement that typically makes use of reason alone—he or she approaches them with *faith*. Kingdom-oriented faith sustains a continuity of vision that the classics do not share

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Wilken, “Culture and the Light of Faith,” *First Things* 208 (February 2011), 36.

even among themselves. Few Christians, however, would deny the role of faith in education, but would rather seek to use it properly—a process requiring greater subtlety in our application of faith. The more subtle our understanding of faith’s role, the more difficult our arrangement of principles; but thankfully, classical Christian *paideia* is strongest when the apparent antithesis of Christian faith and pagan culture most severe.

Faith, for Jacobs, is not a peripheral exercise in Christian education since an empathetic criticism of the classics, or to use Jacobs’ phase—a “hermeneutic of love,”<sup>14</sup> is impossible to maintain without it. The believing plunderer is not the democratic classicist who decries the transformation that has occurred in classical literature since Christianity’s hold on the West. Nor is the thoughtfully believing plunderer the modern nominalist who understands nothing of the relationship of Christianity and classicism. Rather, the believing plunderer engages with history with a fully-realized faith. Anthony Esolen describes this faith that leads us into the very heart of all study as the “surrender in imaginative love.”<sup>15</sup> Esolen joins together the virtue of Christian charity with the necessary humility and imagination (a function of reason) needed to understand history or literature, a union quite impossible apart from faith.

### Humble Faith

Accordingly, retreat from history, or its literature for that matter, is for the plunderer, a denial of place and providence. God did not invade Palestinian history so that the rest of future humanity could pretend it doesn’t have a history. God became a very particular kind of Jewish man, and his empathies bore out the very wellspring of

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<sup>14</sup> Alan Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading*, (Cambridge: Westview, 2001), 13.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Esolen, *Ironies of Faith*, (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2007), 12.

godly emotion as he wept for the stubborn city of Jerusalem. “Behold, I make all things new,” says Jesus, and he does not accomplish this from a place of historical neutrality. Despite modernity’s commitment otherwise, the church’s transformation of this or of any country through the principles of Christian *paideia* will not come from our being more holy than the one “who was tempted in every way.”

### The Place of Books

Cultural engagement, according to Jacobs, also involves an appreciation of one of our greatest cultural artifacts—books. Reading is a synthesis of several of our God-given faculties, and a proper expression of our ontology as humans. Humans were made temporal beings every bit as much as biological beings, rational beings as much as spiritual beings. Participation with one’s historical constitution includes an understanding of all that has shaped the moment in which we find ourselves, and books are the preeminent way in which that takes place. Aside from the biblical writers who have shaped our faith, that heritage encompasses the contributions of ancient philosophers, medieval scholastics, and modern scientists—all of whom wrote. Applying his prescriptive “hermeneutic of love” to all that we read, Jacobs sounds almost as if he is echoing the words of Jerome when he writes of Daniel,

God is said to have given the holy youths knowledge and learning in secular literature, in every book and branch of wisdom. Symmachus rendered this by ‘grammatical art,’ implying that they understood everything they read, and by the Spirit of God they could make a judgment concerning the lore of the Chaldeans.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Stevenson and Michael Glerup, eds., *Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 13, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, (InterVarsity: Downers Grove, 2008), 160.

Teaching this “grammatical art” is surely the purpose of Christian *paideia*. The injection of love into this process has an unusual way of synthesizing the above-referenced sentiments of Augustine, Thomas, and Jerome with particular reference to books, the inevitable artifacts that carry *paideia* forward from generation to generation:

But if our love is only preferential—if we select some books as the proper and worthy recipients of our love, while excluding others from that charmed circle, as is always the case with Aristotelian (i.e. classical *paideia* alone) forms of love—it fails to achieve genuine Christian charity. Charity demands that we extend the gift of love to all books, and receive the gift of love when it is offered to us...but to read this way requires a constant attention to an always rebellious and selfish will that wants merely to use books for gratification. We may indeed use books—it is right and proper that we do so—but we must use them in the way that Augustine counsels, which is to say, a way that recognizes their value as parts of God’s world and that therefore loves them in an ordinate manner.<sup>17</sup>

And reading has a crucial habit at this juncture, that of humility.

### The Example of Christ

Christ did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, but humbled himself to that human place often associated with erroneous opinions and lifestyles, “yet without sin.” In taking on flesh, some of the privileges of deity were suspended. The Christian’s identification with those who shape our cultural inheritance must follow the same pattern. To truly consider the conviction of another, one must suspend—even if momentarily—the hubris of disinterest or of self-congratulatory retort. Faith motivated by self-denying love avoids dismissive attitudes which betray one’s willingness to win arguments or understand cultural ancestry through dishonest means. An argument or position apparently won as a result of clever sophistry is not a position honestly won or defended. Nor is the victory of Christian ideas over, say, a sadly misrepresented

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<sup>17</sup> Jacobs,33.

Darwinism, basis for claiming victory. Aggression is not a replacement for reflection. This is the surrender in imaginative love that Esolen describes as a key feature of the deepest kind of reading, and it also directs us to the deepest expression of Christian *paideia* as a whole. Faith is the component that keeps the believer's foot from stumbling either into pride or despair, two of the most common and unfortunate outcomes of education.

So what has the Christian to fear? To some extent, the divergent views and unbelieving views of pagans cost Jesus of Nazareth his life. Yet in dying, he saved the world. Error may be conceived of as a form of suffering, and while Christ, the Logos, is Truth, he never avoided the suffering that arose from a deep awareness of the ignorance or aberration around him. Likewise, the Christian driven by imaginative love is ready to consider the possibility that he or she could have someone who thought very differently from who they have, by God's grace, come to be.

Imaginative love stands willing to affirm whatever is properly or rightly thought, and to bear up under the suffering that comes from either incidental or intentional distortions of right thinking. This mindset is far different from the speculative opinions of the modern academy. Christian instructors are not merely to list alternatives for the students to give their opinion on. The mindset of those working in accordance with Christian *paideia* is much closer to the spiritual discipline of meditation as it grasps the inseparability of humanity, history, thought, and theology with a view to the kingdom of God.

To return to the apostle Paul's phrase, "faith working through love," is not the avoidance of rationality, but rather the humbling of rationality. As Christians read the

classics, they should do so with an imagination that remembers it cannot create light or love, it can merely place itself in the pathway of light's beam and stand ready to reflect that which is true, good, and beautiful wherever it may be found. Jacobs's hermeneutic of love can be applied to every aspect of *paideia*—its curriculum, its mentoring, its cultural posture, and its generational promise, making the cardinal aspiration and consummation of the educational process to be refined love. Thus a highly nuanced notion of *agape* is the only sufficient mindset in which to read any text, returning us to the primacy of *moral formation* as the highest goal of education.



CHAPTER 5  
TENSIONS WITHIN *PAIDEIA*

Douglas Wilson, in his *Recovering the Lost tools of Learning*, has anticipated several objections to his call for a return to classical, Christian education. His chapter entitled, “The Problem of ‘Pious’ Ignorance” is an answer to the anti-intellectualism of some conservative Christians who find classical philosophy in particular repugnant. Does the synthesis of the classical curriculum and its corresponding pedagogy with Biblical faith represent the irreconcilable?

Example of Paul

Wilson defends his stance using the famous scene on Mars Hill in Athens, in which Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, contrasts the power of the Gospel with the attitude of the Athenians, who “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). This group of Athenians, we are told, included “certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics (Acts 17:18).” Wilson notes the ironic nature of Luke’s commentary in describing the speculations of these self-important philosophers as futile in comparison with the all-important Gospel message Paul delivers that day. Wilson writes that Paul, “did not have a high view of autonomous human

philosophy—nor did he respect eloquence as having great value in itself.”<sup>1</sup> As Paul himself expresses it,

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (I Cor. 1:18-21)

Paul contrasts what John Mark Reynolds describes as the “inner wisdom of the faith” with the “outer wisdom of the Greeks and Romans.”<sup>2</sup> Paul’s response does not represent a total rejection of “secular learning,” since “the very Greek language that the early Christians used to communicate their message was soaked in centuries of classical thought.”<sup>3</sup> As Reynolds asserts, “There was no ‘pure’ stream of knowledge that did not run through Athens,”<sup>4</sup> and the Apostle Paul, as he spoke on Mars Hill, would have been the first to affirm that. Nor, as Wilson contends, is Paul, a speaker perhaps untrained in the classical tradition, simply dismissive of what he does not understand. Wilson asserts, “his lack in these areas only served to highlight the greatness and sovereignty of God in salvation.”<sup>5</sup> Paul knew well the chasm that lay between the mere worldly wisdom of the Greeks and the hidden wisdom of God necessary for salvation, and his Apostolic calling to preach the latter was not to be confused with popular philosophy. Reynolds describes the delicate balance that must be struck between these two “wisdoms”:

Mainstream Christians, such as Augustine in the West and Basil in the East, found a middle way. Jerusalem [representative of Christian thought] gave the basic, rational, religious truth on which to build an understanding of the world. It was

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*, (Wheaton: Crossway), 118.

<sup>2</sup> John Mark Reynolds, *When Athens Met Jerusalem*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity), 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Wilson., 116.

the starting place for wisdom. Athens [representative of classical thought] gave the technical language and categories to help define and extend this truth. Jerusalem [representative of Christian thought] gave the world truth; Athens gave it a valid way to express that truth. Out of this creative harmony came the classical Christian civilizations that shaped most of the world in which we live.<sup>6</sup>

### Example of Apollos

Wilson points out that there was another early Christian who *was* trained in classical rhetoric: “And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus” (Acts 18:24). Further, Luke demonstrates Apollos’s use of classical *paideia* to further the Kingdom,

And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:27-28).

Having been used to describe both Moses and Apollos in the book of Acts, Luke employs the word “mighty” to accurately portray those persons who used their training in the wisdom and eloquence of their respective cultures to encourage and lead the people of God. Having received philosophical and rhetorical training, Apollos has now begun “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5)” for the benefit of his Christian believers—the double love of God and neighbor Augustine refers to in *De Doctrina Christiana*. This was true for Paul as well. His sermon at the Areopagus of Mars Hill detailed the metaphysical realities whose absence within the Greco-Roman world had left classical *paideia* insufficient, “Paul was right. The God-man provided the unity with liberty that the Hellenistic and Roman world craved.”<sup>7</sup> Reynolds continues, “The God of the Jews was equal to the god of the philosophers in

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<sup>6</sup> Reynolds, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Reynolds, 252.

power, wisdom, and knowledge. He was equal to the gods of the Homeric myths in passion, and more their equal in his ability to know our desires and our pains.”<sup>8</sup>

Wilson then reminds us of one of the Proverbs of Solomon, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1:7).” He points out how universal and epoch-making such a verse is in light of I Kings 4:29-34:

“And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt [*which would include astronomy*]. For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs [*including business and economics*], and his songs were one thousand and five [*the fine arts*]. Also he spoke of trees [*botany*], from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals [*zoology*], of birds [*ornithology*], of creeping things [*entomology*], and of fish [*ichthyology*]. And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon.” In short, the fear of the Lord begins with a wisdom not limited to the Sunday school curriculum.<sup>9</sup>

For Solomon, spiritual insight applied to every conceivable thing, and the alleged divide between education and catechesis is only apparent. The two branches of learning, often thought irreconcilable do not represent an antithesis of thought but the raw material of Christian *paideia*.

### The Remaining Tensions

But what about the pagan roots of Hellenism that a transformed *paideia* encounters? Do the limitations of Greek thought representative of classical education pollute the waters of learning beyond all hope of purification? Cornelius Van Til considers the *paideia* model to be fraught with problems:

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, 120.

The synthesis view does not challenge either the questions or the answers of the Greeks and therefore cannot be said to have a message for Athens. The only one who has a message for Athens is he who self-consciously begins his approach to them from the point of view that only through the knowledge of the self-attesting Christ can anyone ask any intelligent question and give any intelligent answer about anything. The Greeks must be shown that their whole culture is utterly bankrupt in principle.<sup>10</sup>

He later claims that through the fall, “men are...irrational in *all* their thought,”<sup>11</sup> and therefore, “our work as educators would be hopeless and futile if we engaged in it on the principle of synthesis discussed above.”<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, synthesis models stake their claim upon the *Logos* of all creation, the One who is “before all things, and by him all things consist, (Col. 1:17)” “upholding all things by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3).” And while the self-attesting Christ of Scripture can alone disclose the mysteries of salvation, “the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, *being understood by the things that are made*, even his eternal power and Godhead (Romans 1:21).” To the degree that a Greek has understood anything that is made, he has apprehended in a limited way the deepest principle of epistemology in this world or in the world to come—the *logos*. Chrysostom, Basil, and Augustine each had a critical message for Athens that pulled no punches in delineating the idolatry and sin of that culture. And yet not one of them has been found hopelessly futile in educating students for sixteen hundred years to come employing a *paideia* model of both that which is classical and Christian. Reynolds has a much more charitable view of our cultural ancestry, “a brief tour of Greece shows how much we moderns have lost by ignoring the past. Such ignorance threatens humankind with a new dark age. . . . We need alternatives to the

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<sup>10</sup> Cornelius Van Til, *Essays on Christian Education*, (Nutley: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing), 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

threats of scientific materialism and postmodern irrationalism. The ancient world can provide such alternatives.”<sup>13</sup> Reynolds has an unusual answer to those who would deny students such alternatives:

Christianity is so complete and so utterly true that it is a severe temptation to give up on mental growth. And yet God has not seen fit to give Jerusalem a complete guide to everything. Christians do not yet live in paradise. There is still a vital role for philosophy. God delights in allowing his children to grow into his image by thinking as he thinks, with liberty based on his absolute freedom. Knowing revealed truth leads to better questions, not to the end of questions. Stagnation and mere repetition of the truths of revelation risk making this good thing the enemy of natural, God-created, human development.<sup>14</sup>

### Lewis Draws Upon Plato

Additionally, C.S. Lewis, in the first chapter of his *The Abolition of Man*, wrote against the educational practices prevalent in England in his generation, as textbooks began striking at the heart of the moral formation of traditional, Greek-based *paideia*. Lewis charitably reminds his readers of the older tradition of education that primarily exists for training in virtue, one of the needed alternatives of the ancient world that guards against societal stagnation:

St. Augustine defines virtue as *ordo amoris*, the ordinate condition of the affections in which every object is accorded that kind and degree of love which is appropriate to it. Aristotle says that the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought. When the age for reflective thought comes, the pupil who has been thus trained in ‘ordinate affections’ or ‘just sentiments’ will easily find the first principles in Ethics: but to the corrupt man they will never be visible at all and he can make no progress in that science. Plato before him had said the same. The little human animal will not at first have the right responses. It must be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting, and hateful. In the *Republic*, the well-nurtured youth is one ‘who would see most clearly whatever was amiss in ill-made works of man or ill-grown works of nature, and with a just distaste would blame and hate the ugly even from his earliest years and would give delighted praise to

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<sup>13</sup> Reynolds, 247.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 253.

beauty, receiving it into his soul and being nourished by it, so that he becomes a man of gentle heart. All this before he is of an age to reason; so that when Reason at length comes to him, then, bred as he has been, he will hold out his hands in welcome and recognize her because of the affinity he bears to her.’<sup>15</sup>

For Lewis, this classical tradition of moral formation is something of objective value, that describes actual things, and at the same time distinguishes between what is real and what is false. Falsehood is first determined in the realm of values, and only secondarily in the realm of reason. This is why Lewis reminds us, using a metaphor from the Second World War, that “In battle it is not syllogisms that will keep the reluctant nerves and muscles at their post in the third hour of the bombardment.”<sup>16</sup> As a soldier who was himself wounded in battle, Lewis speaks from experience. He understands that when the bullets begin to fly, “the crudest sentimentalism about a flag or a country or a regiment will be of more use. We were told it all long ago by Plato.”<sup>17</sup> Consequently, he points out that the central organ in *paideia* is the “chest,” by which he means “magnanimity” or “sentiment,” as “the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man.”<sup>18</sup> Lewis’s point is that the heart is crucial to the right education of the mind. He concludes the chapter with the oft quoted words, “We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”<sup>19</sup>

Van Til, in his treatise on Christian education, introduces the goal of Christian educators, “to teach those who belong to Christ the things that will encourage them to

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<sup>15</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 26-27.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*,35.

wish to belong to Christ with all their heart and mind.”<sup>20</sup> Is this not a transformed Aristotelian educational philosophy? As referenced in the above quote, the goal of education (*paideia*) according to Aristotle is to encourage a student to “like” or “dislike” what he ought. Plato declared that to be the Good. The Evangelist John declares that to be Christ. Either way, Aristotle and Van Til both have realized that the heart and mind are crucial to education, and Van Til at least shares the common ground of heart-inclusive education with the Greeks he rejects.

It is therefore true that Christian *paideia* represents not only a hellenization, but a deeply needed educational philosophy that can bridge the tension between the heart and the mind, faith and reason, worldly culture and Christian culture. *Paideia* is uniquely suited to the task, since its development took place during a time when people thought deeply about the nature of reality and the basis for moral values, which were the intellectual foundation upon which, “in the fullness of time,” God revealed his Son. This forms an indispensable context for the training of God’s servants in the modern world.

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<sup>20</sup> Van Til, 1.



## CHAPTER 6

### FINAL APPLICATION

Thus far, *paideia* has been described using metaphors such as power, impregnation, eloquent emulation, and conversion. Christian thinkers, such as Chrysostom, Basil, and Augustine do not merely find such metaphors workable, but they find that it shapes the very way that Paul and other canonical writers present the gospel to the Gentiles of the Roman world. The Greek educational system was different than all others in the world, for it sought to shape the soul and contained what Jaeger earlier referred to as an absolute ideal. But Paul also observed how Rome undermined its own educational philosophy in *paideia*, and he took the opportunity to fill up what is lacking with Christian doctrine, a foundation upon which Chrysostom, Basil, and Augustine could now build. Together they used it for the purpose of the Kingdom, and in so doing, placed it forever in the service of the church. Examples in the lives of both Moses and Daniel demonstrate *paideia's* uncanny ability to appropriate the truth found even in pagan cultures, showing a unusual resiliency under tension. *Paideia* is uniquely suited to the task of discipleship that our Lord gave to his church at his ascension.

### Paula's Letter

Let us conclude with a final example of *paideia* in the fourth century that shows moral formation at work in the life of an infant girl. The fourth-century church father and monastic Jerome wrote an unusual letter about the education of a young girl, Paula. Phyllis Katz highlights the value of this document: “There is little written information from late antiquity about the individual lives of children. A letter about how to educate a specific little girl, therefore, would seem to be a precious document affording the opportunity to envision what her childhood would be like.”<sup>1</sup> We conclude with Jerome’s advice to a mother as yet another prime example of the outworking of the principle of Christian *paideia* we have advocated in this thesis.

Jerome’s specific instructions, not altogether unlike John Chrysostom’s, begin in chapter 3 of his letter, “I wish to address you as a mother and to instruct you how to bring up our dear Paula, who has been consecrated to Christ before her birth and vowed to His service before her conception.”<sup>2</sup> Jerome reminds the mother of several biblical examples of the consecration of children unto God, including those of Samuel, Samson, and John the Baptist, not to mention our Lord.

Jerome displays his indebtedness to classical *paideia* with its primary concern for the soul (which is inclusive of reason) rather than to reason alone, when he opens the fourth chapter by writing, “Thus must a soul be educated which is to be a temple of God.”

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<sup>1</sup> Phyllis B. Katz, “Educating Paula: A Proposed Curriculum for Raising a 4<sup>th</sup> Century Christian Infant,” *Hesperia Supplements* 41 (2007), 116.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome, “Letter CVII: To Laeta” in *Nicene and post-Nicene Father of The Christian Church*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 190.

Jerome then describes the purity with which this child must be reared by citing the Psalm writer's description of the blessed person: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation (Psalm 24:4-5)." Jerome encourages the mother to give Paula a set of letters with which to play, in hopes that her play will inspire actual learning. He also encourages the mother to have the child form the names of the letters into a rhyme as the letters are rearranged in several different ways, to ensure that Paul has learned them "by sight as well as by sound."<sup>3</sup> The mother can further encourage Paula's mastery of language by placing her own hand over the hand of her child and tracing the letters Jerome even encourages the use of incentives and delight: "Offer prizes for good spelling and draw her onwards with little gifts such as children of her age delight in. And let her have companions in her lessons to excite emulation in her, that she may be stimulated when she sees them praised."<sup>4</sup>

As the child is carefully given lessons that excite her natural delight, Jerome admonishes the mother to introduce memory exercises that will encourage her depth of thought and recollection at an early age. These could include "the prophets or the apostles or the list of patriarchs from Adam downward as it is given by Matthew and Luke. In this way while her tongue will be well-trained, her memory will be likewise developed."<sup>5</sup>

Jerome instructs the mother to find a tutor who thinks it not too low to instruct a child, much like Aristotle instructed Alexander the Great. He warns that the child's nurse

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<sup>3</sup> Jerome, 191.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

must not be overly virtuous, for “We are always ready to imitate what is evil; and faults are quickly copied where virtues appear inattainable.”<sup>6</sup> He concludes the fourth chapter with a description of how the proper moral formation at this young age will manifest itself in the child’s responses to her elders, particularly her grandparents.

In chapter 5, Jerome reminds the mother in no uncertain terms that, as a poignant piece of her moral formation, Paula is to “dress the part”: “Let her very dress and garb remind her to Whom she is promised.” To deck the body in a way incompatible with the soul is confusing and hypocritical, and proper moral training includes purity of body and soul.

He rounds out his letter describing a life of chastity including instruction in diet, Scripture memory, prayer, the spinning of wool, fasting, bathing, and reading, arriving finally at the recommendation that her education be done at her grandmother’s convent:

Let her gaze upon and love, let her from her earliest years admire one whose language and gait and dress are an *education in virtue*. Let her sit in the lap of her grandmother, and let this latter repeat to her granddaughter the lessons that she once bestowed upon her child. Long experience has shown Paula [the grandmother] how to rear, to preserve, and to instruct virgins.<sup>7</sup>

He concludes with his own commitment to aid in Paula’s training, again comparing himself with Aristotle:

I promise to be myself both a tutor and a fosterfather to her. Old as I am I will carry her on my shoulders and train her stammering lips; and my charge will be a far grander one than that of the worldly philosopher; for while he only taught a King of Macedon who was one day to die of Babylonian poison, I shall instruct the handmaid and spouse of Christ who must one day be offered to her Lord in heaven.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Jerome's personal letter offers a model for the education of both the body and soul that has a view to the kingdom of heaven, and therefore a curriculum primarily steeped in virtue. The teacher-student relationship is one of mentoring, as the understudy seeks to emulate and thereby be initiated into the mature life available only through "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4). Proper nurture will express itself in the life of the church as the city of God, and her participation in the life of that city will grant her entrance into God's eternal kingdom as one who recognizes that the values and mindset must always match. Enculturation demands the redirection of the entire person—of the entire soul—especially when the culture has a heavenly goal.

Value, restraint, principle, expectation, memory, familiarity, understanding—these virtues, when appropriately internalized, add up to character, and, outwardly, to culture, according to Wendell Berry. It's a kind of knowledge, he continues, that includes information, but is never reduced to information. This is a way of life and education worthy of immortality; a life perhaps not *perfectly* realized in this world, but nevertheless *truly* available. *Paideia* retains the transfiguring power it has always had in its commitment to God-imagined human beings. It has the capability of shaping all of reality, determining norms, developing a cultural memory, and elucidating the very meaning of life. Its momentum is difficult to slow or escape; its loss equally as challenging to regain.



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