Understanding Classical Catholic Education

William C. Michael, Headmaster
Classical Liberal Arts Academy
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We live at an amazing moment in history. Society is violently divided and bring
driven further apart by news media. Technology is making schooling and
publishing obsolete. Catholic schools are closing, parishes are being consolidated,
religious communities are selling their empty facilities, families are failing to raise
children who remain in the Church.

I was an ex-Catholic teenager who felt the distress of being left to the world. I
knew that the teachers and religious leaders around me were not sincerely interested
in my happiness, and that I needed to find answers for myself. I had a girl I wanted
to marry, but I had no idea how to do anything as a Christian adult.

Christian churches, schools and families, are not supposed to produce lost teenagers
like me, and Christian children cannot afford to learn the way I did—most of them
never will. The problem modern Christian teenagers face is not a joke, or “just the
way it is”. It is a systemic failure of Christian society.

My long and expensive search for answers led me to classical Catholic education.
I’ve been working on this research, all day, every day, for over 25 years. In this
book, I’m sharing lessons I wrote for a course for Christian parents in 2009—and I
am sharing this book with Christian parents who want to save their children’s souls.
The greatest challenge Christian parents face today is that they have no access to the
history that I share in this book. This ignorance has left them vulnerable to false
teaching by a “classical Christian education” movement that is a living example of
sophistry—pretending to be wise to get money. We have to see through this and
move forward.

We can fix these problems. We don’t need to become experts or earn degrees to to
give our children the education they need. Parents don’t need to become teachers
because the teachers have already given us what we need. We need to work
together, as parents, to help our own children learn the truth, which their souls will
recognize. Let’s get that work started—there’s no time to lose.

God bless,
William C. Michael
Classical Liberal Arts Academy
www.classicalliberalarts.com
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

As we begin our study of the classical liberal arts, we will first consider the philosophy behind this ancient system of learning. We will see that modern educational philosophies are not alternatives to the ancient system but errors leading men away from sound philosophy and ultimately, true happiness.

We must understand, first of all, that as neither God, truth, nor man has ever changed in nature, true education has never changed either. What has happened over time is that new forms of education have arisen as man has invented new philosophies of life or of the purpose of education. Thus, when Solomon says, “There is nothing new under the sun.” he does not mean that men have not invented or cannot invent new errors. He means that as far as truth and happiness are concerned, nothing is new and nothing will ever be new. This is a principle we must believe and reason from in our thinking about education, for the eternity and constancy of God and the truth that is in Him provide the only source of peace and happiness in human life. Thus, when we consider man--body and soul--that element which is more like God (the soul) is that in which our happiness consists and this must be the focus of true education.

You may read this with no great surprise, but the errors in modern education are found right here: the denial of the eternal nature of man, and the denial of the superiority of the soul. If you understand this, and reason from these facts you will soon come to see the errors of modern education and the wisdom of the classical liberal arts.

THE POWER OF REASON

When we look back at the ancient world, we obviously can find wise men. In Israel we know of Noah, Abraham, Job, Moses, Samuel, Solomon, David, Isaiah--and many more. Outside of Israel we find wise men, most of whom have unfortunately been made to appear ridiculous through the exaggeration of the poets. The question we must ask is: How did these men obtain their wisdom? What form of education did they receive? With none of the technology or tools available to us they obtained wisdom and understanding of the world that is hard for us to fathom who learn so little despite having so much.

Man is referred to scientifically as homo sapiens or “reasoning man”. This notion of man’s rational nature may be understood when we consider the four operations of the human mind: perception, predication, reasoning and arrangement. These direct us in understanding the means to true education.

Perception is the operation of the mind whereby mental images are collected through the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. The mind operates like a
camera, storing images of what is perceived. For this reason you can close your eyes and still “see” a friend, “smell” a rose or “feel” a warm fire. These mental images are called “ideas” and are the first action or operation of the human mind.

Predication is the operation of the mind whereby images are compared and either joined together or disjoined. We call this a predication, or a judgment. For example, our mind has an idea of ice and an idea of coldness and joins them together: All ice is cold. The “is” is simply a link or copula. On the contrary, our mind disjoins the idea of ice from the idea of hotness and predicates: No ice is hot. Here we are denying the link and are saying, “Ice and hot do not agree.”

The mind continues to from predication to Reasoning by comparing one predication or judgment with another, leading to new and more complex judgments by means of the syllogism. For example, the mind reflecting upon the fact that “All ice is cold.” and that “The sun is hot.” produces a new judgment, that “The sun is not ice.”

Lastly, the mind arranges these arguments to form systems through which future perceptions, predications and reasonings are categorized for yet further reasonings.

Now, when we imagine this mind set loose in the world as it was at creation, it does not require much time for man to make great progress in learning in the world. More importantly, inasmuch as the world was designed by the wisdom of God, it was also a perfect teacher of man, which silently speaks to man’s reason. Man’s ability to reason can safely lead him to the mastery of creation’s resources and ultimately to the knowledge and love of their Creator.

It was by this “eye of the soul” that the ancients made such great progress and this was God’s intention for them. If left to themselves with this guide alone, man had the capacity of enjoying a life full of happiness and wisdom. Eden could have remained a paradise forever and the world would have known only truth.

**THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION**

After considering the power of human reason, it would seem that man would need no further help in discovering all truth. However, man was not created alone in the world and was therefore vulnerable to turning away from the truth because of his freedom.

Man dwelt (and does dwell!) in a world that is also inhabited by myriads of spirits. These spirits were not all good. Evil spirits led men to false perceptions and false predications, which led to false reasonings and entire systems of falsehood. Moreover, men were tempted to turn away from reason and the eye of the soul was darkened, if not altogether blinded. Our Lord later addressed this condition when
He warned, “If then the light that is in thee, be darkness: the darkness itself how great shall it be!”

To rectify these evils, God revealed necessary truths to men and exposed the errors common among them. He did this by disclosing truths (some of which were beyond the power of human reason), by giving signs and by honoring the wise and humbling those enslaved to folly. Moreover, God helped men to understand the reality of contradictory and malevolent spirits. Thus, we see in the earliest books of Scripture stories of Satan tempting Job, and of the Devil deceiving Adam and Eve. These stories give man insight into the invisible world of spirits which, though not perceived by the senses are comprehended by the eye of the soul. God mercifully enlightened man’s way, so that the Psalmist could later sing, “In thy light we see light.”

Thus, when we look back upon the ancients we must avoid criticism that neglects the influence of deceiving spirits and the confusion they introduced. We must focus on the positive intellectual achievements of men and the power of reason displayed by them, while looking with understanding on their failures and flaws. The irreverent and unjust attacks on the ancients is an important part of the rhetoric of modern philosophers and one we must oppose.

MEDITATION & EARLY PHILOSOPHY

It should not surprise us that in the ancient world we find wise men in retreat--taciturn and patient--thinking and reasoning in solitude. We know, therefore, that the primary form of learning in the ancient world was reflection, simply thinking about one’s experiences and observations with the goal being to develop an understanding of the origins and reasons for them, “chewing the cud” as it were. Due to the fact that this was common knowledge in the past, we must appreciate occasional references to the practice, such as we find in Job’s meditation in Job 3 or in the following reference in Genesis 24:

“Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening.”

We must avoid the modern tendency to assume that ancient people were ignorant or “primitive”. Many of the discoveries we glory in today were not beyond the understanding of the ancients. The early philosophers understood that there was a sound path to wisdom that was contrary to the approach being tried by men of the modern world. We glory in our access to information, libraries filled with books, microscopes, telescopes, and so on, but none of these have the power to make man wise and good. Socrates warned of our generation:

“they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing.”
The ancients were not interested in gaining an “appearance of knowledge” and sought out greater freedom for reflection, prayer, etc.. Rather than mock their simplicity, we should first consider whether they were right. The technology and information available today does not address the ultimate need: that wisdom dwell in our souls. Rather than rush with the crowd after books, computers and degrees, we should consider that the men and women we honor as Saints were those who lived as the ancients advised. We will learn to do the same as we progress in the classical liberal arts.

THE BRANCHES OF LEARNING

St. Stephen, before offering his life in martyrdom, spoke of the education of Moses:

“Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians:
and he was mighty in his words and in his deeds.”

Here we see that men were aware of the wisdom of the past, and a method of instruction. What however, is this “wisdom of the Egyptians”? We may find the fruits of this wisdom in the book of Genesis, which Moses later wrote. However, this wisdom was purified and perfected by means of the divine revelation received by Moses.

We read this book over 3,000 years later and fail to appreciate the wisdom needed to write it when it was written. Consider the contents. Moses writes of God, spirits, animals, the sun, the moon, the stars, time, the seasons, the calendar, weather, geography, moral philosophy, language, measurements, law and much, much more. This was not common knowledge! Moses set down in writing a complete explanation of the world’s origin and organization that was true. It was the only book of its kind in the world, and it stood as a light to all men.

When we look more carefully at the wisdom Moses possessed we will see that it can be classified into a number of basic branches. Moses’ study of the origins of words and names belongs to Grammar. Moses’ debates and conferences with God and men belong to Dialectic. Moses’ poetic language, his speech-making and his famous ethos belong to Rhetoric. Moses’ knowledge of numbers and calculations belong to Arithmetic. His understanding of the earth and its measurements, shapes, magnitude, along with geography all belong to Geometry. The knowledge Moses had of the origin of musical instruments, his own art of composing and the employment of song in worship reveals a knowledge of Music. Moses’ understanding of the heavens, the seasons and time belong to Astronomy. Beyond this, we see in Moses great understanding of Logic (by which he judges from the Law), Moral Philosophy (by which He composes the Law), Natural Philosophy (by which he discusses animals and their use) and Metaphysics (by which He discusses
the existence and attributes of God)--the four branches of Philosophy. Of course, most obvious of all is Moses’ knowledge of God and man in reference to God, that is, Theology.

Again, because of modern Christians’ ignorance of these subjects we fail to see them in Moses’ writing. We think of Moses as a cartoon character in a children’s story Bible, rather than as a philosopher able to stand with any that came after him. Yet we find him 1,400 years before Christ! That means 400 years before Solomon and 1,000 years before Socrates, Plato or Aristotle. When we see the wisdom Moses possessed and how long ago it was possessed we will begin to understand the truth about education. We will understand that man does not need any assistance from technology or science to attain the highest and best knowledge, but has the ultimate organum (or instrument) built right into his soul.

THE GROWTH OF EDUCATION

If we think back to the four operations of the mind, we will remember that the last operation involves the systematizing of knowledge. Therefore, what we should expect to find over time is not the creation of new subjects, but the increasing orderliness and systematizing of knowledge. This is exactly what we do find.

While the timeless arts of learning are all found in the wisdom of Moses--the most ancient of Christian writers--they are not arranged as neatly as education would require. After all, the goal of education is to pass on to students the intellectual achievements of the past for them to preserve, internalize, act upon and communicate more effectively to the next generation.

Thus, through history, we find not a changing of these branches of learning but a clarification and distinguishing of them. We also find men gaining greater proficiency in the individual arts. For example, we find drama introducing speech to literature and poetry adding meter to prose. We find religion becoming clearer and more complex as men reason through new questions about the nature of God along with good and evil. We find sons building upon their father’s achievements--for centuries and centuries.

In the next lesson, we will study the specifics of the historical development of education from the time of Moses through the founding of the Greek schools.
CHAPTER 2. THE ARTS IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

In the first lesson, we considered the philosophical foundations of the classical liberal arts curriculum and tracked its earliest progress. We saw that God equipped man with a reasonable soul. We looked at the operations of the mind and how the mind relentlessly attacks any and every object of perception. We also looked at the cause of divine revelation and how it, in conjunction with the mind, guides men into all truth. Lastly we looked at the example of Moses to whom the earliest and greatest gifts of revelation were granted.

In this second lesson we will connect two important points in the history of the classical liberal arts curriculum. We will consider the development of the arts after Moses up to the time of the development of the famous Greek schools.

ISRAEL: A NATION BUILT ON DIVINE REVELATION

Normally, when we consider the people of Israel we think of the ceremonial traditions they zealously maintained--and rightfully did they do so. We fail to compare and contrast this nation with the rest of the world. We take them for granted in the same way we take Moses for granted. Let us consider them with a fresh look at who they are and what they mean for us in the history of education.

Before we enter upon this reflection, we must prepare ourselves to enter with faith in the content of Sacred Scripture. We must accept the propositions of Scripture for what they are--the word of God--and allow them to become the new premises by which we renew our minds. If you are not willing to do so, you have no hope of understanding and might as well get your money back now.

By the time Moses dies, we have this great multitude that possesses something no other people on earth possess: the true story of the origin of the world and the law of God for mankind. We must stop here and not move on until this reality is fixed in our minds. To this point in history (ca 1400 BC) men knew of God or the gods by means of reason. Revelation was scarce and what there was of it was dark and mysterious. For example, a covenant was made with Abraham that was personal, not legal, leaving man’s relationship with God to be understood as a relationship with and through a man. Jacob saw angels ascending and descending upon a ladder into heaven, but what did all this mean? Worst of all, this was the condition of the chosen people! If the light among the sons of Abraham was dim, how dark was that among the nations? Yet, through Moses a great light is fixed in Palestine and that light begins to enlighten every man coming into the world from that point on.

The next great light is found in the great kings David and Solomon. Once again, silly Bible stories have robbed them of their dignity and magnanimity and have
discouraged us in our interest in them. When we hear the name David, we think Bathsheba and when we hear Solomon we think of his wives. We move on with no profit from the mystery and wisdom that enshrouds these two ancient men and all that they have to offer us in understanding the nature of true human education.

Before we look at them individually, we must keep in mind that they are among the first generations of men to start with the light of the five books of Moses (the Torah). Therefore, we find in these men the next radical advance in human wisdom as the revelation of Moses supplies the first principles to these great minds. Moreover, we find that new revelation is prepared for them.

**KING DAVID**

As stated above, most of what we know of king David comes from children’s books. We know of his time as a shepherd. We know he played the harp and sang Psalms. We know he killed Goliath. We know he stole Bathsheba from Uriah—and so on. However, if this was the true message of the life of David, would it justify the use of his writings as the core of all true worship in the Church? There must be something more to David than these superficial children’s stories. God help us to understand David.

In our first introduction to David we find him not as a king, nor a warrior, but as a musician. By our lack of reflection and ignorance of history we miss the point of this: there are not many musicians in the ancient world (here 1000 BC). The art of music is in its earliest development and David is a shepherd boy. Where does this art of music come from and how did a lonely shepherd boy acquire it?

We learned through Moses of the origin of musical instruments. However, the manufacturing of musical instruments and our understanding of the proper uses of music are two separate arts, with the latter being superior. What we find in David is the first true musician. David’s musical skill is a divine gift that demonstrates the power of this skill to man and that in reference to God, which is wisdom. The Scripture does not present music to us as a source of leisure or entertainment. Scripture reveals that music has an enchanting effect on the soul of man. Through the story of King Saul’s spiritual attacks, and the relief David’s music brings, we receive yet another glimpse into the invisible world, which is essential for our progress in true wisdom. Music has a power to deliver man from evil and maintain a sound mind within him.

This understanding of music will be central to our discussion of the liberal arts for the rest of history, but we find the world’s earliest divine musician in David. The Greek legend of Orpheus and the mystery which surrounded his skill should add to our admiration of David, whose achievements are “more sure” than those of the famous Greek.
However, before we move on to Solomon, you may want to see where exactly the knowledge of the classical liberal arts is found in David. Remember that the arts are not present in their tidy little categories as we know them now, for that is the development that will follow in coming centuries. We find in David the mass of wisdom, but not an awareness of all of its proper divisions.

Let us consider an iceberg to understand how to examine the wisdom of ancient men and David in particular. We know that the visible portion of the iceberg, that which protrudes above the surface of the water, is but a sign of the great mass that exists below. In the same way, the wisdom of the ancients is not seen in formal, systematic teachings, but in their deeds. When we see men capable of amazing achievements in judgment, oratory, poetry, politics or military affairs, we must conclude that the wisdom prerequisite for those arts exists beneath the surface. It may not be articulated in a systematic manner, but it is there and the deeds are its signs and symbols.

We find in David a mastery of poetry. Poetry assumes a mastery of etymology, syntax and prosody—the arts within Grammar. We find in David a deep understanding of philosophy—moral and natural. The means to philosophy is Logic, and therefore it must be present in David. David demonstrates mastery of military affairs, politics and international economics all of which presumes a knowledge of Arithmetic and Geometry (which includes Geography). There is no need to discuss David’s reflections upon the heavens such as this:

“The heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night sheweth knowledge. There are no speeches nor languages, where their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth: and their words unto the ends of the world.”

Such meditations are no accident! David is not merely familiar with Astronomy but has reflected upon the heavens sufficiently to understand their theological and philosophical implications. Once again, though in an embryonic form, we find all of the classical liberal arts as well as the higher arts (Philosophy and Theology) present in the mind of the ancients.

**King Solomon**

The greatest gift that King David gave to the ancient world was likely his music, but next in value was the instruction he gave to the son of his old age, Solomon. Solomon himself tells us:
“My father taught me, and said: ‘Let thy heart receive my words, keep my commandments, and thou shalt live. Get wisdom, get prudence: forget not, neither decline from the words of my mouth...My son, hearken to my words, and incline thy ear to my sayings. Let them not depart from thy eyes, keep them in the midst of thy heart: For they are life to those that find them.”

Those are some confident words spoken by David! He says, “My words are life to those that find them.”, and this was obviously a key part of David’s notion of true education learning and reflecting upon his words, which we find in the Psalms. No wonder they are central to Christian worship!

We know of Solomon’s famous request for Wisdom from God, and the fact that God granted his request. What we fail to appreciate is the nature of that wisdom and its contribution to the continued development of the classical liberal arts. We saw all of the arts present in the mind of Moses. We can see them all in the mind of David, most especially Music. However, in Solomon we find the liberal arts radically improved in a very short amount of time as knowledge that flows from yet another divine gift fills the world with light.

The key passage for us is in 1 Kings 4. There we find the author of the sacred history describing the wisdom that Solomon possessed:

“And God gave to Solomon wisdom, and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, as the sand that is on the sea shore. And the wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the Orientals, and of the Egyptians; And he was wiser than all men...and he was renowned in all nations round about. Solomon also spoke three thousand parables: and his poems were a thousand and five. And he treated about trees, from the cedar that is in Libanus, unto the hyssop that cometh out of the wall: and he discoursed of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And they came from all nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who heard of his wisdom.”

Let’s look carefully into this passage and see exactly what it tells us about Solomon and his wisdom.

We are told that at this time in history, the wisdom possessed by Solomon was the most excellent of all the earth. It was superior to that of the eastern philosophers as well as the Egyptians. Some may recommend to us the ancient wisdom of the Chinese or Indians, but what we have in Solomon is greater. Now, we must understand that the wisdom of the eastern wise men and the Egyptians was in essence the knowledge of the classical liberal arts. What we are being told here, then, is that Solomon’s mastery of this true knowledge (for theirs was in many respects true) has reached a degree to which none have reached before. There is no
subject not treated in the Proverbs or in Ecclesiastes. Solomon raises the bar for human wisdom throughout the world.

We are told that Solomon possessed a special interest in natural philosophy. We see that he had great knowledge of all four classes of animals: beasts, birds, reptiles and fish. What is important here is the classification of creatures, which reveals the development of a scientific understanding of nature. Very rarely do we speak of Solomon’s knowledge of the natural world, or consider that the wisdom God granted filled the study of nature with divine light. God enlightened man’s understanding of natural philosophy, providing a true and God-oriented understanding of the world. True natural science is not taught inductively as all modern science textbooks do, but deductively as classical natural philosophy has always done.

We are told of the means of Solomon’s instruction. He himself taught in proverbs, parables and poems. What we find here is the development not only of knowledge, but in the means of its transmission, that is, in pedagogy. The book of Proverbs is not a mere collection of sayings for the adornment of bulletin boards. It is an instruction manual in philosophy, which the preface explicitly states.

“To know wisdom, and instruction: To understand the words of prudence: and to receive the instruction of doctrine, justice, and judgment, and equity: To give subtilty to little ones, to the young man knowledge and understanding.”

We are told of the scope of Solomon’s influence. Remember Solomon lived somewhere between 1000-900 BC. We are told that at that time, “they came from all nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth.”. We must consider then that not only did wisdom come from God to Solomon, but also through Solomon into every nation. Again, this wisdom is being taught hundreds of years before the Greek masters Homer (800 BC), Socrates (469), Plato (429) and Aristotle (384) were even born. So, when we find amazing philosophical achievements among pagan nations, let us not forget that the inspired premises upon which this wisdom was built is likely to be traced back to Israel. This is no mere post hoc argument, for Scripture confirms that he did not merely come before the Greeks, but that his fame spread into all nations.

Thus, we see a philosophical tradition emerging in ancient Israel that is directly inspired by God. It is God that draws Moses out from the world that he may receive the knowledge of the origins of the world and the law of God. God calls David from the pasture to fill the world with divine music. Lastly, God raises Solomon to yet another level of understanding. We must see more than just these individuals being lifted up, but all of human thought, for the knowledge given to these men spreads throughout the world.
More importantly we see an increasing attention to instruction. We have moved from Moses’ narratives and laws to David’s songs and now to Solomon’s proverbs, parables and poems. The classical liberal arts curriculum is beginning to take shape, and as attention is directed increasingly at instruction, the demand for systematization will also increase.

In our next lesson we will move from Israel to Greece, where instruction in philosophy reaches incredible new heights under Homer, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.
CHAPTER 3. THE ARTS IN ANCIENT GREECE

In the first lesson, we considered the philosophical foundations of the classical liberal arts curriculum and tracked its earliest progress. In the second lesson, we considered the development of the liberal arts in ancient Israel in the lives of David and Solomon. We reflected upon the fact that while the liberal arts curriculum was not yet organized into a deductive system, it was nevertheless present as a less organized whole in the minds of ancient wise men. Moreover, we will see that throughout classical Greece and Rome the desire was to understand and teach the ideas of the ancients but rarely to promote their own.

Making assertions like this is easy, but how may we prove them? In this third lesson we will consider the liberal arts curriculum as it continues to develop among the Greeks, demonstrating that the wisdom of the Greeks was in their honoring the ancient wisdom of Egypt and Israel. We must begin by recalling the testimony of Scripture that Solomon’s wisdom filled the nations. We will see that, while many modern scholars admire the Greeks yet despise the ancient religious traditions, the Greeks were themselves eager to preserve and practice the wisdom of the ancients.

THE ORIGIN OF GREEK WISDOM

Modern educators despise the humility and contentment of ancient Jewish philosophers like Solomon, who fail to honor the relatively insignificant “inventions” of modern society. Nevertheless, many modernists maintain a respect for the Greek philosophers believing that the wisdom of the Greeks stands as some sign of human greatness. It is suggested that the cultural and philosophical achievements of Greece prove that the Jews received no divine revelation but only called “divine” that which was within the reach of human achievement. Unfortunately for them, this respect reveals an ignorance of the order of events in ancient history and the actual teachings of the Greeks, for the greatest of the philosophers (i.e, Pythagoras, Plato) eagerly promoted the study of ancient wise men.

This notion among modernists that an argument against Sacred Scripture might be found in Greece is not new. In his work, On Christian Doctrine, St. Augustine faced similar opponents in his day of whom he spoke the following (read it carefully):

“When the readers and admirers of Plato dared calumniously to assert that our Lord Jesus Christ learned all those sayings of His, which they are compelled to admire and praise, from the books of Plato? because (they urged) it cannot be denied that Plato lived long before the coming of our Lord!?? did not the illustrious bishop [St. Jerome], when by his investigations into profane history
he had discovered that Plato made a journey into Egypt at the time when Jeremiah the prophet was there, show that it is much more likely that Plato was through Jeremiah’s means initiated into our literature, so as to be able to teach and write those views of his which are so justly praised? For not even Pythagoras himself, from whose successors these men assert Plato learned theology, lived at a date prior to the books of that Hebrew race, among whom the worship of one God sprang up, and of whom as concerning the flesh our Lord came. And thus, when we reflect upon the dates, it becomes much more probable that those philosophers learned whatever they said that was good and true from our literature, than that the Lord Jesus Christ learned from the writings of Plato?a thing which it is the height of folly to believe.”

Thus we find St. Augustine, a great classical scholar and one-time Platonist himself, working in his day to explain the Greeks’ indebtedness to the Jews. We would do well to seek out this discovery of St. Jerome, which supplies our assertion with no less support than that of two doctors of the Church, explained in a letter to a fellow bishop in 394 AD (Letter 53 to Paulinus).

“We read in old tales that men traversed provinces, crossed seas, and visited strange peoples, simply to see face to face persons whom they only knew from books. Thus Pythagoras visited the prophets of Memphis; and Plato, besides visiting Egypt and Archytas of Tarentum, most carefully explored that part of the coast of Italy which was formerly called ‘Great Greece’. In this way the influential Athenian master with whose lessons the schools of the Academy resounded became at once a pilgrim and a pupil choosing modestly to learn what others had to teach rather than over confidently to propound views of his own.”

Now, with this testimony of Sts. Augustine and Jerome, we would have quite a case for our argument that the Greeks merely continued the ancient and divinely inspired philosophical tradition, but we need not settle there. We have direct testimony from the Greeks themselves in their own writings.

In the Phaedrus, Plato writes of Socrates telling an Egyptian tale that explained why the Egyptians did not give great attention to writing. The tale is met with a snobbish reply from Phaedrus, and he is reproved by Socrates for discriminating against the source of the wisdom, rather than its truthfulness. The snobbery of his companion demonstrates an attitude present in Plato’s day similar to that in our own, while Plato’s reproof displays the philosopher’s demand that the ancients be revered.

Again, in the Timaeus, we find the telling of “an old-world story” learned by Solon, the famous Athenian law-giver. The story is the source of our knowledge of the lost city “Atlantis”, but more importantly speaks to us of the link between the Egyptians
and Greeks that was known and discussed in Plato’s day. Solon, visiting the city Sais in Egypt, was received with honor and spoke eagerly with the Egyptian priests. The priests revealed ancient secrets to Solon--secrets of the beginning of the world, the first man and the great flood. The Egyptian priests left Solon with a criticism of Greek thought (which Plato is eager to relate):

“O Solon, Solon. You Greeks are never anything but children, and there is not an old man among you....In mind you are all young; there is no old opinion handed down among you by ancient tradition.”

Plato continues to explain that the destructions and wars that disturbed the Greek cities through history never allowed them the continuity necessary for the cultivation of wisdom. This wisdom was found in Egypt, where the Nile protected them from foreign invaders and natural catastrophe.

The point in all of this is that, confirming St. Jerome’s argument, we find a great sense of admiration in Plato for the ancient Egyptian philosophers. We see the influence of near eastern religious traditions on the mind of Greece’s great theologian. Rather than rebelling against the ideas of the ancients as modernists do, Plato is commending them to his fellow Greeks and to us today. Their antiquity and continuity is the strongest argument for their importance and the novelty and instability of modern societies is the strongest argument against theirs.

The significance of all this is that when we come to Greek philosophy, we find them working to recover and reflect upon the ancients! Greek ideas are not new, but are simply a continuation of the learning of the Egyptians, which we saw was the foundation of Moses’ great wisdom. Solomon was not in error: “There is nothing new under the sun.”

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ARTS

Having now demonstrated that in Greece the ancient traditions were continued, what we find there is more truly understood not as something new, but as something ancient arranged more perfectly.

For the classic discussion of the classical liberal arts, we must attend to the seventh book of Plato’s Republic, written around 360 BC. There we find Socrates inquiring after the ideal education, which does not produce this or that special skill, but “something which all arts and sciences use in common”. This “something” is nothing other than the Wisdom about which Solomon wrote, and which was urged upon him by his father David. What Socrates seeks--and what Plato describes--is the normal path to wisdom that forms the classical educational curriculum.
The first aim in education is to elevate the soul from the material to the immaterial, from the becoming to being, and for this, Socrates recommends Arithmetic. Socrates explains:

“Arithmetic appears to me to be a study of the kind which we are seeking, and which leads naturally to reflection, but never to have been rightly used; for the true use of it is simply to draw the soul towards being.”

Secondly, Socrates goes on to ask of Arithmetic’s sister, Geometry. He discourages his friend from contemplating the practical uses of Geometry and urges him to look further than the superficial. He says,

“the knowledge at which Geometry aims is knowledge of the eternal, and not of anything perishing and transient...Geometry will draw the soul towards truth and create the spirit of philosophy.”

Next in the discussion is Astronomy, the “motion of solids” which, in lifting the eyes from the Earth to the heavens, seems to be of obvious value to the philosopher. However, Socrates warns that this lazy idea of philosophy must be avoided, for it is not the lifting of the eyes that we intend through education, but the soul. Socrates explains that the celestial bodies we observe with the eyes provide us with “a pattern and with a view to that higher knowledge.”

While on this topic, we should note a very important comment made by Socrates on natural science. The Classical Liberal Arts Academy is hammered daily with questions about the natural sciences. It seems obvious to all that the study of the physical world is of the utmost importance--but it was not so admired by Plato. Socrates makes the following comment that must inform our understanding of the value of the natural sciences:

“a true astronomer...will never imagine that the proportions of the night and day...or of the stars to one another, and any other things that are material and visible can also be eternal and subject to no variation--that would be absurd; and it is equally absurd to take so much pains in investigating their exact truth.”

The natural sciences as we know them today were not unknown to the ancients, they were undesired. As the study of the wisdom-seeker was directed at the elevation of the soul, the value of the study of the physical world was understood to be limited. This is the source of the necessary balance in science education. Let’s move on.

Socrates then turned to Music and explained again the spiritual and eternal aim of true musical studies. The error of most music teachers is that they “compare the sounds and consonances which are heard only.” Socrates recommends to us the
seeking not merely of the knowledge of the numbers of harmony, but why some are harmonious and other not.

Fifthly, Socrates discusses Dialectic, more commonly known as the “Socratic Method” or strategically asking and answering questions, by which

“a person starts on the discovery of the absolute by the light of reason only, and without any assistance of sense, and perseveres until by pure intelligence he arrives at the perception of the absolute good, and finds himself at the end of the intellectual world.”

That’s some heavy stuff, but it’s the foundation of all true philosophy!

Here again, we find the contrast between the classical and modern curriculum--and the superiority of the former. All of the physical sciences, with all their information, observations and discoveries, lead us no further than the present life. The greatest achievements in science are mere shadows when compared with the brilliance of philosophy and theology. An education founded upon the sciences is incompatible with human nature and degrading to mankind. God intended greater things for us.

Having seen now these five arts, we may ask, “What of Grammar and Rhetoric?” After all, they are included among the seven liberal arts, but are missing from Socrates’ list. The first, Grammar, is omitted because of its obvious necessity for any of the arts mentioned above. It is absurd to prove that the knowledge of reading, writing and speaking is important and to describe such would make for boring reading--especially among men who are already able to read and speak well!

ARISTOTLE & CLASSICAL TEXTBOOKS

If we only read Moses, David, Solomon and Plato, we would have an education that rivaled history’s greatest scholars. However, the efficiency of instruction desired to make as many wise students as possible is not to be found among the early masters. Moses left us laws and narratives. David left us a variety of Psalms. Solomon left us lists of Proverbs. Plato added his provocative dialogs. Unfathomable wisdom is to be enjoyed in them all, but very few would possess the time and leisure to swallow and digest their teachings in a manner that led to a well-ordered mind.

To meet the challenge of instruction and efficiency, God raised up for us Aristotle, who was taught by Plato. “The Philosopher”, as St. Thomas calls him, did the work of organization for us. His works provide the textbooks for much of the classical liberal arts curriculum, summarizing and systematizing for us the wisdom of the ancient world. Aristotle’s works include:
The Organon (Reasoning)
The Art of Rhetoric
Physics (Natural Philosophy)
Metaphysics (Sacred Philosophy)
Ethics (Moral Philosophy)

When we add to these the Arithmetic of Nicomachus, the Geometry of Euclid and Astronomical works of Ptolemy, we possess the full canon of classical liberal arts textbooks. Because these authors merely summarized and systematized the wisdom of the ancient world, their works are timeless and irreplaceable in classical education. Attempts to redesign or improve fail to demonstrate any advantage and often proceed from an intent to tacitly disapprove of the original authors rather than promote sound philosophical studies. Rarely has a Catholic author judged it necessary to alter or replace the classical authors with books of their own, which should reveal something about the theological, philosophical and financial motives of those that do.

SUMMARY

In the first lesson, we considered the philosophical foundations of the classical liberal arts curriculum and tracked its earliest progress. In the second lesson, we considered the development of the liberal arts in ancient Israel in the lives of David and Solomon. We reflected upon the fact that while the liberal arts curriculum was not yet organized into a deductive system, it was nevertheless present as a less organized whole in the minds of ancient wise men.

In our study of the Greek philosophical tradition, we have seen that there is nothing new under the sun. Heavily influenced by ancient near eastern philosophy, the Greeks identified and arranged the classical liberal arts. These arts provided a normal path to wisdom and allowed the quest for wisdom among good men to become clearer and more systematic. In our next lesson, we will study the maturation of the art of Rhetoric among the Romans: Caesar, Cicero and Quintilian.
CHAPTER 4. THE ARTS IN ANCIENT ROME

In the first lesson, we considered the philosophical foundations of the classical liberal arts curriculum and tracked its earliest progress. In the second lesson, we considered the development of the liberal arts in ancient Israel in the lives of David and Solomon. We reflected upon the fact that while the liberal arts curriculum was not yet organized into a deductive system, it was nevertheless present as a less organized whole in the minds of ancient wise men. In chapter 3, we saw that the best of the Greek philosophers sought not to promote new ideas, but to recover and systematize the teachings of the ancients.

In this fourth lesson we will consider the liberal arts curriculum as it continues to develop among the Romans, demonstrating that the Romans added the language of the curriculum and the art of Rhetoric. Once again, the essence of the liberal arts curriculum (the goal of which is true Wisdom) is not changed, but the beauty of the program is enhanced and the systematizing of yet another part is completed.

AN INITIAL DISTINCTION

All Christians know that the word “Christian” is almost never used justly. Some use the term to refer to anyone or anything that is not Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or Atheist. Some use the term to separate themselves from “Catholics” (who are therein judged not to be Christians). This same trouble occurs when we speak of the Romans. Throughout the history of ancient Rome there were two distinct classes of men: one good and the other bad. We must be careful to distinguish them.

The “Romans” on the one hand were pagans who were selfish, greedy, violent and immoral. It is these Romans we think of when we discuss the corrupt emperors and bloodthirsty mobs of Rome. These Romans were lovers of pleasure who used the wealth and freedom of Roman life as a means of sinful self-indulgence. We hear stories of Romans banqueting until they vomited, then starting again. We read of drunken orgies, crowds cheering as gladiators butcher one another in the Colosseum and so on. Indeed, these were the Romans.

However, from the beginning of Roman history, there was a moral Roman tradition, which is second to none for piety and selflessness. When we think of the Romans, we must also remember men like Cato the Elder (234-149 BC), Cicero (106-43 BC), Caesar (100-44 BC), Virgil (70-19 BC), Seneca (4 BC - 65 AD) and Marcus Aurelius (121-180 AD). The writings and virtue of these men are among the most praiseworthy of all history--especially when considered in light of the moral desert they lived in.
In the CLAA, when we speak of the Romans, we generally do not mean the worst of Rome, but the best. Stories of the wicked Romans make for great library books and Hollywood films, but it was by her greatest men that Rome became what it was and remains the greatest empire the world has ever known.

THE ROMAN CONTRIBUTION

It has been made explicit from the beginning of this course that the classical liberal arts curriculum was revealed to the human race throughout history by God through chosen men each uniquely gifted and placed in time and location. The Jews, from the most ancient time and most central location, gave us the content and end of true education: the knowledge of the one true God and His will. The Jews taught mankind the knowledge of the origin and history of the world, the origin of evil and the natures of God, men and the angels. Israel also gave the moral law and the motivation to observe it through the narratives of God’s grace and Israel’s hardness of heart. The Jews taught the world the essence and purpose of true music as well as the foundations of all true philosophy and theology. The debt owed to them by the human race is immeasurable and is the reason for their deserved seat of honor, protected by God through all time.

The Greeks, second to the Jews in antiquity and equally central in geography, gave us the method of true education (Logic) as well as the materials to teach it (Aristotle). What we also received from the Greeks was the icon of Socrates who represents the truth-seeker to us: surrounded by darkness, poor, lonely, despised and ultimately killed, yet in truth full of light, wealthy beyond measure, friend of Wisdom and praised by history’s greatest men. His image and the inspiration he lends to men everywhere cannot be overemphasized.

The Romans, inheriting all of this added two equally important gifts of their own. First, the Romans, through their sense of destiny and discipline provided the language for true education. The Latin language, unlike the Greek, was developed with a consciousness of what was needed of language for the perfection of philosophy and theology. Lucretius (99-55 BC), the Epicurean, writing in the early part of the first century BC complained of “how hard it is to make clear in Latin verses the dark discoveries of the Greeks”. Yet by the end of the same century we find Vergil, the prince of poets, writing the most elegant verse the world has ever known...in Latin. The development of Latin, conscious of the needs of those seeking wisdom, was crafted to become the language of the learned for all time.

THE PLACE OF LATIN

Wycliffe Bible Translators identify their mission as making God’s Word accessible to all people “in the language of their heart”. The group explains that certain ideas
and teachings can only be effectively communicated to people in the language they best understand, i.e., their own native language. While their mission is based on a subtle flaw (they not being the possessors of the original ideas have not the authority to judge whether the “heart language” parallel is accurate or not), it helps us to discover this true principle by reflection: The languages in which ideas are communicated are essential, not accidental to those ideas. Read that carefully and let it sink in.

Therefore, we would be wise to make our own that language in which the world’s most significant ideas were originally expressed. Otherwise, how can we hope to possess them? The original expressions of the greatest ideas is the closest mankind can ever get to the true ideas themselves. We would then be pressed to answer the question, “What language would that be?” Would it be Hebrew for the original writings of the ancient Jews? Would it be Greek for the original writings of the Greek philosophers and New Testament? No.

The language that history would commend to us is Latin.

Latin did not stumble into wide use due to a fortunate turn here or there as many other languages have. Latin was born, like Romulus and Remus, out of a human and divine marriage. From the day Aeneas first set sail from Troy, the Romans were destined to rule the world and Latin would be the medium by which they communicated that rule. The modern skeptic would doubt and deny all of these supernatural influences and revelations, but they are commended to us by their fulfillment and, whether fabricated or not, were believed to be true by the Romans who acted upon them.

As Latin grew, she was molded in the Roman courts, which will forever be the center of human law and justice. So heavy was her influence in the development of law that the study of law has never since been attempted without her.

Further, to Latin was added the knowledge of all international government, military strategy and trade. To her alone was known the details of international politics, communications, business and culture. What language has ever enjoyed so diverse and elite an upbringing as Latin? What language has ever enjoyed primacy of place in every land under heaven, but Latin?

If we were to stop here in our consideration of the virtues and privileges of the Latin language, we would have already established her as the queen of all languages. However, when we consider that these are merely the achievements of her youth, we must reflect upon all that her mature years added. The Son of God chose to enter the world not when Hebrew or Greek ruled, but during the reign of Latin. To the Hebrews and Greeks He said, “I have many things to tell you which you are not able to bear.” These loftier truths were reserved for the Church, which made Latin
their chosen tongue to publish them. Thus to Latin was added the wisdom of all
Church councils, creeds and treatises. To Latin were added the songs of the
Church, along with her prayers and sacred liturgies. Scripture as well was
translated from the Hebrew and Greek to live forever in the Church and among her
people in Latin.

Later still, as the arts and sciences flourished throughout Christendom in the light of
true religion, they did so never apart from Latin. The writings of history’s greatest
theologians is, by no accident, to be read in Latin. The founding works in all of the
modern sciences belongs to her as well. When we seek the official name of any
plant or animal, we are directed to Latin for the answer. Moreover not only did her
reign extend through every subject in all the world, but that for nearly half of known
human history.

Thus, whether we consider her mind, beauty, length of life, force or fortune, we find
Latin exalted far beyond all other languages as we find the Blessed Virgin beyond
all the sons and daughters of men. Only when we find a rival to the Mother of God
among mankind, will we find a rival to the Latin tongue. Thus, as we continue in
our study of the contributions made by the Romans to the development of the
classical liberal arts, let us be persuaded that their gift is among the greatest of all--
ever to be surpassed. Latin is the language of learning for all time.

THE ART OF RHETORIC

Proceeding naturally from the Romans’ gift of language was the art of
communication. It is to the Romans that we must look for the perfection of this art
and in the persons of five masters: Julius Caesar, Cicero, Vergil, Horace and Livy.
Among these five masters are three separate genres: History, Poetry and Oratory.
Each of these genres was brought near to perfection under the Romans through their
mastery of the art of Rhetoric.

To Julius Caesar we look for the earliest perfection of historical (prose) writing.
Famous for his political career, Caesar is less known today for his life as a writer
and speaker. One old teacher wrote:

“Caesar’s genius was many-sided, and he might have been no less eminent as
an orator and an author than as a statesman and a general, if he had chosen
des fields of activity for their own sake.”

Later, Livy wrote the history of Rome, Ab Urbe Condita (From the City’s
Foundation), which again helped to establish and model all of the virtues of
historical narrative: Perspicuity, Probability, Brevity and Suavity.
Vergil led the way of the poets with his eternal masterpiece, the Aeneid. Students today know only the story through English translation, but the virtue of Vergil’s work is found in his heroic meter (dactylic hexameter) and the language which he brought to poetic perfection. Horace added the model for all in lyric poetry, which is employed for the expression of human emotion, often to the music of the lyre. Despite the great poets time has produced, none has ever approached the sublimity of the Roman masters.

Lastly, Cicero is universally acknowledged to be the greatest communicator to ever have lived. Cicero perfected the art of oratory in every detail and, by God’s grace, recorded the principles of his art for us in his De Oratore and other rhetorical writings. No author can ever equal him for circumstances, experience, success, influence, erudition or fame. He is the world’s teacher in the art of Rhetoric.

One final name that must be mentioned is that of Quintilian. Living in the first century AD, Quintilian composed a uniquely practical guide On the Education of an Orator, which remains in print to this day. This timeless and most helpful guide directs the complete course of training from a rhetorician who is as near to Cicero himself as any can be. From the earliest studies of letters and pronunciation to the exercises of the mature orator, Quintilian’s contribution to the art of Rhetoric is no less important than those of the original masters themselves.

**RHETORIC ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

The essential difference between “classical literature” and “modern literature” is not to be found in its time or location of writing, but in its purpose. Modern literature is composed in a spirit of individualism that began in the Renaissance (we’ll learn the details later). This spirit establishes self-expression as the end of all arts, with the audience reckoned but a fly on the wall. Classical literature was composed in a spirit of community, where composition was meant not to satisfy the author, but the audience.

When we consider the goal of composition (of any kind) to be the affecting of a desired response in an audience, we find a great deal of knowledge to be necessary to the author. An author must understand the influence of his own person and perspectives on the audience’s judgment. He must understand the emotions and their causes in his audience. He must also understand the art of persuasion as it relates to human reason and the power of arguments. This knowledge is pursued in the study of the arts, not only of Rhetoric, but also Dialectic, Logic, Moral Philosophy and Politics. Whether we consider the content, the structure, the language or the appeals employed by the author, we find classical literature to have been composed with careful regard for the principles of these arts.
Therefore, we cannot analyze or appreciate the virtues and genius of classical authors until we learn of their art. Once we gain mastery of the arts ourselves, we will stand in awe of the masters’ wisdom and diligence in applying them throughout their writings and speeches. The student of the classical liberal arts, then, studies the arts not only for his own use in composition, but also for the sake of literary interpretation and art appreciation. Through them our eyes and ears are opened to see and hear rightly.

There is no such understanding of modern literature possible. Inasmuch as we cannot hope to possess the spirit of the men who wrote modern works, we cannot confidently explain their meaning or intentions in writing as they are written independent of any art or rule. The works of modernity, being composed for the author’s sake are to be buried with their authors for whom they exist. It is for this reason that the CLAA gives little attention to modern authors in formal studies. The relativism that surrounds their interpretation is inevitable because of the manner of their composition.

Likewise, for a student to be “classically” trained in writing and speaking he or she must first master and then commit to follow the principles of these arts. It is by careful adherence to these principles that our writings are guarded from misinterpretation and by them also that they are rightly analyzed. Our consistent adherence to the rules of the arts leaves our readers a map by which they may, in any age, find the treasures we intended for them and no others. It is for this reason that all learned discourse was conducted in Latin, so as to protect the original ideas expressed from misinterpretation by those ignorant of the principles of their articulation, and the reason why the Protestants demanded that they be thrown to the common people--an undeniably evil design. It is for this reason also that the CLAA does not waste energy in teaching young children to write or interpret what they read. Our focus is on their mastery of each of the classical liberal arts in their due order that they may posses the art that will later enable them to wield writing and speaking as swords under their full control, rather than stones to be cast by the handful at uncertain targets.

Lastly, we learned from the Greeks that the goal of education is a knowledge that applies to all men and all subjects. Logic and Rhetoric, above all subjects, supply this demand. Whether our students pursue religious vocations, technical trades, literary careers or business pursuits, the arts of Logic and Rhetoric will equip them for strategic missions and communications in their work, rather than the hopeful abandonment to luck that characterizes most today.

**SUMMARY**

In the first lesson, we considered the philosophical foundations of the classical liberal arts curriculum and tracked its earliest progress through Moses. In the
second lesson, we considered the development of music and philosophy in ancient Israel in the lives of David and Solomon. In our study of the Greek philosophical tradition, we learned how the Greeks identified and arranged the classical liberal arts, and how Aristotle supplied us with the first deductive textbooks on Logic, Rhetoric, Poetry and the branches of Philosophy. In this lesson, we have seen yet another wave of development among the Romans as they add to the classical liberal arts the language by which they will forever be communicated and the perfection of instruction in the art of Rhetoric.
Thus far in this course we have observed that the pursuit of wisdom (philosophy) has never been conducted apart from the classical liberal arts curriculum. We have seen the curriculum in its early stages in Ancient Israel and have watched the curriculum grow in stature and in favor with God and men through Greek and Roman times.

In this fifth lesson, we must do a bit of historical background work before looking at the perfection of the classical liberal arts curriculum by the Church Fathers. We will consider the inter-testamental history so as to rightly understand the relationship between classical liberal arts education and Jewish society around the time of the life of Our Lord.

THE SIX MODELS OF JEWISH LEARNING

In the history of Israel, there were six models for education: Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Daniel and Ezra.

Abraham, the ancient father of the Jews, was known for his exemplary role in domestic education. His fidelity to this duty was suggested as the purpose of his election (Gen 18:19):

“Indeed, I have singled him out that he may direct his sons and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord may carry into effect for Abraham the promises he made about him.”

This was the foundation for all Jewish education: passing down the way of the Lord to the next generation. The motivation for this was the belief that this was the primary way of securing God’s blessings.

Second, Moses, as we have already discussed, was a model for theological and judicial learning. It is for this reason that the role of the judge in Jewish society is referred to as “the seat of Moses”.

Third, David was the model of the Jewish man described in Psalm 1, devoted to the law of the Lord. His life of zealous worship and skill was a pattern for all Jewish men to imitate.

Fourth, Solomon was recognized as the model of the Jewish philosopher. His book of Proverbs was held to be an inspired guide to wisdom, as the introduction to the Proverbs makes plain:
“That men may appreciate wisdom and discipline, may understand words of intelligence; may receive training in wise conduct, in what is right, just and honest; that resourcefulness may be imparted to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man by hearing them will advance in learning, an intelligent man will gain sound guidance; That he may comprehend proverb and parable, the words of the wise and their riddles.”

Fifth, Daniel was the model Jew in exile--faithful to God and winsome among the nations. We read in Daniel 1 that he was chosen to receive instruction in “the language and literature of the Chaldeans (Babylonians)”. However, rather than conforming to the Babylonian culture, he demonstrated the superiority of the wisdom of the Jews. Daniel exemplified the fearlessness with which the true Jew was to confront the ideas of the world and the confidence with which he was to enter upon his studies, knowing that all true wisdom was with God to give freely to those who love Him:

“To these four young men God gave knowledge and proficiency in all literature and science, and to Daniel the understanding of all visions and dreams...In any question of wisdom or prudence which the king put to them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his kingdom.”

Note: God gives wisdom in literature and science, not theology alone.

Lastly, Ezra was the model scribe or Jewish theologian. Upon returning from captivity in Babylon, the king of Persia set Ezra over all the Jews, acknowledging the divine wisdom he possessed. Upon returning to Israel, Ezra executed the office of a great Jewish scribe, where he,

“read plainly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read.” (Neh. 8:8)

These models demonstrated the full range of wisdom which was to be sought by every educated Jew.

CONTENT & METHOD OF JEWISH LEARNING

The content and method of education centered about the Law of Moses, without which all was vanity. The core Jewish instruction was prescribed by Moses himself in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (read it slowly and attentively):

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today. Drill them into your children. Speak of them at home and abroad, whether you are
busy or at rest. Bind them at your wrist as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.”

Several things must be noted. First, this passage contains the *Shema*, which is the core expression of the Jewish faith, the shield against all idolatry and error:

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!”

The following line is known as the *V’ahavta* and is the foundation for all true moral philosophy:

“Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

In St. Mark 12, when Jesus is asked which is the greatest commandment, he answers with the words of the *Shema* and the *V’ahavta*. This was the essence of Judaism and that which was to be passed down by every man to his children.

Secondly, this passage contains the method of Jewish education. Jewish children were not to be sent off to school from 8am to 3pm to learn their lessons in the manner in which modern societies compartmentalize life. The instruction God required was to be performed always and everywhere, incorporated into every action of the day.

Thus, while we do not have a great supply of historical detail on Jewish education, we have enough to work on by reason that we may understand what education looked like in the time of Christ.

**THE LIBERAL & ILLIBERAL ARTS**

Practically, Jewish boys were also taught a trade. Jesus learned carpentry; St. Paul, tent-making; St. Peter, fishing, and so on. However, the common education received by Jewish children in the faith and in a trade was not the formal education where we might look for the classical liberal arts. We find examples of these wise men in the prophet Daniel and in Ezra the scribe.

In the book of Sirach, we find the classic Jewish division of the liberal and illiberal arts. The date of the book is commonly set somewhere in the 3rd or 2nd century BC.

“The scribe’s profession increases his wisdom; whoever is free from toil can become a wise man. How can he become learned who guides the plow, who thrills in wielding the goad like a lance, Who guides the ox and urges on the
bullock, and whose every concern is for cattle? His care is for plowing furrows, and he keeps a watch on the beasts in the stalls. So with every engraver and designer who, laboring night and day, Fashions carved seals, and whose concern is to vary the pattern. His care is to produce a vivid impression, and he keeps watch till he finishes his design. So with the smith standing near his anvil, forging crude iron. The heat from the fire sears his flesh, yet he toils away in the furnace heat. The clang of the hammer deafens his ears. His eyes are fixed on the tool he is shaping. His care is to finish his work, and he keeps watch till he perfects it in detail. So with the potter sitting at his labor, revolving the wheel with his feet. He is always concerned for his products, and turns them out in quantity. With his hands he molds the clay, and with his feet softens it. His care is for proper coloring, and he keeps watch on the fire of his kiln. All these men are skilled with their hands, each one an expert at his own task; Without them no city could be lived in, and wherever they stay, they need not hunger. They do not occupy the judge’s bench, nor are they prominent in the assembly; They set forth no decisions or judgments, nor are they found among the rulers; Yet they maintain God’s ancient handiwork, and their concern is for exercise of their skill.

How different the man who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High! He explores the wisdom of the men of old and occupies himself with the prophecies; He treasures the discourses of famous men, and goes to the heart of involved sayings; He studies obscure parables, and is busied with the hidden meanings of the sages. He is in attendance on the great, and has entrance to the ruler. He travels among the peoples of foreign lands to learn what is good and evil among men. His care is to seek the Lord, his Maker, to petition the Most High, To open his lips in prayer, to ask pardon for his sins. Then, if it pleases the Lord Almighty, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding.”

Here we find, in Israel, the conviction that to become a wise man, one must be free from the burdens of wage-earning. This distinction between the man of labor and the man of learning is in perfect harmony with the Greek explanation of the illiberal (practical) and liberal arts. The idea in Israel of “learning” is clearly philosophical learning and while every Jew received the basic instruction in the faith, only a select few chose the contemplative life of the scribe.

We find in this important passage that the studies of the scribe extend into all areas of learning. First, we learn the content. The scribe studies the Law and the Prophets. Yet just as the Catholic Church today possesses a depositum fidei composed of both written Scripture and oral tradition, the Jews possessed both the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) and the Oral Torah, which consisted of an unwritten tradition of interpretation and commentary on the Scriptures, believed to have originated with Moses and to have been restored later by Ezra. It is to the teachers of this oral tradition that Sirach most likely refers as “famous men” and “sages”.

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This oral tradition and its study centered about the Temple in Jerusalem, which was the center of learning and culture in Jewish religious life.

However, the learning of the 3rd/2nd century scribe extends beyond the study of Jewish thought, to the universal learning we have seen in Moses and Daniel. Sirach tells us that beyond what we might consider the standard course of Jewish studies was the study of international philosophy, politics and culture. To access this information requires a bit of history.

**THE HELLENISTIC WORLD**

Christian circles today are all but unconscious of the Hellenistic world, which lasted from the time of Alexander the Great (c 330 BC) to shortly before the opening of the New Testament. Knowledge of this period provides an invaluable connection between the classical and Christian eras and must be a part of Catholic learning. Protestantism, by its omission of the Deuterocanonical books, has contributed immensely to this problem, leaving the reader of Scripture confused as the Old Testament closes under Persian rule and the New Testament opens with the Romans firmly in control. The ignorance of inter-testamental history leads to great errors in New Testament interpretation.

Let’s summarize this important history. Around 450 BC, the Jews were freed from their Babylonian captivity by the Persian king Cyrus. This history is narrated in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is important to note that it was during this time, between 399-387 BC that Plato was supposed to have become acquainted with Jewish philosophy at Alexandria--before returning to Athens and founding his famous Academy. The Jews enjoyed their freedom until around 320 BC when Alexander the Great, the famous pupil of Aristotle, conquered the world from Greece south to Egypt and east to India. The attempt by the Greeks to “Hellenize” Israel divided the Jews as many welcomed the new culture and others saw it as apostasy from the Law. This situation is narrated in detail in 1 Maccabees 1:

“In those days there appeared in Israel men who were breakers of the law, and they seduced many people, saying: “Let us go and make an alliance with the Gentiles all around us; since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us.” The proposal was agreeable; some from among the people promptly went to the king, and he authorized them to introduce the way of living of the Gentiles.”

Israel, through this controversy, was divided into two major divisions: those who admitted Hellenistic influences and those who opposed them. Among the opposing Jews, four major schools of thought emerged: the Pharisees who honored Jewish written and oral tradition; the Sadducees who denied the authority of oral tradition; the Zealots who favored violent opposition to foreign influence; and the Essenes
who were devoted to spiritually-minded asceticism that removed them from the battles of the other three groups. Israel, thus divided, ultimately found itself in a state of civil war. In 63 BC, Pompey seized control of Palestine and the Jews found themselves under foreign control once again. It is during this Roman period that the New Testament opens.

The significance of all of this is that the Jews were not a group of religious people cut off from the rest of civilization. They had direct contact with Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman civilization throughout their history—all of which are recognized as the most learned of nations. It is improbable that the Jews mastered the Babylonian sciences, yet did not study Mathematics themselves, or that they knew of Alexander, but not of Aristotle. Did the Jews enjoy access to the Roman courts, yet not know of Cicero and Caesar? We must reason that the scribes of Israel were fully aware of and skilled in the learning of the nations, or the classical liberal arts.

**JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF CHRIST**

We learned above that the Jews studied both the written Scriptures and the oral tradition of Israel. We learned that the learned Jews were expert not only in their studies of their own nation and culture, but also that of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans—many of them either living among or corresponding with these nations. It would be more probable then, that the Jews were entirely familiar with the classical liberal arts not only because of their proximity to Greco-Roman culture, but also because of the examples found in men like Moses and Solomon, which we have discussed before.

In this context we find the Son of God, a *rabbi* in Israel. The term *rabbi* in Hebrew is equivalent to our use of the word “Reverend”. The rabbi was a religious teacher or sage, responsible for the religious instruction of a group of disciples. We would not expect to find in the rabbi teaching Logic or Rhetoric in a formal manner any more than we would expect such from a parish priest, for his aim was simply the exposition of the law and its observance. The disciples of Jesus received an elite rabbinical education, but that education was not to be considered as a replacement to the literary education pursued among the more academically oriented groups. It is for this reason that we find the Apostles referred to as “unlearned and ignorant men”. The word “unlearned” is *agrammatōi*, which is elsewhere translated “unlettered” or “illiterate”.

Here we must address a popular notion that the Apostles were a crowd of simpletons who might be looked at as the models of “true” Christian education. This silly notion neglects the aim of the education received by the disciples from Jesus. The disciples were called away from their trades for a specialized training that prepared them for their apostolic ministry. The education they received was not
a model for all Christian education, but for that of a specific mission—a mission that
would never be duplicated. What the Apostles learned was a more perfect
interpretation and application of the Law, supplied by Jesus Himself, that would
characterize Christianity and distinguish it from Judaism. Thus Christ did not
“abolish the law”, nor to change it, but to provide the perfect interpretation of it.
Christ’s teaching ministry challenged the Jewish oral tradition that was imperfect
and established the true and perfect interpretation which would be passed down
from that time on by the Catholic Church. It is this “tradition” that St. Paul defends
in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and it is this Apostolic tradition that the Catholic Church
maintains to this day. However, the Apostolic tradition is not where we would
expect to find the Church’s view on formal education generally.

In the next lesson, we will examine the Church’s early teaching on education, in
which the classical liberal arts are brought yet closer to perfection.

Summary

In the first lesson, we considered the philosophical foundations of the classical
liberal arts curriculum and tracked its earliest progress through Moses. In the
second lesson, we considered the development of music and philosophy in ancient
Israel in the lives of David and Solomon. In our study of the Greek philosophical
tradition, we learned how the Greeks identified and arranged the classical liberal
arts, and how Aristotle supplied us with the first deductive textbooks on Logic,
Rhetoric, Poetry and the branches of Philosophy. In the last lesson, we have seen
yet another wave of development among the Romans as they add to the classical
liberal arts the language by which they will forever be communicated and the
perfection of instruction in the art of Rhetoric. Here, we have established the
historical background against which our next study will consider the educational
philosophy of the early Christian Church.
CHAPTER 6. THE ARTS IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Thus far in this course we have observed that the pursuit of wisdom (philosophy) has never been conducted apart from the classical liberal arts curriculum. There have been particular instances where the special mission of a group (e.g., the Apostles) required a special education, but when we investigate the general or normal courses of study history’s wisest men have followed from the beginning to the end of their studies, we find the classical liberal arts.

In this lesson, we will continue to follow the development of the classical liberal arts in the early Christian Church. Too great familiarity with the history of the Church has bred a widespread contempt as modern men seek to find reason to suggest that their ideas, interests and endeavors are worthy of great attention. The truth is that the effects of the Christian Church on human civilization have made all else relatively insignificant. We do better today to preserve and transmit what we have received than to attempt to invent anything of our own. Many disagree with such a notion, so let’s consider whether it is true or not.

THE WORD OF GOD

We have seen that throughout history, God enlightened chosen men and sometimes revealed wisdom to them directly, and sometimes simply assisted them in their studies. However, when Christ came into the world, the age ended where in God:

“At sundry times and in divers manners, spoke to the fathers by the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1)

but that began in which it might be said,

“In these days, hath spoken to us by his Son.” (Hebrews 1:2)

The coming of the kingdom of God on Earth was not just one of many great times of enlightenment or cultural progress. It was the climax of all divine revelation, which consisted not in holy men moved by God, or in shadows or symbols, but as St. Paul explained,

“In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead corporeally.” (Col. 2:9)

God did not raise up for the world another great teacher or philosopher--a new Moses, Solomon, Plato or Aristotle. God did not reveal a new law or new idea. God did not supply the content for a new book. St. John of the Cross famously explained this truth when he said:
“In giving us His Son, his only Word (for He possesses no other), He spoke everything to us at once...and He has no more to say.” (CCC 65)

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Before Christ, the world was already filled with different schools of thought and religious sects: Epicureans, Stoics, Platonists, Pharisees, and many more. What would distinguish Christianity from the rest? Would it provide the answers to every other group’s flaws? Yes. Would it bring men to levels of happiness never before known to men? Yes. Would it transform civilization and bring times of refreshing to the world? Yes.

However, none of these were the true mark of Christianity, which set it apart from all other philosophies and rules of life. St. Paul addressed this in his own day as he challenged all men in saying (the Latin and Greek are much stronger than the English),

Non enim in sermone est regnum Dei sed in virtute. (1 Cor. 4:20)

Christianity was more than a new school of thought. It was founded not by the dedication of a building or the publication of a book but by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We must consider the circumstances surrounding the event and reflect upon what their effect would have been. We are familiar with the basic details of Pentecost in Acts 2, but do we consider what followed the event:

“There were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, ‘Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.’ They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, ‘What does this mean?’”

We learned that in the days of Solomon, all of the nations were represented among his audience. We find the same here at Pentecost. Visitors from every nation are present to witness the event: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia and Europe. It was to this crowd that St. Peter preached the first homily in the Christian Church and it was from this crowd that 3,000 persons were added to the Church. What we must imagine is the ripple that this event would send through the world as these travelers
took not only their stories of their visit home with them, but also the news of the fulfillment of “what was spoken through the Prophet Joel”, as St. Peter described it. These international visitors went back to their cities as Christians and that would require some explanation.

The explanation, of course, was not founded upon the speech of the Apostles, but upon the power surrounding and being dispensed through their ministry, which consisted of teaching, instituting the sacraments and prayer. As St. Luke said, these men “turned the world upside down”.

Seeing all of this, we would have to imagine what the classically trained rhetoricians would have to say. These apostles were agrammatoi and humble. They were not trained in the arts of Logic or Rhetoric, yet they moved multitudes and “brought low every height that exalted itself against the knowledge of God” (1 Cor. 10:5). More importantly, we will see that the greatest question among learned men was of the fruit that would be born when this raw power took upon itself the ornament of the liberal arts.

SCHOOLS OF THE FIRST CENTURY

By the grace of God, we have record of the Acts of the Apostles. Without these, we would be in the dark about the traditions and practices of the Church, just as Christians are often ignorant of the historical and cultural context of the Gospels when they neglect the study of the Deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament. What we find is the beginning of the redemption of the world and, as we’ve discussed in this course, the “plundering of the Egyptians”. Let’s take a moment to look more practically at the methods of education around the world in the first century.

When we speak of education, let us remember that we are speaking of a portion of society for only the free-born were free to study and for this the course of study was known as the liberal (“free”) arts. We also keep in mind the economy of the ancient world, which was founded upon slavery. Education and culture were enjoyed by those free to pursue them and the modern notion of universal education was unknown and undesired.

After birth, children were placed with nurses, who attended to the needs of the body and later to pedagogues who watched over the children’s moral conduct. Children had two options for schooling. They could receive private instruction--at home--by a hired teacher or they could attend larger schools called “public” schools (not to be confused with modern “common” schools). The most famous teachers were normally in the public schools, yet parents often preferred private education for the sake of its supposed moral benefits. There was disagreement on this question even
among the most learned men, for while the famous Rhetorician Quintilian preferred the public schools, the emperor Marcus Aurelius was grateful to have learned:

“From my great grandfather, not to have frequented public schools, and to have had good teachers at home, and to know that on such things a good man ought to spend liberally.” (Meditations, I.4)

Nevertheless, what is certain is that the goal of parents was to seek out the very best teachers they could afford for the education of their children. It should be noted that the popular idea that “parents are their children’s best teachers” was never held by any society in history as far as academic studies are concerned. The modern notions of “public” and “home” schooling are extremes, both of which lead families away from more appropriate notions of “private” individualized instruction and “public” group instruction—both conducted by expert teachers, not Mom and Dad. There is no such thing as parent-driven “classical” home schooling for the classical world admitted no such practice.

The world’s greatest teachers often moved in and out of cities, providing instruction to families that could afford their price. Great cities hosted famous schools to which the “best” students (too often merely the wealthiest) were sent for their education. Just as families today might prefer a Catholic school to a secular school, parents sought out teachers who shared their beliefs and values. One teacher might be a Stoic, another an Epicurean and so on. Nevertheless, these all had one thing in common: they taught some variation of the classical liberal arts. The teachers were grammarians, dialecticians, rhetoricians, musicians, etc. and they passed on to children an education that was known for centuries.

THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF ROME

While the classical tradition continued with little disruption during the Roman Empire, the Christians spent more time trying to survive the many waves of imperial persecutions that came upon them. We rarely (if ever) read of Christian children becoming great scholars in the early years of the Church. Most of the famous Christian teachers we can name were converted to Christianity after their education was behind them. Normally, those who took up arguments against the approved teachers in the Empire paid for it with their lives. Without peace and leisure, we should not expect to find much in the way of education among these early believers.

However, when Constantine converted to Christianity in AD 312, everything quickly changed. In 313, Constantine issued the Edict of Milan which forbid the persecution of Christians and granted the release of all Christian prisoners. For the first time since the founding of the Church, Christians were free to study and teach publicly. Out from the woodworks Christians came having been secretly serving in
offices throughout the Empire: soldiers, governors, state officials—but more importantly philosophers and teachers were free to discuss the faith and apply it to the perfection of the classical liberal arts.

It was after this time that the great fathers and teachers of the Church rose up: Sts. Athanasius, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine and all the rest as a list of the Doctors of the Church makes plain.

THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE CLASSICAL LIBERAL ARTS

While the classical tradition continued with little disruption during the Roman Empire, the Christian teachers had to work out the relationships between the classical liberal arts tradition and the Christian faith. The most famous treatment of the topic was St. Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana.*

Augustine was born to a pagan father, but a famous mother, St. Monica, in AD 354. Thus, he was born into the first generation of free Christians. His father, like most worldly men, intended for him to become wealthy and famous, whether as a great lawyer, rhetorician or whatever else worked—and sent him to the best schools available. St. Augustine began his classical education in what would be the equivalent of the CLAA Petty School, and then moved (as CLAA students do) to Greek and Latin Grammar (Remember that Latin was the native language.). Augustine hated all of these studies, which he pursued only to avoid getting beaten and to win an occasional, “Well done!”.

In Book I of his Confessions, Augustine discussed what was wrong with the system in which he was educated:

“O my God, what miseries and mockeries did I experience, when obedience was proposed to me, as proper in a boy, in order that in this world I might prosper, and excel in tongue-science, which should serve to the “praise of men” and deceitful riches.” (Bk. I, Sec. 14)

It is important to note that Augustine did not question the effectiveness of the methods, but only criticized the ends for which they were employed in his day. They were pursued for a notion of beauty divorced from truth and goodness, which was, in Augustine’s judgment, no beauty at all. Without bodily punishments and material rewards, these studies find no motivation.

As he matured, Augustine progressed through the philosophical schools of his day, spending his time most among the Platonists and Manicheans. Though he admired the faith and sincerity of his mother, Augustine had little respect for Christianity and found the Scriptures to be rather boring in comparison with the writings of other philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle. However, while following the teaching
of the Manichees, Augustine moved to Milan to take an impressive post as a teacher of Rhetoric in the city, where he met (St.) Ambrose. This meeting changed Augustine’s life and changed the history of the classical liberal arts. Despite initially judging Ambrose on his eloquence alone, Augustine was most impressed by the bishop’s kindness, diligence, humility and wisdom. By steps, Ambrose led Augustine to the baptismal font and the rest is history. Today, both Ambrose and Augustine are honored Saints and Doctors of the Catholic Church.

The work of St. Augustine that interests us most in this course is *De Doctrina Christiana* (On Christian Teaching). In this book, St. Augustine teaches a system whereby Sacred Scripture may be interpreted and taught rightly. This discussion leads the saint to acknowledge the source of many of his insights: his own classical liberal arts education.

The first and greatest contribution made by St. Augustine (and the Catholic Church through him) to the classical liberal arts was to remind mankind that true wisdom was not attainable without holiness of life. St. Augustine taught that man approaches wisdom by seven steps, the details of which are available in Book II, Ch. 7 of *De Doctrina Christiana* (know their order!):

1. Fear of the Lord.
2. Piety
3. Knowledge
4. Resolution
5. Counsel
6. Purification of Heart
7. Wisdom

Thus, St. Augustine lays the foundation for a more perfect use of the classical liberal arts aimed not at the mastery of the arts for their own sake, or for the sake of human wisdom alone, but for the sake of knowing God truly, primarily through the proper interpretation and application of Sacred Scripture.

In chapters 11-42 of Book II, St. Augustine explains the role of each of the liberal arts in Christian studies, the details of which we cannot examine here. However we must take a brief walk through each of his points.

St. Augustine’s concern is that there are multiple senses in which literature may be taken and the same is true of Sacred Scripture--only the stakes are much higher. His interest in this study surely flowed from his own distaste for the Scriptures through his life--that is, until St. Ambrose taught him how to read them. The chief problem is that untrained readers misunderstand or do not recognize figures of speech being used in Scripture and while the true interpretation is often very obscure, the divine inspiration of the Church allows us to have confidence that we are walking in the
truth. The Church then, is established as the pillar of fire to guide all Christians in
the pursuit of wisdom.

First, Augustine discussed the necessity of language studies. Sacred Scripture exists
in Hebrew and Greek. Every other available copy of the Scripture is a translation,
which pushes us at least one step away from the true Scripture and makes us
dependent upon the translations of others which are numerous. When the
opportunity is available to us, we should learn the original languages.

Second, Augustine explains the importance of general humanities learning, which
consists of erudition or the “knowledge of things” in general. Through a sound
understanding of literature, world history and the characteristics of animals,
minerals, plants, etc., we are able to discover the meaning of obscure passages. To
illustrate his point, Augustine describes how many times serpents are used as signs
in Scripture and how incomprehensible those passages are without a real knowledge
of their habits.

Note: This is a greater danger in modern society where most people teaching Scripture have scarcely
spent time among animals and plants as ancient people did and therefore can easily misuse their
illustrations.

Third, St. Augustine discusses the divine origin of logical reasoning and its benefits
and dangers:

“The science of reasoning is of very great service in searching out and
unravelling all sorts of questions that come up in Scripture, but in the use of it
we must guard against the love of wrangling and the childish vanity of trapping
an adversary.” (31)

Fourth, Augustine moves on to discuss the role of Rhetoric explaining its value in
setting forth truth that has been discovered, but not in discovering the truth. He
again seeks to make it plain that the art of Rhetoric was not created by men, but has
merely been discovered by them. It is important to note that he makes an effort to
remind the readers that Logic is greater.

Note: This last point is important historically because, as we learned in the last lesson, the Romans
devoted great attention to the art of Rhetoric, as opposed to the Greeks who cared much more for Logic.
Augustine seems to hint that a return to the Greek priorities would be helpful. This is important because
we may see in Augustine’s thought the beginning of the Christian focus on Aristotle that would
characterize the focus of Scholasticism, which we will study in an upcoming lesson.

Fifth (through Eighth), Augustine discusses the place of Mathematics, or the
“science of numbers”: Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy. Just as we
find in the CLAA curriculum, Augustine explains that the four mathematical arts
are of divine origin and therefore only rightly studied when used as steps by which
we may inquire after their source.
SUMMARY

Many attempt to establish practical rules and doctrines based on the earliest years of the Church, but this is impossible. As the Church suffered great persecutions and spent much of their time in hiding, we should not expect to find much material from which such early practices may be studied. The book of Acts teaches us very little of the practices of the Churches outside of Judea and Samaria and the epistles are not to be interpreted outside of the Church for the simple fact that the living tradition of the Church is the key to their true meaning.

To find a truly Christian educational manual we must look to the 4th century Church, when Christians were free to study, discuss and publicly practice the principles of their faith with the fear of punishment behind them. When we look to that age we find, once again, the classical liberal arts unchanged.

St. Augustine challenges us to fulfill the divine purpose of the classical liberal arts and not be satisfied with the pursuit of them for their own sake. We are called to pursue the arts not for material gain or for the praise of men for the appearance of learning, but for things better suited to the mind of man. For God’s will is that our minds be fixed upon that which is eternal and unchanging that we find the true source of peace for our souls: the eternity, immutability and incorruptibility of God.

The Christian Church, then, brought the classical liberal arts to perfection by establishing their true goals and by clarifying the means by which they must be pursued. We must pursue wisdom in the person of Jesus Christ, by the light of the Holy Spirit, who speaks to us in Sacred Scripture and nourishes us with grace through the Sacraments of the Church. Anything less will lead us and the classical liberal arts into darkness and futility.
CHAPTER 7. THE ARTS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Thus far in this course we have observed that the pursuit of wisdom (philosophy) has never been conducted apart from the classical liberal arts curriculum. There have been particular instances where the special mission of a group (e.g., the Apostles) required a special education, but when we investigate the general (or normal) course of study that history’s wisest men have followed, we find the classical liberal arts.

In the last lesson, we concluded with the study of St. Augustine’s re-orientation of the classical liberal arts curriculum for Christian ends. We learned that God added to the classical curriculum the power or grace to not only know the Truth, but to observe it and by that observance to approach new realms of learning that had been previously inaccessible to men. From this point on, we must always keep in mind the “seven steps to Wisdom” that formed the foundation of the Christian philosophy of education.

It is because of the reality of this process that the Classical Liberal Arts Academy takes such pains to introduce not books alone, but a full vision of faith and piety. Students may enter the gate of Wisdom’s kingdom but they will never dine with her until they are properly clothed, and that clothing is virtue. It is for this reason that our universities languish and the traditional branches of learning—philosophy have become dry and vain pursuits of esoteric trivia. They have been severed from the vine and have died.

In this lesson we will consider the next important page in the history of the classical liberal arts: education in the medieval world.

THE “MIDDLE” AGES

Before we begin, we must address some important issues in the study of history. There are many modern prejudices built into our conception of the past that are very difficult for us to free ourselves from. Most of us were educated in modern schools that served a secular or material mission—including Catholic and Protestant schools. In comparison with the classical schools of the past, our schools have almost no use for the history of Christendom or its contributions.

As a result, the history of Christendom is labeled the “middle” age, which identifies the age not for what it was but for what it was not. Some appreciation is given to the ancient and classical world: the Egyptians, Romans and Greeks are familiar to all. Yet from the fall of Rome to the Scientific Revolution, the world is seen to have suffered through a “dark age” in which superstition and religious fanaticism
oppressed the truth and held men in captivity. This age ended with the revolt against the Catholic Church (the mother of all evil), the invention of the printing press and the use of the Scientific method. As Catholic Christians, we can easily see the real message here: all is good in world history except for Catholic Christianity.

The medieval world was a dark age not because it was a time of ignorance or immorality, but because historians have cut it out from the history books and denied the knowledge of it to millions of students. Thus, we must work to restore the knowledge of what actually happened in this most significant era of human history. Such a task cannot be accomplished in this course, but it is one that is central to the Classical Liberal Arts Academy’s work in Chronology. Let us consider several men who are rarely studied today: Boethius, Cassiodorus, Charlemagne and Alcuin.

Note: As an example, in a popular Western Civilization textbook, Boethius is mentioned once—in passing—while the role of the bicycle in women’s liberation was judged worthy of a full-page feature!

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE FATHERS

Whenever virtuous men feel themselves trapped in what St. Augustine called the “river of human custom”, refreshment may be found in Socrates. His relentless attack on popular notions reassures men that their counter-cultural persuasions flow not from madness but from sober thinking. The heavenly focus and freedom found in Plato’s writings were very attractive to men seeking something more stable that the transient rewards of fame and fashion in the late Roman Empire. We should not be surprised, then, to find the persecuted Church fathers gathered about Plato. However, after the conversion of Constantine, the responsibility of Christian leaders to address earthly concerns inspired interest in the more practical works of Aristotle.

However, those who possessed the library of Aristotle’s writings were the leaders of his school in Athens. In 529 AD, the emperor Justinian ordered the closing of the school and its teachers removed to the East: to Persia and likely into Egypt. The writings of the Philosopher went with them into exile.

BENEDICT, BOETHIUS & CASSIODORUS

As the old Roman Empire declined, civilization moved north and west into Europe. The central figure in this transition was Boethius (480-525 AD). It is important to keep Boethius and St. Benedict together in our minds for they lived at the same time and symbolize the challenge of the Church at the time. In St. Benedict (480-547) we find the concern for the new wealth of the Christian Church and the effort of the pious to be “in the world but not of the world”. In Boethius, we see the concern to preserve the achievements and wisdom of the past as a new age dawns in Europe. Therefore, we must always keep Boethius and Benedict together.
Anyone who reads Boethius today probably reads his famous work: the Consolation of Philosophy. However, being ignorant of the philosophical tradition and the history of the period, the book’s value cannot be justly appraised. (CLAA Praeceptors would appreciate it!) Boethius was a member of an elite Roman family, whose ancestors included both popes and emperors. He stood between two worlds: the declining classical world represented in the Empire and the mysterious new European world that was rumbling to the north.

Fearing that the dawn of the new age might lead men to forget the glories of the past, Boethius managed the work of preserving the classical texts by translating them from Greek into Latin. Boethius translated the available works of Aristotle, Plato and other philosophers to supply the study materials that would be used in Christian schools for the next 700 years. However, we must remember that the works of Aristotle available to Boethius were few.

In addition to his translations, Boethius also wrote several important pieces to improve the classical liberal arts curriculum. He wrote important mathematical works that preserved the classical Arithmetic of Nicomachus, the Geometry of Euclid and the Astronomy of Ptolemy. To these he added his own work De Musica, which is the classic medieval treatment of the art of Music. Thus, all of the seven liberal arts owe their medieval popularity to Boethius. We do well to acknowledge Boethius as the bridge between classical and medieval education. We also do well to see that, as far as learning goes, there is nothing new under the sun.

Note: Considering the contributions made by Boethius, is there any justification for his being left out of a Western Civilization textbook?

Following close behind Boethius was Cassiodorus (490-583 AD) who was, like Boethius, a prominent Roman who held an influential place in Roman politics. After retreating from political life around 540, Cassiodorus imitated St. Benedict and established a monastery of his own. Cassiodorus established a library for his brothers at the monastery and wrote a number of important works on the classical liberal arts and music. What is important to note is that he, like Boethius, labored to preserve and promote the classical liberal arts tradition. There was no attempt to change the traditional system--not even as the Roman Empire fell, as Christianity entered new lands, as wealth came into Christian hands, etc. If one thing was certain in this uncertain period of history, it was the system of learning.
In the late 700s, Western Europe was, by the grace of God, supplied with a good Catholic king: Charlemagne. A great conqueror, Charlemagne filled Europe with Christian culture. As the king’s wealth grew, he gathered the best teachers for himself, his children and those of his nobles. His mission was to prepare an elite nobility, from which he might select the best and most virtuous to administer affairs within his kingdom. It is worth noting that the education chosen by the king was the classical liberal arts.

Among the leaders of Charlemagne’s classical teachers was Alcuin (735-804). Alcuin studied and taught the classical liberal arts, and wrote important texts on Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric. Whenever we hear of the cultural achievements of Charlemagne, we must remember that directing many of these pursuits was Alcuin. Alcuin’s work in the palace school included the development of the court’s handwriting, Carolingian Minuscule, which we now associate with medieval literature. Alcuin was also a mathematician and author of a book of mathematical problems for students. Here’s a taste of medieval mathematics:

There were three men, each having an unmarried sister, who needed to cross a river. Each man was desirous of his friend’s sister. Coming to the river, they found only a small boat in which only two persons could cross at a time. How did they cross the river, so that none of the sisters were defiled by the men?

Thus, into the 9th century, Charlemagne carried Christian culture and the classical liberal arts tradition to the outer limits of European civilization. The wealth and power he acquired by conquest did not distract him from the promotion of Christian culture and, most importantly, education. Following the advice of wise Alcuin, Charlemagne earned the title that remains with him to this day: “the father of Europe”. It is his cultural program that most of us think of whenever we speak of medieval Christendom.

THE LOST BOOKS

As we said earlier, interest in Aristotle picked up after the conversion of Constantine in 312 AD. The writings available were few in number and known to few. We mentioned how the teachers of the school of Aristotle fled to the East around 529 when their school was closed in Athens. The bulk of Aristotle’s works were carried into Persia, but we ought not to confuse Persian society in the 6th century with the Muslim Persia that developed later. The prophet Muhammad was not even born until 570.
We must remember that the Middle East was not isolated from classical civilization. The Persian Wars brought the Persian armies into direct contact with Greek civilization and later, Alexander the Great conquered all of Persia and filled it with Greek culture. Remember, too that Alexander’s teacher was Aristotle.

At the time, Christianity, Judaism, unorthodox Christian sects and eastern religions such as Zoroastrianism were all present in the Middle East. The area as a whole was ruled by the Roman emperor, who was himself a Christian--Justinian. Into this Persia the writings of Aristotle went and they all but disappeared.

While Aristotle had been studied through the translations of Boethius in Europe, much of the Philosopher’s work--even the most important pieces--were unknown. In Persia, Arab scholars had translated the writings of Aristotle and spent many years interpreting the Philosopher’s ideas and teaching these interpretations. Over time, an Arabic Aristotelean tradition developed that went everywhere Muslim culture did. As Muslim culture spread throughout North Africa and into southern Europe, something wonderful happened despite all the hostility between these two groups: the European Christians were supplied with the missing works of Aristotle.

In the 12th century, the works of Aristotle were translated from Greek and Arabic into Latin for the schools of Europe. With this, Christendom conceived and would in a short time give birth to something wonderful. We will learn of this birth and its fruit in our next lesson.
CHAPTER 8. THE ARTS IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

The period from the founding of the Christian Church through the 5th century AD is known as the Patristic Age, or the Age of the Fathers. As we learned before, the Church Fathers were admirers of the teaching of Plato and, maintaining that whatever was true was from God, worked to reconcile the sublime principles of Plato with the divine message of Sacred Scripture. We ought not to look at this as an attempt to baptize Platonism the way many moderns add Christian dress to essentially anti-Christian ideas like Naturalism and Relativism. The teaching of Plato was the product of the right use of the gift of reason and the truths discovered thereby were in many cases more clearly demonstrated than they were at the time in Christianity.

Between the 5th and 9th centuries, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Alcuin and others gathered and preserved the wisdom of the Patristic age, but also sowed the seeds that would give birth to the age to come. The developments of this era were caused not so much by the conscious effort of the period’s scholars to bring in something new, but were forced upon them by the new challenges of the spread of Christianity through Europe. Most importantly, they highlighted the centrality of Dialectic in Christian education and set the stage for the flowering of Scholasticism.

THE OLD VS. THE NEW

Just as the history of Philosophy moved from the thought of Plato to that of Aristotle, the history of Christian education leads from the focus on the Socratic Method of Plato into a fuller and more technical Logic of Aristotle. However, this move did not come about without controversy. Considering the holy men who stood on the side of Patristic (mystic) philosophy, only fools would happily oppose them. While many of the later thinkers were brilliant men, many of the Patristics bear an important prefix before their names: “St.” The mystics were holy men and a careful balance must have been maintained to gain the benefits of the “new” learning while preserving the “old” sanctity. Unfortunately, this balance was not maintained early on and the young Scholastics took a beating from the mystics.

The first important difference between the old mystics and the new rationalists had to do with the means of discovering religious truth. The mystics believed that true theology came primarily through divine revelation and contemplation. The rationalists, obviously, preferred to seek religious truth by means of Dialectic. In light of the successes of the Church Fathers in silencing all heresies, this new method was cautiously resisted. Unfortunately, undiscerning Scholastics welcomed not only the works of Aristotle, but also the Arabic and Jewish commentaries on them, which corrupted Aristotle’s message and supplied yet more fuel for the resistance.
The second important difference had to do with sanctity. The faith of the Patristic age, characterized by prayer, penance and contemplation, produced many of the Church’s holiest men and women. The apparent desire to shift from faith to reason led many to recall the warning of St. Paul, “Knowledge inflates with pride, but love builds up.” (1 Cor. 8:1). With a rationalistic method the danger always lurks wherein man ceases to trust in the Lord, but leans upon his own understanding (Prov. 3:5). Even today, we recognize the difference in personal piety that exists between contemplative, prayerful Christians in chapels and confessionals and intellectual Christians in the college lecture halls and seminaries. This is a real challenge to Scholasticism--yet one that could, by the grace of God, be overcome for the attainment of more excellent things. While many knew of the danger, too few feared them. One such man was Peter Abelard.

Note: It is interesting to note that scholars who professed such great devotion to St. Augustine as the mystics did, had such a difficult time seeing the good to be found in the teaching of Aristotle. After all, it was St. Augustine who famously encouraged Christians to “plunder the Egyptians” and use all that is good and true among the heathens in the service of God. It seems there was more concern to holding on to the past than for truly honoring the principles of their favorite Doctor.

**PETER ABELARD (1079-1142)**

Peter Abelard was the most illustrious of the early professors at the University of Paris, serving from 1108-1118, when the school was the center of Christian learning in Europe. Abelard enjoyed rock-star status in European circles and boldly employed the rational approach of Aristotle to questions of philosophy and theology. However, he lacked the humility to despise this celebrity status and was filled with pride and irreverence. Ultimately, his famous academic career came to an end through a scandalous affair with the niece of a Church Canon that resulted in a secret marriage and a child born out of wedlock. This famous incident has given birth (no pun intended) to many depictions of the romance of Abelard and Heloise (see right).

After falling, he removed to a Benedictine monastery where he continued to stir up controversy, contradicting many orthodox teachings in the name of “Reason”. His end came when he was at last called out by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the most influential and holy men in the Church in the 12th century. Rather than obeying the call for a retraction of his teachings, Abelard asked to dispute them before a council. After having his writings condemned by the bishops, Abelard appealed to Rome, but received a speedy condemnation from the Holy Father as well. He spent the rest of his life as a monk in Cluny.

The bad example of Peter Abelard appeared to confirm the fears of the conservative mystic Christians. He joined Scholasticism to scandal, disobedience and heresy. Coincidentally, Aristotle taught in his Rhetoric that when the Truth does not prevail
in a case, it is the fault of the speaker and Abelard’s failures in this regard are unquestionable. We would do well to learn this lesson as we seek to influence our own society for good today: Our causes may be failing because of our bad example.

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274)

The 13th century may be the Church’s greatest age after that of the Apostles. Within a span of 100 years, the Church enjoyed the service of St. Dominic (1170-1221), St. Francis (1181-1226), St. Clare of Assisi (1194-1253), St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), St. Louis IX (1226-1270) and St. Bonaventure (1221-1274). That’s a religious all-star team if there ever was one!

To guide the Church through the great challenges faced in the 12th century, Our Lord graciously provided a more than competent shepherd. St. Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican, was endowed with such grace, humility and wisdom that he was able in his own person to unite these two parties. Joined to Thomas’s unrivalled intellectual powers we find a life with all the devotion of the most blessed mystics. Throughout Thomas’ later years, he was often raised in ecstasies of the most incredible nature. These experiences climaxed in 1273 when, after an ecstasy during Mass, he swore to never write again, saying, “Such secrets have been revealed to me that all I have written now appears to be of little value.” What those secrets were will remain forever a mystery, but what is most important is that we see in St. Thomas the ideal Christian philosopher who possesses both the devotion of a mystic and the reason of a dialectician. This is Scholasticism in the truest and best sense. Unfortunately, that blessed union has rarely been found in the Church and its scarcity leads many into an unnecessary dilemma between the roles of faith and reason.

It is only in the light of this historical context that we can appreciate—and understand—the Summa Theologica. In the Summa, St. Thomas took on all of the questions raised against the Scholastic method and settled them in a clear and faithful manner. Since his death, the Church has repeatedly exhorted Catholic schools to listen to his voice, and all of the Church’s warnings against Modernism might be summed up in three words: “Study St. Thomas”. He was given the most wonderful name—“the Angelic Doctor”—and canonized less than 50 years after his death, in 1323.

Our ignorance of the life and teaching of St. Thomas and the few references we hear made to him from our teachers offers us a clear view of why there is so much ignorance, impiety and confusion in the Church today. We have our light hidden under a bushel basket. St. Thomas, teach us.
ST. BONAVENTURE (1221-1274)

Standing beside St. Thomas in the battle for faith and reason was St. Bonaventure. This holy man enjoyed the privilege of growing up as a child surrounded by saints. His name was given him by St. Francis who exclaimed “O bona ventura!” after curing him of a childhood sickness. If it were not for the shadow cast by St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure would likely be among the most widely known and admired of all saints. Living contemporaneously with the Angelic Doctor, St. Bonaventure was another model of the ideal Christian scholar and served as a professor of Theology at the University of Paris. In him, as in St. Thomas, a burning love and a brilliant mind lived in harmony, which is why he later was named “the Seraphic Doctor”.

St. Bonaventure, a leader among the Franciscans, was known for his great ecstasies, one of which forced St. Thomas (who was visiting) to leave his cell and call him a saint. Among his works was De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam, in which he explained the manner in which all of the arts might be rightly oriented toward and absorbed into Theology. Understanding the historical context and considering the similar challenges and triumphs of St. Thomas, we need say little more of St. Bonaventure. St. Bonaventure was canonized in 1482.

SUMMARY

We have now followed the life of the classical liberal arts for well over 2,500 years of human history. In this last lesson we have looked at the challenges European Christians had as they sought to reconcile the sanctity of the Church Fathers with the analytical genius of Aristotle. We have learned of the failures of Peter Abelard, who is fittingly remembered for his romantic activity more than for any religious devotion. We have learned of God’s answer to the difficulty, by and through His Church, in the equipping and exaltation of two illustrious scholars: St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure. The result of the achievements of these two faithful friends is the flowering of medieval learning and culture as the classical liberal arts curriculum reached full maturity in world history. In future lessons we will learn of the steady decline of the classical curriculum and its ultimate extermination as modern attacks on Christianity collaborated to snuff out the light of faith and reason in the modern world.
CHAPTER 9. THE RENAISSANCE & REFORMATION

In past lessons, we have studied the steady development of the classical liberal arts curriculum from the earliest days of human civilization through the growth of the Catholic Church in Europe in the 1300s. In this lesson, we will jump ahead to the first great assault made on the classical liberal arts. This assault took place over a period of time, from the 14th through the 17th centuries and is contained within two events identified by historians as the Renaissance and the Reformation.

THE RENAISSANCE

When we examine the terms used by historians it becomes clear that the Catholic Church is not very well liked. As Catholics, we might call the period from the fall of Rome to the Protestant Reformation the “Golden Age” of world history. However, when we look to the history books we find this period referred to as the Middle age, implying it merely stood between two more important periods to which it was referred. We find the cultural and political rebellion against the medieval Church called the Renaissance, which means “rebirth” and implies that something had been lost or dead before. Lastly, the widespread rebellion against Catholicism in the religious sphere is called the Reformation, which implies purification and improvement. In our study of history, we have seen the birth of the Christian Church, the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Catholic-European civilization. Apparently historians judge this to be a bad thing!

On one hand, there were a number of things lost that might have needed a renewal. We see in this period a rebirth of sculpture, painting and art that was indeed lost throughout the medieval world. This is not surprising when we consider that art always flourishes where men have peace and wealth. The art and literature of classical Greek culture flourished after the Persian Wars ended and all of Greece’s foreign enemies were pushed back. Roman arts flourished during the Pax Romana when imported slaves took on much of the labor in and around Rome, freeing citizens for leisure studies. However, after enduring centuries of persecution and oppression and then facing the challenge of Christianizing Europe, we cannot expect the Christian Church to have been a source of great artistic achievement. Once, however, the dust settled, the arts were “reborn”, and this was a wonderful thing. We are all familiar with Renaissance artists: Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Donatello, Van Eyck, etc..

However, in the realms of philosophy and education, what was reborn was the interest in man and life on this side of the grave, as opposed to the medieval interest in God and what lay across the river, so to speak. This movement is known as humanism.
We learned earlier in this course that the Greeks were known for the development (not invention!) of the art of Logic, while the Romans were the world’s teachers in Rhetoric. This fact guides us in understanding the Renaissance. Inasmuch as the medieval world was guided by the Scholastics and their analytical pursuit of truth it was an age that looked less to the needs of the body, or of the state than other ages. The center of what we might call the Middle ages was the Church, not the State.

As Catholic Europe embraced the Scholastic view of life and looked to heaven, the Italians maintained their devotion to the world and studies they knew. For them, Caesar and Cicero remained the models of human virtue and those studies which led to action were the most desirable. Rhetoric requires an audience and through history served the courts and political life. The Roman focus was not set on theology and metaphysics but on moral philosophy, poetry and rhetoric. This, then, was the rebirth that took place philosophically and educationally. The center of what we might call the Renaissance was the State, not the Church.

This reality is most evident in the representatives of each group and the subjects upon which they wrote. Representing the Middle Ages we find St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure writing on God, the soul, prayer, angels, virtues and vices, etc.. Representing the Renaissance we find Machiavelli and Thomas More writing on politics, Copernicus and Galileo on physical sciences, Petrarch on his own internal conflicts, loves, etc.. Even in authors that stood between the two movements, like Dante, we find the local and material mixed inseparably with the universal and spiritual.

THE REFORMATION

While the cultural movement known as the Renaissance spread from Italy throughout Europe, it either brought with it or was joined to an individualistic and worldly religious movement. As the regard for meaning and fulfillment in the present world increasingly occupied men’s thoughts, traditional views concerning the primacy and authority of the Church came into question. The history of the Reformation usually centers on Martin Luther, but he is only a representative, maybe even a caricature, of a much broader (and evil) movement that pervaded every sphere of life. The Reformation is little more than the application of Renaissance principles in an extreme and disobedient manner, similar to Peter Abelard’s misuse of Scholasticism studied earlier.

We always have to be careful in discussing the Reformation because, as in many circles today, the Church deserved much of the abuse it received. The Church was plagued with corrupt leaders, schisms, controversies and more. There was just cause for a spirit of anti-Catholicism among many. This is not the appropriate place to discuss all of the details of these problems or the events of the Reformation. It is
enough to know that the corruption was ready as a pile of dry sticks and Renaissance thought entered as a spark to ignite the rebellion.

Inasmuch as the “here and now” received greater estimation from men, those who ruled the land also grew in power. It is here that the nationalism known in later European history had its origin. The Reformation would never have found the support and protection it needed to carry out its rebellion were it not for worldly rulers eager to push the Church out from its borders and confiscate the lands she owned. So, rather than crediting the success of the Reformation to the Holy Spirit’s work in restoring the true Gospel as though it were surrounded with signs, miracles and peaceful deliverances, we must acknowledge that the Reformation was accomplished by the weapons of the flesh. One of the strongest arguments I ever heard against the Reformation was that for such a massive event as it was and for all the talk of the Holy Spirit’s guidance and selection of its leaders, there are no records of anything supernatural being done to confirm these claims. God gave miracles to Moses, Daniel, the Apostles and the Catholic saints but none to the Reformers.

We see the secular nature of the Reformation best in its English manifestation. The English Reformation centered around one man: King Henry VIII. Again, we cannot afford to dive into details here, but it is enough to say that while the Reformation spread through Europe a dispute broke out between the King of England and the Church at Rome. Henry VIII had no heir and wanted his marriage annulled. The Church refused. Henry “reformed”. Henry used an English law that forbade obedience to a foreign ruler to be applied to the Pope and thus to condemn the clergy who would not side with him! The result of Henry’s power trip was the foundation of the Church of England (note the secular focus) and the publication of what are now known as the Articles of Religion (their number varied over time).

What is most shocking of this is that in the end, the head of the Church in England was the king himself. Thus, the Church of England would from this point on follow the king, rather than vice versa. This, however, is impossible because it makes the Church subservient to the king, whose policies and programs must change, which means that religious doctrine and practice can no longer be “catholic” and constant, but now are as unstable as the secular throne itself.

Later, when the articles were finalized, this was set in writing:

Article XXXVII: The Queen’s Majesty hath the chief power in this realm of England and other her dominions, unto whom the chief government of all estates of this realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not nor ought to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.
Where we attribute to the Queen’s Majesty the chief government, by which titles we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended, we give not to our princes the ministering either of God’s word or of sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also lately set forth by Elizabeth our Queen doth most plainly testify: but only that prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly princes in Holy Scriptures by God himself, that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil-doers.

The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England.

The Reformation was hardly of a spiritual nature. Its entanglement with secular concerns was not only a source of many of its manifestations, but also the means by which it executed its reforms. While a more detailed study would reveal many helpful lessons for Catholics (including the martyrdom of St. Thomas More) we must keep the focus on education and move on.

MAINTAINING BALANCE

We must clarify again that the Renaissance was not entirely evil. There was no question that, while the Church had maintained the True and the Good, it was in need of a revival of Beauty. The challenges of the era caused the Church to focus on the priorities of truth-seeking by means of Scholastic education and attention was hardly given to worldly cares. However, before we beat up the medieval Church, let’s remember the litany of saints it nurtured as well. We cannot imagine Catholic life today without St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Anthony of Padua and, of course, Sts. Thomas and Bonaventure. They were all members in good standing of the medieval Catholic Church.

The Church, likewise was no enemy to the renewal of classical studies. The Church Fathers were among the most highly renowned classical scholars, but they often lived off of Greek and Latin studies treasured up before their conversion to Christianity. The Vatican Library was founded in the 15th century for the very purpose of protecting classical literature and artwork for future study and enjoyment. The time had come to determine exactly what a Christian classical studies program might look like and that took some time.

Nevertheless, many of the brightest stars of the Renaissance were faithful sons of the Church: Petrarch, Dante, Thomas More, Leonardo, Michelangelo and many more. Even at the time of the Reformation, there were humanist critics who remained loyal to the Church, the most famous of whom was Erasmus.
Furthermore, the Church was not opposed to the increased attention to humane affairs. As was said above, the Renaissance and Reformation, along with its attacks on Catholicism cannot be understood rightly in a historical vacuum. Was there corruption in the Church? Yes. However, it was because the Church’s charity and sacrifice that Christianity was in Germany, Switzerland and England in the first place. It was not the Apostles who evangelized the northern regions of barbarian Europe, but Catholic missionaries. Were pagan influences present in the Church? Yes. However, this was because there were pagans now in the Church! To complain of the pagan influences and assimilations would be comparable to complaining that modern churches embrace holidays like Mother’s Day, the 4th of July, etc. They were an inseparable part of the culture at the time and, when not intrinsically evil, were welcomed. Protestant Churches do the same today.

**SUMMARY**

The Reformation was an abuse of the principles of the Renaissance, which were neither good nor bad. The desire for a renewal of classical artistic and literary studies was a matter of the times in Christian Europe. The Reformation consisted of a complex and dangerous marriage of religious and civil ambitions. In our next lesson, we will look at the Scientific Revolution and the overall effects these three movements had on education.
CHAPTER 10. THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

In past lessons, we have studied the steady development of the classical liberal arts curriculum from the earliest days of human civilization through the Renaissance of the 14th through 17th centuries. In this lesson, we will look at the Scientific Revolution, which like the Protestant Reformation, is another manifestation of the dark side of the Renaissance. Having had the opportunity to follow the maturation of the classical liberal arts curriculum through history, you will now observe the ideas that unraveled it all in just a few centuries. In this lesson we will get at the core principles of the Scientific Revolution, which have caused great confusion in the Church, have provided for several embarrassing moments in Church history and continue to cripple Christian people today.

THE SEEDS OF THE REVOLUTION

It is well known that “Ideas have consequences.”, yet few have the knowledge to trace consequences back to their original ideas. When we look back through history, we see individual movements such as the rise of Scholasticism, the Protestant Reformation, the Scientific Revolution and later the rise of Capitalism, Marxism, Darwinianism, Nazism, and so on. However, these events are the manifestations of philosophical developments that have taken place behind the scenes and slowly trickle down into different fields of study and practice.

Since the ascension of Jesus Christ, the Church labored to carry out the apostolic ministry described by St. Paul in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians:

“We destroy arguments and every pretension raising itself against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive in obedience to Christ.”

The history of the Christian era through the Middle ages is nothing more than the outworking of this mission from Jerusalem, throughout the Roman Empire and then to the borders of Europe. For this mission, God provided the Church with an army of apostles, prophets and teachers who were divinely gifted to dismantle every false philosophy and demonstrate the superiority of the Catholic faith over the course of more than 1,400 years. This mission included the development of sacred traditions, the production of creeds, the establishing of the canon of Scripture, the composition of philosophical treatises, the preparation of catechisms and more. While there were certainly weeds mixed with the wheat in the Church, the overall achievements of the Church were supernatural, as we might expect.

Into this clean field of truth many seeds of falsehood and disobedience had been cast—and that not by men alone. Most of them had been rooted out, but others had remained dormant for some time. As never before in human history, the lust of the
eyes, lust of the flesh and pride of life—had been kept under control by the Church’s
diligent government and sacramental life, but new (or newly energized) forces and
new alliances, filled the Earth with new and more hardy weeds than had ever been
faced before. Some of them took root so strongly that even the elect were scarcely
saved from them. Human society has never recovered from the evil effects of these
movements.

The peace and prosperity that followed Christianity’s conquests in Europe, created
just the opportunity many enemies of the Church needed to stir up a rebellion. The
Church’s authority, wealth and power—combined with visible bad examples of a
few—were easily used to present false, though appealing, arguments against the
Church and her teaching. As we saw in the last lesson, the increasing secularism
provided the civil support and protection the Reformation needed to succeed. In
this lesson we find these same forces ready to support another revolution, this time
in the realm of the Natural Sciences.

THE NEW ORGANON

To suggest, as many do, that man is on a steady path of progress is easily
contradicted by human history. There have been many changes that resulted not
from true progress, but from violent revolutions inspired by evil ambitions and the
abuse of power, wealth and influence. One such revolution was that proposed in
the name of “Science” in the 1600s. Many suggest that the advent of modern
science was among the greatest achievements of human learning. Many see the
event as a liberation of mankind from the darkness of ancient superstitions into the
clear light of modern observation. Many boast of the great advantages received by
mankind ever since Galileo freed the universe from Catholic control. However, we
would challenge the truth of each of these claims. Modern science has the
appearance of a beautiful fruit, but it contains a deadly poison. A poison that affects
all today, though we seem to know not where it comes from. It comes from a
disordered devotion to the Scientific Method.

The key philosophical treatise behind the Scientific Revolution, which explained the
principles upon which the Scientific Method was based, is the Novum Organum,
written by Sir Francis Bacon in 1620. The fact that what was taking place was a
conscious rejection of and rebellion against classical philosophy and traditional
Christian thought is found in the very title of the book. We may translate the title
Novum Organum, to mean “The New Method” or “The New Instrument”. If it is
“new”, then it must be replacing something known as “old”. What is being replaced
in the Novum Organum?

The title of Aristotle’s library of Logic texts is called (in Greek) the Organon and in
Latin the Organum. Aristotle, then, is the author of the “Old Method”—and what is
this method? It is Logic. This is the method Francis Bacon seeks to replace.
If the shift taking place was simply one that moved from an ancient philosophical method to a modern philosophical method based on new knowledge or historical necessity, that would be one thing. However, when we realize that the Catholic Church had embraced the Aristotelean tradition and employed it, through the expertise of the Scholastics, in the development of Catholic dogma, we find in the Novum Organum no innocent challenge of ideas, but a violent rejection of the Church and her authority.

Catholic doctrine was complex and firmly established throughout the Christian world. Catholic philosophy was brought to such heights by the Doctors of the Church—especially by St. Thomas—that virtually no stone was left unturned. A complete system of faith and practice that encompassed every area of human life was articulated by the Doctors of the Church and bore with it the blessings and curses of the keys of St. Peter. Anti-Catholics had (and have) no hope of refuting the arguments of the Scholastics. The Logic of the faith was impenetrable and so easily defended by the Church that there was only one option left for anti-Catholics: to reject Logic as the method for seeking truth. This is the aim of the Novum Organum.

Now, the “logic” of the war against Logic would require great cunning for none would admit the argument that Logic was not reliable! The power and infallibility of the syllogism cannot be questioned. Bacon crafted a devilish scheme: to suggest that all existing human knowledge had been or might have been based on false doctrines in the ancient past and that Logic had merely led men from those false doctrines to the false conclusions known in his day.

“The logic now in use serves rather to fix and give stability to the errors which have their foundation in commonly received notions than to help the search after truth. So it does more harm than good.” Aphorism XII

Furthermore, since these original false doctrines are unknown to us, mankind must start all over again from scratch if we are to have any hope of being freed from the errors and idols of the past. Since our minds cannot be freed from the influence of past ideas, traditions, etc., we must allow experimental science to be the ONLY source of our new ideas. Anything that contradicts the conclusions of our experiments will be identified as a remnant of the errors of the past. Cunning, no?

Again, setting up such a violent battle between the traditional philosophy and the new philosophy would draw too much attention to the issues on which they differ. Therefore Bacon proposed that we compartmentalize learning into two different groups and the philosophers of each group into two separate families that leave each other alone. In this way, the new scientists might be free to advance their own system while pretending to not interfere with the old philosophers and their realms.
of influence. Here, as in the Protestant Reformation, we find the initial impetus for the separation of Church and State, and more full yet, the Church and Science. When we clear away the cunning Rhetoric and false suggestions of peace, we find one common aim: to launch a full-scale war on Catholicism. In the place of more than 4,000 years of human experience, tradition and divine revelation (!) was set the small band of like-minded men--the possessors of the instruments of research--as the new “pillar and support of the truth”.

**EFFECTS ON EDUCATION**

The two evil manifestations of the Renaissance--the Protestant Reformation and the Scientific Revolution--have all but destroyed education. In the universities, the “Scientific Method” has been applied to all fields--including theology, ethics and history. While the electron microscope reveals the “truth” in the chemistry department, the archaeologist’s shovel determines for us whether Jesus ever lived or not--warning us of the danger of accepting the errors of ancient superstition before we have evidence of what truly occurred.

Inasmuch as the classical liberal arts curriculum served the “old” system, modern education requires a completely new course of studies. The role of education in the modern world is to brief students on the current consensus of the scientific community. The entire body of knowledge changes from one generation to the next and one generation’s learning is considered “obsolete” by the next. The result is not progress, though! Schools go through chaotic waverings often returning to previously rejected ideas and then back again to new ones. Textbooks are valid for but a few years until their content is frowned upon by the scientific community. Fortunately, schools suggest, computers will allow “real-time” learning in modern schools.

Rather than freeing men from superstition, these systems have enslaved men to agnosticism and materialism. Sacred Scripture is reckoned all but unknowable by modern society since there is no way of demonstrating in a scientific way which interpretation is true for any passage or whether any passage is genuinely inspired. Any doubt becomes a case against Scripture and any interpretation--no matter how absurd--becomes a possible meaning. As individuals know themselves to be unable to answer the questions raised by skeptics, they doubt themselves whether there are any answers.

The natural world, likewise, is unknowable. Virtually any statement made based on one’s observation will be challenged by a “scientist” who has the ability to see deeper or further than the man on the ground. Very, very few have access to the most powerful instruments and since the argument is that only they can tell us what may truly be “seen”, we must await their revelation of the newest sight before we can say we have seen anything ourselves. The study of science, hanging always on
the endless release of retractions, contradictions, questions, confusions, etc..., is but a waste of time. What is “scientific” in one generation is abandoned in the next.

What is worse, tragically worse, is that Catholics have fallen for the false peace offered by the new scientists and have offered their own schools to this madness. Modern Catholic schools have nothing at all to do with St. Thomas or the philosophical tradition of the Catholic faith. Instead they themselves are breeding grounds for doubt, materialism and despair among Christian students who believe that what they find in the modern Catholic school is all that the Church has to offer.

**SUMMARY**

With this lesson, our study of the classical liberal arts curriculum through the Renaissance ends. Through the injection of two simple ideas, namely that the premises upon which the Catholic-Aristotelean tradition are false and that the true premises may only be discovered by means of scientific instruments, the foundation is laid for the complete dismantling and erasing of educational history that follows. In our next lesson, we will look at the application of these principles as democratic societies consider the mission of public education.
CHAPTER 11. AMERICAN PUBLIC EDUCATION

In our previous lessons, we have seen how the classical liberal arts curriculum developed throughout history--from its origin in the rational nature of man and through the refinements and advances of many generations. Ultimately, the classical liberal arts curriculum was taken up by the Catholic Church, which, in the 12th and 13th centuries, brought it to perfection. We also saw how this intellectual cornering of anti-Catholics provoked the emotion and zeal that fueled the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation and, the granddaddy of them all--the Scientific Revolution.

FROM NEW METHOD TO THE NEW WORLD

If your American history is shabby, it might be worthwhile to give it a little exercise. When many think of American history, they usually begin with the Declaration of Independence and Revolutionary War. Many remember Christopher Columbus who “in 1492 sailed the ocean blue”, but few realize that his discovery was made was 25 years before the Protestant Reformation began with Luther’s 95 Theses in 1517. Within a century from Columbus’s voyage, European powers began sending ships in hope of finding what Columbus originally sought: a more profitable trade route to the Indies. Thus, the Americas were initially settled by kings’ men in hope of improving their nation’s international trade.

Further, as the Protestant Reformation spread through Europe, great changes took place. In Germany, the Lutherans broke away from the Church and formed an alliance with secular rulers creating a Lutheran state. In Switzerland, the Calvinists broke away from the Church and likewise mingled with secular rule. In England, Henry VIII broke away from the Church and made himself the head of the Church of England. These divisions came as secular rulers were seeking material advantages in an age of increasing national competition and the religious divisions allowed secular rulers to gobble up power and property previously held by the Church. The notion of a united Christendom extending to the ends of the Earth was abandoned and replaced by a materialistic nationalism, bearing all the marks of the individualism, divisiveness and pride of the Renaissance, Reformation and Scientific Revolution.

THE PILGRIMS

As the first colonies were established in America, they often failed--either because the colonists died or because the goods received from the native Americans did not impress the European sponsors of these voyages and funds were cut off. Nevertheless, it was a matter of fact that there was now a place to live outside of Europe--far away from kings and bishops. This new land attracted the most radical
of the anti-Catholics who were so vehemently hateful towards the Church that they condemned even the Church of England for attempting to maintain something of Christian tradition. The Puritans, for example, ordained themselves as preachers, started their own churches and threw everything they didn’t invent themselves out for the sake of “purity”. These radicals ultimately found themselves in trouble with the law in England and saw America as a refuge. Thus, America was ultimately filled with men eager for either (a) financial gain and/or (b) religious license.

This spirit of profit-seeking and religious license led to the ideals and institutions that make America what it is today. America was formed as a melting pot of unorthodox religious factions that ultimately found their unifying bond in the cares of this world—not those of that which is to come.

17TH-18TH CENTURY EDUCATION

In colonial America, school was a private matter with a heavily religious focus as the original documents prove. “The Old Deluder Satan Act” was passed in Massachusetts in 1647 to make sure towns provided for the education of their children, with all the anti-Catholic fire we would expect from Puritan Americans:

“It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these latter times by persuading from the use of tongues (see note below), that so that at least the true sense and meaning of the original might be clouded and corrupted with false glosses of saint-seeming deceivers; and to the end that learning may not be buried in the grave of our forefathers, in church and commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors.

It is therefore ordered that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to fifty households shall forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read, whose wages shall be paid either by the parents or masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general, by way of supply, as the major part of those that order the prudentials of the town shall appoint; provided those that send their children be not oppressed by paying much more than they can have them taught for in other towns.

And it is further ordered, that when any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families or householders, they shall set up a grammar school, the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university, provided that if any town neglect the performance hereof above one year that every such town shall pay 5 pounds to the next school till they shall perform this order.”
Thus, communities organized schoolhouses where upper class children gathered for instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. In the larger cities, Grammar schools were established where a traditional course was offered to prepare students for the university. Such studies were normally pursued in Europe. Education in America became more efficient in the late-17th and 18th centuries as Americans established their own colleges, now known primarily as the “Ivy League” schools: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Penn, Columbia, Brown and Dartmouth—along with William and Mary and Rutgers. The U.S. government also took the first steps toward public schooling with the Land Ordinance of 1785, which established an area of land in every township for public education.

In 1789, however, when the Constitution was established, the American government obtained the power to collect taxes. That changed everything.

19TH CENTURY EDUCATION

After the establishment of a federal government in the United States, the ability to collect taxes gave educators and lawmakers a means of ramping up this mission. In Europe, the increase in secular power that followed the Reformation inspired rulers to create public school systems for the indoctrination of children in the interest of social obedience. The leader among these states was anti-Catholic Germany, which instituted a public school system beginning with kindergarten. In 1763, education was required for all German children between ages 5 and 13.

Nevertheless, the German model was of great interest to the American leaders who wished to establish an obedient and productive citizenry of their own. While originally established as a land of freedom, the newly formed American government took on an identity of its own to which the interests of the individual were to be subordinated. The means by which this spirit of obedience, sacrifice and devotion was to be taught was the public school system.

In 1852, the German system was adopted in Massachusetts through the leadership of Horace Mann, who is styled the “father of American public education”. After it was established in Massachusetts, it was quickly embraced also by the state of New York, Connecticut and others. It should be noted that the rhetoric with which these schools were promoted was that all citizens deserved equal opportunity in education, but that was not the true intent. To add to the rhetoric, these schools were referred to as “free schools” even though they were funded by American taxes. Behind all the patriotic rhetoric was an age-old plan to control the common people.
ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

As in Germany, the American public school system was inherently Protestant, though professedly “non-sectarian”. However, non-sectarian meant Protestant inasmuch as “Sola Scriptura” was the definition of allowable religious teaching. Thus, the fundamentals of the Catholic faith: the role of sacred tradition, the authority of the priesthood, the necessity of the sacraments and so on were forbidden, while Bible reading from the King James Version was allowed.

As the early Americans were Protestant in doctrine, their creed was thought of as the “faith of our fathers”—and is in America to this day. In the mid 1800s, Catholic immigration—from Ireland in particular—increased dramatically and the establishment of schools in Catholic communities led many anti-Catholics to fear the possibility of Catholic schools being funded with American (i.e., Protestant) money. As a remedy, the infamous Blaine Amendments of the 1870s were proposed in the U.S. Senate, and while not making it through the national legislature, they were passed by most states and made law. The Blaine Amendments made the use of state funds for “sectarian” schools illegal, arguing that the preservation of sectarian traditions like Catholicism prevented the development of the new American citizenry. It is odd that today, we find Protestants speaking out so loudly against secularism in the United States, when it was their anti-Catholic forefathers who wrote the laws that created the society they pretend to despise!

Perhaps you’re not convinced that the early American public schools were really anti-Catholic in nature. Well, there’s proof for you that not only was the public school movement anti-Catholic, but men were aware of this reality then. The anti-Catholic spirit of the American public schools is explicit in the editorial cartoons of Thomas Nast, who was a featured artist in Harper’s Weekly from the 1860-1880s—the nation’s leading newspaper at the time.

In 1875, Nast published the following cartoon, titled “The American River Ganges”. In the illustration, we find a brave schoolteacher protecting his terrified and prayerful students from an invading army of Catholic bishops made to resemble crocodiles! The poor U.S. school building is in a state of emergency while the powerful, wealthy Roman Catholic Political Church and School press upon the shores. Fortunately, the school teacher has his Bible tucked into his shirt to protect him and his little Americans from the Catholics. The bias is pretty clear, no?
Again, Thomas Nast published the following image, titled “No Church Need Apply” around the same time. We find a church official wearing three crowns of Church, State and School trying to enter the school with decrees from the Vatican demanding control. However, he is checked by a message from Uncle Sam that no “sect” can rule this school and a faithful public school teacher guarding the door. Is it not clear that the “anti-sectarian” rhetoric has a specific enemy in view? Is the Catholic Church indeed a “sect” that threatens what is presented as an established American society? This American society is barely 100 years old!

SUMMARY

We believe that the Catholic Church is the true Church established by Jesus Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit and protected by the power of God for all time. The waves of rebellion against the Church in the 15th-16th centuries spilled onto the shores of America in the 17th and 18th centuries where heretical refugees sought to hide themselves from lawful religious authorities. Once here, an effort to establish a Protestant America was launched, though with a number of different disguises to promote a superficial sense of higher purpose and national identity. Once the rhetoric is cleared away, however, we find a violent attack on Catholic tradition and that upon the common people—just as it had been in Europe by Luther and his fellow reformers. The early Americans established a federal government, raised taxes and opened anti-Catholic schools aimed at protecting Americans from foreign
influences and at assimilating immigrants (especially Catholics) to the state religion of America: Protestantism.

The model followed by the Americans was the secular model of the Germans. The laws and precedents were recklessly established that guaranteed that religion would one day be effectively eliminated from the American mind, yet Christians appear confused today just how this happened! The classical liberal arts, inasmuch as they represent the old world had no place whatever in the American schools. The curriculum turned from heaven to earth as it sought to make political control and economic gain its chief ends, rather than the knowledge, love and service of God.
CHAPTER 12. THE DAWN OF MODERN EDUCATION

In recent lessons, we have followed a series of anti-Catholic developments in human thought and practice. We saw three massive movements which declared open war on Catholic tradition: the Protestant Revolution, the Scientific Revolution and the foundation of the secular American school system. Each of these movements, when looked at carefully, may be characterized by the attempt to undermine the authority of the Catholic Church and undo the effects Christianity has had on human civilization since its founding.

In this lesson we will look deeper into the philosophical and historical context of the American public school system to understand how it evolved from a Protestant endeavor to create an anti-Catholic American citizenry into a secular machine for cultural change. Prepare yourself to see the fruits by which we may know that the string of revolutions that occurred between 1600 and 1900 were not the work of God.

THE FRUITS OF THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

We studied the writing of Francis Bacon, in which he argued--contrary to all Christian and classical history--that the senses, empowered by scientific instruments would lead men out from the “dark age” of faith-based reasoning brought to its zenith by St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. Many of his ideas, along with his fellow scientists, were couched in religious language as they needed to be to find acceptance among his religious hearers. However, the seeds were sown for what would be the most shocking consequences.

As scientists gained greater knowledge of the forces and workings of nature, the time came to set them to practical use. Since ancient times, human society was centered on a relatively unchanged system of agricultural production, whereby the production of goods took place at the speed of nature. The famous Roman Cato (Roman consul and philosopher) summed up the happiness of the agricultural life when he wrote sometime before 150 BC:

“It is true that to obtain money by trade is sometimes more profitable, were it not so hazardous; and likewise money-lending, if it were as honourable...The trader I consider to be an energetic man, and one bent on making money; but, as I said above, it is a dangerous career and one subject to disaster. On the other hand, it is from the farming class that the bravest men and the sturdiest soldiers come, their calling is most highly respected, their livelihood is most assured and is looked on with the least hostility, and those who are engaged in that pursuit are least inclined to be disaffected.” (De Agricultura)
Moreover, communities were close-knit and largely self-sufficient. Most children were raised for a life of manual labor and but a small percentage were sent off to the university for liberal arts studies. William Cobbett captured this reality in the 1820s as he wrote:

“You should bear constantly in mind, that nine-tenths of us are, from the very nature and necessities of the world, born to gain our livelihood by the sweat of our brow. If they be, as now and then one will be, endued with extraordinary powers of mind, those powers may have an opportunity of developing themselves; and if they never have that opportunity, the harm is not very great to us or to them.” (Cottage Economy)

However, the practical applications of scientific discoveries were made in the areas of manufacturing and agriculture--precisely those by which the common peopled gained their livelihood. The improved ability to produce metals allowed the construction of complex machines. The development of steam power replaced the need for draft animals and human effort with more machines. The machines that were built were used to make bigger and stronger machines and the common people, along with their animals, watched as their skills were rendered obsolete by the metal creatures being developed in the laboratory. The scientific harnessing of natural forces and mechanical advantages gained were employed to replace manual labor and the social and economic earthquake that resulted is known as the Industrial Revolution.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The applications of scientific discoveries targeted five fundamental areas of life:

1. Textile production,
2. Metallurgy,
3. Mining,
4. Agriculture and
5. Transportation.

Textile production, rather than depending on the shearing and spinning of local workers was increasingly performed by machines. Advances in metal production allowed wood to be replaced as the primary material used for tools and equipment. The steam engine allowed water to be pumped out of deep mine shafts, allowing coal to be extracted in greater quantities than before. The development of metal ploughs, seed drills and steam-powered tractors eliminated the use of draft animals and manual farm labor, allowing landowners to work greater tracts of land with less and less men. The construction of canals and railways allowed natural resources to be drawn from lands previously untouched and products to be transported into areas previously too distant from centers of trade for men to develop. Steam power
allowed mills to be built in places where water-powered mills would not have been able to exist. In essence, human and animal labor was replaced by machinery as the foundation of human economy.

Of course, the industrialists celebrated these developments as great improvements to the human condition and for them they were indeed. Wealth gathered into the hands of the machine owners, while the traditional social structure of the farm and neighborhood was destroyed. Machines were gathered into “factories” that all manufacturing could take place under a single roof before being conveniently sent off to a worldwide marketplace. Men without work in the country had to relocate to the cities to find work in the factories, on the railways or in the mines. Eventually, their families followed and found work of their own.

The managers of the factories were seeking efficiency and profit and that meant bypassing the elder laborers for women and children. After all, the new jobs being created were not heavily physical in nature and often required little more than supervision--work perfect for children. Children were put to work for entire days and along with women given the most unhealthy and dangerous tasks. They were worked so badly that the first labor laws limited work by children under 18 years old to twelve hours per day!

As the upper classes worked for the protection of women and children from exploitation, child labor laws were established. Ultimately, however, child labor was made illegal. This meant that children were no longer needed about the farm and could not work in the factory. The traditional school calendar and schedule were based around the assumption that children had to help at home. However, the urbanization produced by the industrial revolution led to the development of a new school model.

The effects of this cultural revolution were described by the philosopher John Dewey in 1900:

“The change...that overshadows and even controls all others, is the industrial one?the application of science resulting in the great inventions that have utilized the forces of nature on a vast and inexpensive scale: the growth of a world-wide market as the object of production, of vast manufacturing centers to supply this market, of cheap and rapid means of communication and distribution between all its parts. Even as to its feeble beginnings, this change is not much more than a century old; in many of its most important aspects it falls within the short span of those now living. One can hardly believe there has been a revolution in all history so rapid, so extensive, so complete. Through it the face of the earth is making over, even as to its physical forms; political boundaries are wiped out and moved about, as if they were indeed only lines on a paper map; population is hurriedly gathered into cities from the ends of the
earth; habits of living are altered with startling abruptness and thoroughness; the search for the truths of nature is infinitely stimulated and facilitated, and their application to life made not only practicable, but commercially necessary. Even our moral and religious ideas and interests, the most conservative because the deepest-lying things in our nature, are profoundly affected.” (John Dewey, School and Society)

AN EDUCATION SUITED TO THE NEW SOCIETY

The summary of the effects of the Industrial Revolution above were provided by John Dewey, who is no mere historian or sociologist. Dewey was quite a fascinating man. He was an atheist, who is recognized in history as a key contributor to several philosophical movements of the early 20th century including: pragmatism, secular humanism and progressivism.

More important to our discussion, however, is the profound influence he had on American education in the early 1900s. Dewey taught at the University of Chicago and Columbia University’s Teacher’s College, two of the most influential institutions for the development of modern educational theory in the early 1900s. What we must reflect on is that his explanation of the historical situation in which he lived (quoted above) reveals how conscious the educational theorists were of the changes they were making in the 1900s. They understood clearly that the revolution of society and culture in which they lived was comprehensive and unprecedented in history. Notice the adjectives used to describe the events: vast, rapid, extensive, complete, hurriedly, startling, abrupt, and so on. It is not normally good when changes take place that are deep, extensive...and rapid.

What is frightening about this movement, however is not the history of the discoveries and applications themselves, but the opportunity that Dewey and his fellow pragmatists seized upon to implement equally radical and rapid changes in education. Today, we look back at traditional Catholic culture and wonder where it went as though it was slowly lost by accident. When you read Dewey’s words, realize how clearly the educators understood what they were doing and what the consequences were.

“That this revolution should not affect education in some other than a formal and superficial fashion is inconceivable.

Back of the factory system lies the household and neighborhood system. Those of us who are here today need go back only one, two, or at most three generations, to find a time when the household was practically the center in which were carried on, or about which were clustered, all the typical forms of industrial occupation. The clothing worn was for the most part made in the house; the members of the household were usually familiar also with the
shearing of the sheep, the carding and spinning of the wool, and the plying of
the loom. Instead of pressing a button and flooding the house with electric light,
the whole process of getting illumination was followed in its toilsome length
from the killing of the animal and the trying of fat to the making of wicks and
dipping of candles. The supply of flour, of lumber, of foods, of building
materials, of household furniture, even of metal ware, of nails, hinges,
hammers, etc., was produced in the immediate neighborhood, in shops which
were constantly open to inspection and often centers of neighborhood
congregation. The entire industrial process stood revealed, from the production
on the farm of the raw materials till the finished article was actually put to use.
Not only this, but practically every member of the household had his own share
in the work. The children, as they gained in strength and capacity, were
gradually initiated into the mysteries of the several processes. It was a matter of
immediate and personal concern, even to the point of actual participation.

We cannot overlook the factors of discipline and of character-building involved
in this kind of life: training in habits of order and of Industry, and in the idea of
responsibility, of obligation to do something, to produce something, in the
world. There was always something which really needed to be done, and a real
necessity that each member of the household should do his own part faithfully
and in co-operation with others. Personalities which became effective in action
were bred and tested in the medium of action. Again, we cannot overlook the
importance for educational purposes of the close and intimate acquaintance got
with nature at first hand, with real things and materials, with the actual
processes of their manipulation, and the knowledge of their social necessities
and uses. In all this there was continual training of observation, of ingenuity,
constructive imagination, of logical thought, and of the sense of reality acquired
through first-hand contact with actualities. The educative forces of the domestic
spinning and weaving, of the sawmill, the gristmill, the cooper shop, and the
blacksmith forge, were continuously operative.

No number of object-lessons, got up as object lessons for the sake of giving
information, can afford even the shadow of a substitute for acquaintance with
the plants and animals of the farm and garden acquired through actual living
among them and caring for them. No training of sense-organs in school,
introduced for the sake of training, can begin to compete with the alertness and
fulness of sense-life that comes through daily intimacy and interest in familiar
occupations. Verbal memory can be trained in committing tasks, a certain
discipline of the reasoning powers can be acquired through lessons in science
and mathematics; but, after all, this is somewhat remote and shadowy compared
with the training of attention and of judgment that is acquired in having to do
things with a real motive behind and a real outcome ahead. At present,
concentration of industry and division of labor have practically eliminated
household and neighborhood occupations, at least for educational purposes. But
it is useless to bemoan the departure of the good old days of children’s modesty, reverence, and implicit obedience, if we expect merely by bemoaning and by exhortation to bring them back. It is radical conditions which have changed, and only an equally radical change in education suffices. We must recognize our compensations, the increase in toleration, in breadth of social judgment, the larger acquaintance with human nature, the sharpened alertness in reading signs of character and interpreting social situations, greater accuracy of adaptation to differing personalities, contact with greater commercial activities. These considerations mean much to the city-bred child of today.”

In essence, Dewey is admitting that the society being destroyed by the Industrial Revolution and urbanization was an excellent one. Children grew up with a sense of responsibility, respect, the need for sound judgment, the value of community and so on. Dewey admits that no amount of school lessons could ever reproduce what those children learned through their everyday experience at home and on the farm. Nevertheless, the changes that were transforming society demanded that something new be designed—no matter how good the old was and for how long. As he stated: “That this revolution should not affect education…is inconceivable.”

What were the benefits of this revolution? Dewey lists them without any judgment concerning their value in comparison with what was being destroyed: growth of a worldwide market, increased speed of distribution, increased speed of transportation, increased speed of communication. Every benefit listed concerns material wealth, while the losses from traditional society concern the moral life of families and children. Here we see the real evil of these movements: the progress was entirely material and temporal, while the impoverishment was moral and spiritual.

As we learned earlier, the Scientific Method was not unknown to the ancient philosophers, but undesired. Here we see why. All of the so-called advances of the modern industrialized world belong to the needs of the body—and they do not come at no cost to the soul. As these changes were being made in American history, the thinkers and planners and “reformers” knew perfectly well what was happening. Dewey explains it in perfect clarity: the soul of man was being sold for the comforts of the flesh.

DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

Dewey’s ultimate vision was to transform schools from places where children went to gain mastery of a handful of traditional academic subjects to a new society of its own. He believed that by creating a microcosm of the adult world children could learn to participate in a free society, learn to communicate and make good social judgments and develop those skills and interests that they judged to be most beneficial for themselves.
The preparation of healthy, docile workforce along with future inventors of new technologies became the goal of the schools. Inasmuch as the household and neighborhood systems of the past were to be relevant no more, relations between students and their parents were de-emphasized and their relationship to their peers and advisors within the school system given greater emphasis. Children needed to be trained for participation not in family life, but in the new industrialized and democratic society. The school expanded from a school house to a laboratory with instruction in mechanical and industrial arts, home-making, natural and social sciences, health and physical education, fine and performing arts and citizenship. The advances made in assembly line efficiency in the factories were applied to the organization of schools, with each child being moved along in a row. Man was at last reduced to one more machine being manufactured and prepared for the cause of social progress.

SUMMARY

Such were the ultimate fruits of the Scientific Revolution. Note that the legal efforts of the Protestants to forbid Catholic participation in the public schools provided the precedents that ultimately allowed the secular takeover of the schools, with the Protestants drinking the cup of their own folly to the dregs. Their first rebellion against the Catholic Church was a sign that evil things were coming. The rest simply flowed out from the door they opened at the Reformation.

With the Industrial Revolution every aspect of society changed--and that often within a single generation! Families gave up the means of production (the farm) and moved to the cities so that they could be closer to the factories. Despite dangerous working conditions, women and children also worked in the mines and factories until the abuses were finally outlawed. This produced an army of idle youths with nothing to do in the cities other than go to school. The school leaders, including John Dewey, redesigned the school so that it would no longer function as a meeting place where children learn five or six subjects, but an artificial society in which children could be trained to embrace and enter into the brave new world outside.
CHAPTER 13. CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

The history of Catholic schools in America is only understood when we consider the schools in light of the history and experiences of the Church in America. What is most important to focus on is how recent these events are--pay attention to the dates.

EARLY SETTLEMENTS

The earliest events in America’s history are surprisingly Catholic. Columbus and other settlers were Catholics and there was a Catholic presence in America from the beginning. Florida was settled by the Spanish Catholics in the early 1600s. Maryland was settled in the 1630s by the English Catholics and named after Queen Mary. In the early 1700s, the French Catholics established sites throughout Louisiana (New Orleans), the northern U.S. (Detroit) and Canada (Quebec). Catholicism was present in early America. However, the majority of immigrants were English Protestants, who filled the eastern colonies.

JOHN CARROLL

John Carroll was born in Maryland in 1735. He received an excellent classical liberal arts education with several soon-to-be famous relatives and joined the Society of Jesus in 1753--at age 18. Carroll studied classical Philosophy and Theology at the College of St. Omer in Liege and was ordained to the priesthood in 1769. He returned to Maryland (USA) around 1773. Father Carroll established Maryland’s first Catholic Church shortly thereafter, and after a decade of pastoral work, organized--with a handful of other priests--the Catholic Church in America.

We must remember that in Carroll’s day America was not Catholic--it was a mission field. Carroll himself was appointed by the Vatican as superior of that mission and was given some of the powers of a bishop. However, in 1788, he was officially ordained the first bishop of the Catholic Church in America and though officially named Bishop of the Diocese of Baltimore--America was his diocese.

To establish a Catholic foundation for learning in America, Carroll worked to establish the young nation’s first Catholic University. In 1791, Georgetown University was founded as a Jesuit school. In 1808 Bishop Carroll was named America’s first Archbishop, but died shortly thereafter in 1815. We must therefore remember the life of Archbishop Carroll, who played a central role in the establishment and development of the Catholic Church in America. Again, when we consider that the U.S. Constitution was adopted in 1789 there was but a single Catholic bishop in America, which was a mission field.
EXPANSION & IMMIGRATION

The Catholic population of America skyrocketed in the 19th century through two separate movements. First, in the early 1800s, the three major land purchases of Florida, Louisiana and the Southwest enclosed Catholic populations within American borders. Second, in the latter half of the 1800s, Catholic immigrants poured in from Europe--Irish, Italian, Polish, Hungarian, etc. By the end of the 1800s, just 50 years after the founding of the Catholic Church in America, Catholicism was the most populous denomination.

PLENARY COUNCILS OF BALTIMORE (1852-1884)

We are all familiar with the “Baltimore Catechism”, but often unfamiliar with its historical significance in America. As we learned above, Bishop Carroll became the first Archbishop in the United States and the Archdiocese of Baltimore was thus the first. By 1850, the number of archdioceses and dioceses in America had multiplied and request was made that a national (plenary) council be called to help establish the rules and regulations for the Catholic Church in America.

In 1852, the first council was called and was attended by 6 archbishops and over 35 bishops. Of the decrees of this first council, two are to be noted as we focus on the history of Catholic education in America. First, it was decreed that pastors of Catholic churches directly catechize the young and ignorant. Second, it was decreed that a Catholic school be established in every parish and that teachers be paid from parish funds.

In 1866, the second council was called and was attended by 7 archbishops and almost 40 bishops. In this council important matters of doctrine were hammered out including a rejection of the seeds of religious pluralism (which was already developing). As for parish schools, it was decreed that religious be employed for teaching whenever possible and again that schools be established in every parish. Schools were ordered to teach students the basics of Gregorian chant for their participation in the divine worship. The modern notion of “faith formation” programs were established for children attending public schools--which we must remember were at the time intended for the poor and unschooled. Parents were required to guard their children from bad books and schools required to purge textbooks of anything that contradicted the faith.

In 1884, the third council was called and was attended by 14 archbishops and over 60 bishops. In this final council, the establishment of parochial schools was demanded and Catholic parents forbidden to send their children to non-Catholic schools without the approval of the bishop. The heat from the growing public
school system is evident as concern is shown in the council for the relative cost and efficiency of the parish schools. Most importantly, a commission was established for the production of an official catechism for American Catholics.

In 1885, the Baltimore Catechism was published. As said above, it was to maintain the teaching of the previous Roman Catechism of St. Robert Bellarmine, which was drawn from the Councils of Trent, and published in 1597. What must be noted about the Baltimore Catechism, is that although its name appears to be regional, Baltimore was in fact the center of the Catholic Church at the time. Second, what should be noted is that the Baltimore Catechism is a continuation of the Church’s pre-American catechesis, bringing the Catholic faith into American life.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS

Before the great increase in American Catholic population, Catholic education was provided privately by those who had and by individual groups like the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph and the Friends of Mary to those who had not. However, as the Catholic population exploded, the need for organized Catholic schools increased. With the Catholic immigrants came Catholic religious orders devoted to education. However, the Protestant public schools grew increasingly hostile to the growing Catholic presence and pushed them out. As we learned earlier in the course, the Protestants used a cunning strategy to promote what appeared to be a “non-sectarian” public school policy, only to define “non-sectarian” as non-Catholic! Though supported by president Ulysses S. Grant, this effort failed on the federal level, but was adopted into more than 30 state constitutions and remains in effect to this day.

When we consider that, in 1884, the archbishops demanded that parishes establish their own Catholic schools (with mandatory attendance!) and that an American catechism be published, we can see that the Church felt the anti-Catholic pressure increasing around them. Realizing that the hope of state support for Catholic students was all but lost, the Church established schools of its own. In addition to the parochial schools, the Catholic University of America was established in 1882 as a national Catholic university to advance the Catholic cause in America.

Despite its rough beginnings, the growth of Catholic education in America borders on miraculous. Within 15 years of the Baltimore council, over 3,500 privately-funded Catholic schools were in operation. Growth continued to skyrocket through the 1920s, ‘30s and ‘40s. By the 1960s there were well over 5 million students in Catholic schools. In order to make sense of the height the Catholic schools had reached, we can compare that figure to the number of Catholic school students today, which is less than half of that.
THE DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Since the 1960s, there has been a steady decline in Catholic school attendance and a more troubling trend of closing Catholic schools. As said above, the number of Catholic school students is a fraction of what it once was and the number of schools has also been halved. The causes of this decline are manifold, but what they all point to is a sudden decline in the fervency and zeal within the Catholic community in the middle of the 20th century.

The most glaring causes of the decline of Catholic schooling are vocational, pedagogical and economic. First, the number of religious men and women (mainly women) has all but vanished. The decrease in religious vocations is sudden and mysterious. Was it the feminist movement? The cultural revolution of the ‘60’s? Perhaps. However, we cannot imagine that a Catholic population that overcame the religious oppression of early Protestant America could not resist the pressure of these movements. Second, the abandonment of traditional teaching methods led to larger and more expensive schools. When it came to pedagogy, the Catholic schools tended to follow the public schools and this led into a dangerous trap. Traditional methods of catechesis and curricular content were abandoned and the modern program of study and methods of instruction proved too costly. While the state schools enjoyed public funding and simply increased taxes to meet rising costs, the Catholic schools quickly worked themselves into financial ruin. Increased expenses led to increases in tuition that many families simply could not--or would not--pay. (Remember, the Baltimore council wanted the Catholic schools to be free.) Third, changes in the economic organization of the United States population led to troubles as Catholic families moved from the cities to the suburbs--and the Catholic schools remained behind. This led both to the increase in public school attendance among Catholic children and the financial failure of many city schools--a trend that continues today.

Today, the situation remains dark for Catholic schools. Tuition is too high for most Catholic families--especially large ones--to afford. Academic standards are comparable to those of the public schools which almost endlessly fall. Despite the constant closing of old schools, parishes continue to develop new schools based on the same models. Without religious teachers, the Church is forced to hire lay faculty members who demand far greater pay than the sisters ever would have. As the Catholic schools cannot compete with public schools for teacher pay, many Catholics teach in the public schools and inferior non-Catholics are employed by the parish schools as last options. The Catholic schools today are a sad ruin of what they were through the wisdom of the Baltimore councils and the zeal of the early American Catholics.
CHAPTER 14. THE CLASSICAL LIBERAL ARTS ACADEMY

In this course, we have covered the history of education from the ancient Egyptians through to the Catholic schools of the 20th century. By now, you should understand clearly where education started and what its original goals were. You should also know how education changed in history, when and where it abandoned its original aims and who the people were who orchestrated these changes. In this lesson we will look at the misguided efforts some have made to “repair the ruins” and the founding of the Classical Liberal Arts Academy.

RETURNING TO PROGRESS

Living in the early-mid 1900s, C.S. Lewis stated plainly the remedy to the Progressivism promoted by men like John Dewey:

“We all want progress, but if you’re on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road.”

Understanding what needs to be done does not require supernatural gifts of wisdom or divine revelation. It is a matter of simple historical study. As a man who wanders off course on a journey must back-track to the point of departure and continue on his original route, so we must acknowledge that the past 100, 200, even 300 years of educational history have been spent wandering off course. The only solution--as unhappy as it may be--is to travel back to the original point or points of departure and set out rightly again.

When we do this, we will find that those who either (a) lack the faith to take on the challenge, (b) lack the ability to see and achieve the needed reforms or (c) have something to gain from the present state of affairs in education will attempt to discourage those who seek to return to the right path. Because we have lost so much time on our journey, the willingness to sacrifice the time spent wandering will be called rash; the willingness to return to the point of departure will be called outdated or old-fashioned (which in modernist thinking is equivalent to “evil”); the willingness to turn and wade against what St. Augustine called “the river of human customs” will be called arrogant and futile--yet all of these discouragements, as challenging as they may be, will be proven false by the man who reaches the point of departure and sets out again on the true path. He that prefers patience and truth to convenience and expediency will be proven wise in due time.

MISGUIDED EFFORTS AT REFORM
Aware of the great problems in modern education, many have taken upon themselves the task of “repairing the ruins”, but these have been misguided efforts. Like the messenger Ahimaaz in 2 Samuel 18, they have been eager to run, but without knowledge of what to report.

**DOROTHY SAYERS**

In the 1990s, a “Classical Education” movement grew in the United States, largely among Protestants who assumed that the problems in modern education were caused by the secularization of education and the modern arrangement of school subjects. These groups also argued that the ordering of studies in modern schools was in need of correction. The solution was said to be articulated in an obscure early 20th century essay titled, The Lost Tools of Learning by Dorothy Sayers, an English novelist and translator.

Now, we should first take notice that this effort was conducted in the main by Protestants and the problem with education will not be solved within a Protestant framework. The Protestant Reformation is itself a large part of the problem that led to the corruption of classical education and, though modern secularism allows Protestants to sweep in wearing the dress of saviors, this is either naive or misleading. Protestantism itself must be abandoned for true education to be restored.

Nevertheless, let us examine the educational philosophy proposed by these groups, which was taught by Ms. Sayers. In her essay, she promotes a historical monster as a solution to the modern trouble in education. She is to some degree aware of the classical liberal arts and is obviously thoroughly familiar with the modern scheme, yet she proposes a third option--a via media--or middle road that marries the two and gives birth to something monstrous.

Sayers suggests a marriage between modern educational psychology and the classical liberal arts. In detail, she suggests that the old Trivium (Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric) be looked at as three “stages” of child development. The Grammar “stage” consists of information-gathering, which we would refer to as “perception” and “judgment” in the classical operations of the mind. In her scheme, Grammar is not itself a subject, but a stage and there can be a “Grammar” of other subjects: a grammar of history, a grammar of Biology, and so on. Next, a student moves into the “Logic” stage, where his education consists largely of activities that exercise the operation of the mind we referred to as “reasoning”. As with her notion of Grammar, Logic is not a subject, but a stage of learning. Students will therefore study the logic of history, the logic of Arithmetic, and so on. Lastly, the student advances to the “Rhetoric” stage, where he is exercised in self-expression. It should be noted that Sayers maintains the modern division (or multiplication rather) of academic subjects--only suggesting that they be studied in three “stages”.

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Now, while such a scheme may have impressed ignorant modern educators and parents who were zealous for something that appears to be better than was available at the modern schools, a sound knowledge of educational history clearly proves this to be a novelty itself and no return to classical liberal arts education--no return to the original path. If the proponents of Sayers’ views would have presented it as such, that would have been fine. However, it was hailed as a “return to classical education” and sold as a return to tradition. The system was called “the Trivium” and it was directly claimed that what Sayers proposed was what Christians of past generations knew as classical education. Images were used of Aristotle, Socrates and Cicero and there were references to early Christians like St. Paul and St. Augustine. The final product has greatly misled Christian families who have been told--and believed--that their children were receiving a Christian education similar to that of many of the saints of past generations.

Today the Sayers curriculum provides the foundation for the following programs: Mother of Divine Grace School (Catholic), St. Thomas Aquinas Academy (Catholic), Veritas Press (Protestant), Canon Press (Protestant)--and most other self-proclaimed “classical” study programs. The most depressing observation to be made concerning these programs is that there is a general ignorance of classical sources on education which clearly contradict Sayers, which leads us to what the actual courses are based on.

**BIG-SCHOOL MODEL PROGRAMS**

One essential element in classical schools was the simplicity of instruction. Students rarely studied more than one course at a time and the instructors were masters of the arts themselves. The entire program was dependent upon an orderly and natural progress through the arts: from Grammar (the art of speaking and writing well) to Dialectic (the art of reasoning rightly) to Rhetoric (the art of persuasive communication). Because the curriculum was so simple and all students had to advance by the same steps, there was no problem teaching a number of students at different steps since the advanced students provided a preview for beginning students and beginning students provided a review for advanced students.

In the classical Jesuit schools of the 17th-18th centuries, the Praeceptor system allowed a small number of skilled teachers to manage the education of hundreds and hundreds of students--and that normally for free. Elite and affordable were not contrary terms in education since the educators possessed the wisdom to craft a system of studies that was sustainable and efficient. They were masters in the truest sense of the word.

Most attempts at school reform by groups today simply cannot think outside of the box of modern education. Even if they try to restore traditional subjects and
teaching methods, they begin with age-based grade levels of the modern public school system. This “big-school model” requires low teacher-student ratios, which means large faculties and insupportable staffing costs. This system is only sustainable when government taxation supplies the funding and when private schools built on this model do not receive taxation it leads to low teacher salaries, which leads to low teacher quality. Worse, though the schools require large numbers of teachers, the number of competent teachers will always be very low as it requires wisdom and grace to order learning and inspire students. Remember that when the supply of unpaid sisters dried up, the Catholic schools collapsed in America--because the big school model was, is and always will be unsustainable for privately funded schools.

In homeschooling circles, the big-school model creates unbearable burdens for parents who are required to serve as teachers of multiple subjects--and multiple grade levels! In order to make the teaching burden lighter on parents, courses are dumbed-down until they are little more than workbook assignments with answer keys. The problem with all of this is simply an inability to see beyond the last 150 years of education. The big-school model is another problem that must be rooted out for education to be restored to its former excellence.

Modern programs founded on the big-school model include: all available local schools, Seton Home Study (Catholic), Kolbe Academy (Catholic), ABeka Homeschool (Protestant) and any other that arranges students by grade levels such as K-12.

**THE CLASSICAL LIBERAL ARTS ACADEMY**

The Classical Liberal Arts Academy (CLAA) was not designed to emphasize a certain element of traditional schooling or to promote some new textbook series. It was designed to unapologetically restore the classical liberal arts curriculum that was used throughout history. Because our program so directly depends on the actual historical arrangement, we do not need to say anything of its philosophical or curricular details. If you know the classical liberal arts curriculum of the past, you know the CLAA. In fact, we have not even changed the study materials but, seeking to first return to the point of departure, judged it to be most wise to begin with what was last used by the classical European schools of the 17th-18th centuries and gain experience with it before seeking to produce anything of our own. We are not wiser in our generation than those educators were who stood at the end of centuries of practical teaching experience! The thought of authoring our own materials at this point in history is ridiculous--we simply must concentrate on getting back to the right road.
What should be explained, however, is our effort to make use of modern technology to restore the traditional simplicity of classical liberal arts education and the traditional praeceptorial system.

**A ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE—WITHOUT WALLS**

In the past, instruction was provided to students in local schoolhouses. One or a few masters of the liberal arts taught local students to prepare them for the university (which was nothing at all like our modern universities). Teachers managed the progression of students through the arts and the quality of schools were dependent upon the gifts of individual teachers. Those students who were blessed with excellent teachers were well prepared for the university, others were not. Some communities had no schools at all. Remember too that these schools were often free.

As we reflected upon the benefits of this traditional arrangement of classical schools, two modern issues drew our attention: (1) distance learning resources and (2) computer database technology.

What would have happened if the best teachers in the old classical schools could have been made available to all students—no matter where they lived? Surely, it would have created an educational revolution. Well, we thought, using distance learning resources such as online lesson delivery, audio recordings and video instruction—we can do just this.

Second, while no teacher—no matter how gifted—can manage the lessons, assessment and grading of thousands and thousands of students—a computer database can. By creating an online database that contained all student information, lessons, examinations and records, a few efficient teachers could manage the education of thousands of students—without compromising quality in instruction or assessment. Through our unique connections and resources, we were able to quickly arrange such a system.

**THE PRAECEPTORIAL SYSTEM—AT HOME**

As we reflected on the success and wisdom of the classic praeceptorial system, we quickly saw a wonderful opportunity to reproduce it in our generation. In old classical schools, praeceptors were normally older, successful students who had mastered their teachers’ lessons and could supervise and assist students at lower levels. In our generation, we cannot begin with an army of advanced students, but we can create a virtual army of praeceptors using (1) online quizzes and exams (2) web-based student support and (3) homeschooling parents.
By combining easy-to-use online activities, lightning-fast student support and the present help of homeschooling parents, the CLAA has been able to capture most of the benefits of the old praeceptorial system. However, through this Praeceptor training program, we are preparing the next generation of knowledgeable praeceptors who will be able to serve as the highly skilled liaisons between the CLAA instructors and CLAA students. By this time, you should be able to see how this goal is being achieved.

THE FUTURE OF THE CLAA

In our first year of enrollment--despite how radical our program is to modern adults--we enrolled over 630 students. The hardest work is behind us and the impressive results of our first students is creating a steadily increasing enthusiasm and confidence among parents. We have, however, only just begun. Courses are still being written, research still being conducted and capable instructors still being found that will allow us to completely restore the lost classical liberal arts curriculum.

When the core program is finally restored, we will turn our attention to improving from our original point of departure. We have resources available to us today that teachers of old could not have dreamed of. Once restored and understood from an experiential perspective, we will be able to assess how these resources may be employed to raise classical liberal arts education to heights it has never before reached. What is most exciting is the knowledge that, just as the history of the classical liberal arts extends back to the creation of man, we know that the work we are doing will have a significant effect on the future of Catholic education until the end of time.

We thank God for the opportunity to engage in such work and trust that His grace is sufficient to enable us to accomplish our work.

SUMMARY

We have studied the history of education together and have seen the unquestionable superiority of the classical liberal arts curriculum to all other innovations. In this lesson, we have identified the misguided efforts at reform based on historical ignorance and poor organization. Lastly, we have looked briefly at the efforts made by the Classical Liberal Arts Academy to return to the historical point of departure from the classical curriculum and those unique resources that have made its early success possible.
CHAPTER 15. THE GOAL OF EDUCATION

Thus far in the Praeceptor training course, we have surveyed the history of the classical liberal arts before studying education in the modern era. Do not think these topics have been covered in any sufficient detail! You have received only the simplest introduction.

What you should realize at this point is that our challenge in the Classical Liberal Arts Academy is not one of discovery or invention, but a challenge of restoring what was lost. Nevertheless, we must begin with a careful examination of the goal of the classical liberal arts curriculum. In subsequent lessons, we will work through each of the objectives necessary for the achievement of this goal.

THE GOAL OF EDUCATION

Obviously, the goal of education is to lead (Lat. ducere) children to fulfill the purpose for which man was created. This purpose is basic knowledge for any catechized child:

“God made us to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world; and to be happy with Him forever in the next.”

However, the difficulty of this purpose--in practice--has to do with the five letter word in the second part of that sentence: happy.

If you were to make a habit of asking people to define happiness, you would find widespread disagreement. In fact, this has been the case throughout all of human history and it was to find the definition of happiness that the study of wisdom (i.e., Philosophy) originally began. Philosophical schools were established based on the definition they gave to this word. The situation is no different today. As we move from school to school today, will find that they differ based on the definition of happiness to which they subscribe. Every school is pursuing happiness with all its might--they simply disagree on what that happiness consists of.

We need to establish a definition of happiness that can provide us with a clearly defined goal for the Classical Liberal Arts Academy. Once this definition is established--all of the objectives of the school on the day-to-day level will work themselves out quite easily. We will do this in this lesson by comparing and contrasting the definitions of happiness given throughout history along with those today.
Throughout much of classical literature, we find happiness spoken of as a matter of luck—in fact, the poets and historians would nearly define it as good luck. Here is a selection from the classical historian Herodotus, wherein he narrates (imaginatively, of course) the famous discussion between Croesus (king of Lydia in Asia Minor) and Solon (the Athenian law-giver):

Croesus afterwards, in the course of many years, brought under his sway almost all the nations to the west of the Halys. When all these conquests had been added to the Lydian empire, and the prosperity of Sardis was now at its height, there came thither, one after another, all the sages of Greece living at the time, and among them Solon, the Athenian.

Croesus received him as his guest, and lodged him in the royal palace. On the third or fourth day after, he bade his servants conduct Solon over his treasuries, and show him all their greatness and magnificence. When he had seen them all, and, so far as time allowed, inspected them, Croesus addressed this question to him. “Stranger of Athens, we have heard much of thy wisdom and of thy travels through many lands, from love of knowledge and a wish to see the world. I am curious therefore to inquire of thee, whom, of all the men that thou hast seen, thou deemest the most happy?” This he asked because he thought himself the happiest of mortals: but Solon answered him without flattery, according to his true sentiments, “Tellus of Athens, sire.” Full of astonishment at what he heard, Croesus demanded sharply, “And wherefore dost thou deem Tellus happiest?” To which the other replied, “First, because his country was flourishing in his days, and he himself had sons both beautiful and good, and he lived to see children born to each of them, and these children all grew up; and further because, after a life spent in what our people look upon as comfort, his end was surpassingly glorious. In a battle between the Athenians and their neighbours near Eleusis, he came to the assistance of his countrymen, routed the foe, and died upon the field most gallantly. The Athenians gave him a public funeral on the spot where he fell, and paid him the highest honours.”

Thus did Solon admonish Croesus by the example of Tellus, enumerating the manifold particulars of his happiness. When he had ended, Croesus inquired a second time, who after Tellus seemed to him the happiest, expecting that at any rate, he would be given the second place. “Cleobis and Bito,” Solon answered; “they were of Argive race; their fortune was enough for their wants, and they were besides endowed with so much bodily strength that they had both gained prizes at the Games. Also this tale is told of them:- There was a great festival in honour of the goddess Juno at Argos, to which their mother must needs be taken in a car. Now the oxen did not come home from the field in time: so the youths, fearful of being too late, put the yoke on their own necks, and
themselves drew the car in which their mother rode. Five and forty furlongs did they draw her, and stopped before the temple. This deed of theirs was witnessed by the whole assembly of worshippers, and then their life closed in the best possible way. Herein, too, God showed forth most evidently, how much better a thing for man death is than life. For the Argive men, who stood around the car, extolled the vast strength of the youths; and the Argive women extolled the mother who was blessed with such a pair of sons; and the mother herself, overjoyed at the deed and at the praises it had won, standing straight before the image, besought the goddess to bestow on Cleobis and Bito, the sons who had so mightily honoured her, the highest blessing to which mortals can attain. Her prayer ended, they offered sacrifice and partook of the holy banquet, after which the two youths fell asleep in the temple. They never woke more, but so passed from the earth. The Argives, looking on them as among the best of men, caused statues of them to be made, which they gave to the shrine at Delphi.”

When Solon had thus assigned these youths the second place, Croesus broke in angrily, “What, stranger of Athens, is my happiness, then, so utterly set at nought by thee, that thou dost not even put me on a level with private men?”

“Oh! Croesus,” replied the other, “thou askedst a question concerning the condition of man, of one who knows that the power above us is full of jealousy, and fond of troubling our lot. A long life gives one to witness much, and experience much oneself, that one would not choose. Seventy years I regard as the limit of the life of man. In these seventy years are contained, without reckoning intercalary months, twenty-five thousand and two hundred days. Add an intercalary month to every other year, that the seasons may come round at the right time, and there will be, besides the seventy years, thirty-five such months, making an addition of one thousand and fifty days. The whole number of the days contained in the seventy years will thus be twenty-six thousand two hundred and fifty, whereof not one but will produce events unlike the rest. Hence man is wholly accident. For thyself, oh! Croesus, I see that thou art wonderfully rich, and art the Lord of many nations; but with respect to that whereon thou questionest me, I have no answer to give, until I hear that thou hast closed thy life happily. For assuredly he who possesses great store of riches is no nearer happiness than he who has what suffices for his daily needs, unless it so hap that luck attend upon him, and so he continue in the enjoyment of all his good things to the end of life. For many of the wealthiest men have been unfavoured of fortune, and many whose means were moderate have had excellent luck. Men of the former class excel those of the latter but in two respects; these last excel the former in many. The wealthy man is better able to content his desires, and to bear up against a sudden buffet of calamity. The other has less ability to withstand these evils (from which, however, his good luck keeps him clear), but he enjoys all these following blessings: he is whole of limb, a stranger to disease, free from misfortune, happy in his children, and
comely to look upon. If, in addition to all this, he end his life well, he is of a truth the man of whom thou art in search, the man who may rightly be termed happy. Call him, however, until he die, not happy but fortunate. Scarcely, indeed, can any man unite all these advantages: as there is no country which contains within it all that it needs, but each, while it possesses some things, lacks others, and the best country is that which contains the most; so no single human being is complete in every respect—something is always lacking. He who unites the greatest number of advantages, and retaining them to the day of his death, then dies peaceably, that man alone, sire, is, in my judgment, entitled to bear the name of ‘happy.’ But in every matter it behoves us to mark well the end: for oftentimes God gives men a gleam of happiness, and then plunges them into ruin.”

Such was the speech which Solon addressed to Croesus, a speech which brought him neither largess nor honour. The king saw him depart with much indifference, since he thought that a man must be an arrant fool who made no account of present good, but bade men always wait and mark the end.

The message of Solon is a relatively good one, but it takes no theologian to find the troubles in this view of happiness. The gods are not “out to get us” and jealous of our success—although the spirits known by the Greeks may have been. (They didn’t make their religion up after all.) The gods are not seeking to bring us down whenever we rise up as the “Wheel of Fortune” suggests. We do not believe that happiness is a matter of chance and that there is no means of attaining happiness in any lasting way. This leads to an aimless life that blames all success and misery on fortune.

Believe it or not, this definition of happiness fills many schools. I have had many arguments with students who were taught that writing or singing was “a gift” that was received by chance, rather than an art that can be cultivated by the study of theory and the exercise of the mind and body. These students have been taught that the successes of men and women are not the result of their study and labor, but of random gifts, opportunities and connections along the way. In fact, when it comes to the arts, most modern schools take up the old idea that the gods send happiness and misery on whomever they please...whenever they please.

In the CLAA, we don’t accept this careless definition. It is true that many received gifts through birth, but it is equally true that many who make diligent use of art achieve more than those who merely possess yet do not cultivate their natural gifts. Happiness is is no way linked to these gifts or disadvantages, but to the management of them. This is why students must be taught the arts of every field of learning and given the opportunity to exercise themselves in them. As the Roman poet Virgil rightly sang, “Labor vincit omnia.” (Labor conquers all things.)
HAPPINESS: PLEASURE WITHOUT PAIN

In the modern world, happiness is broadly defined as the enjoyment of pleasure combined with the absence of pain. Happiness is considered to be an emotional state based on one’s condition at the moment. As that condition changes, happiness comes and goes. Those who hold this idea of happiness work to gain control over those factors that are judged to control happiness: wealth and health.

This hedonistic definition of happiness focuses on wealth because it is wealth that allows one to afford the pleasures of life. Rich foods, fine clothes, big houses, luxurious cars, exciting vacations, expensive conveniences—all depend on wealth.

Further, health is an obsession because the individual lives in dread of pain and seeks to avoid it at all costs. This, too, depends on wealth as the constant access to medicines and doctor visits requires either a lot of money or excellent “health insurance”. Here begins the concern for immunizations (whether the danger is real or not), here the routine “well visits” just to make sure pain is not coming, here the sanitation of home and hands, here the pain relievers and so on. Good and bad behavior is defined by its relation to health and wellness. Unprotected sex with many partners is bad because it exposes one to disease. “Safe sex” is promoted as an alternative since it reduces the risk of disease. Overeating is bad because it increases the risk of heart disease and digestive troubles. Lowering calorie intake, eating a wide variety of foods and increasing exercise are recommended as the alternative for “good” eating.

The school of the hedonist provides an education focused upon these goals: to gain wealth and be healthy. The school begins with the question: “What do our students need to be wealthy and healthy adults?” and the answers form the curriculum. This is the nature of public school education, which mirrors the “bread and circuses” of Roman times. Consider a philosophy statement from the NC state curriculum website:

“North Carolina educators seek to provide the most appropriate education possible for the diverse learners in the public schools of the state in order to prepare all students to become successful, contributing members of a 21st century society and global economy.”

When this philosophy works itself out into practical details, a constantly changing curriculum is required to keep up with a constantly changing society:
“Today, the challenge of education is to prepare students for a rapidly changing world. Students in modern society must be prepared to:

- compete in a global economy,
- understand and operate complex communication and information systems, and
- apply higher level thinking skills to make decisions and solve problems. American businesses seek students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in the international marketplace of today’s information-based society. Whether at work or in post-secondary study, students must be able to apply what they’ve learned from their years of public schooling.”

Notice the ends of these studies: economy, business, marketplace, etc.. That is where the wealth is at. Unfortunately, we cannot say that Christians reject this philosophy or that Christian schools despise these goals. For most Christian schools, and among most homeschoolers, these are the goals save for some religious touches here and there.

In the CLAA, we reject this philosophy to its roots and deny that happiness is in any way dependent upon pleasure and the absence of pain. We deny that the marketplace and global economy determines what children should learn in school. We deny that education should be constantly changing to keep up with society. We are not hedonists.

HAPPINESS: DIVINE CONTEMPLATION

Plato, in the Symposium (“The Dinner Party”), presents Socrates in a discussion which leads to the Platonic definition of happiness. Socrates recounts a lesson he learned from a woman, Diotima, on the nature of love and happiness. Love, Diotima says, desires what is good and happiness is the everlasting possession of good. Diotima explains as follows:

“He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)—a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and-foul to others, or in the likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being, as for example, in an animal, or in heaven or in earth, or in any other place; but beauty absolute, separate, simple, and
everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who from these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. This, my dear Socrates, is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute.”

This, of course, sounds wonderful and it was because of teaching like this that early Christians maintain the doctrines of Plato. St. Augustine even spent time explaining to the Christians how Plato was able to come so close to Christian truth, as you learned earlier in this course. Indeed it is the everlasting possession of what is good that we call happiness and ultimately (in this life) this happiness consists in the contemplation of the highest good (summum bonum)--God Himself.

From this definition of happiness, Plato builds his philosophy of education. Just before this sublime passage in the Symposium, he presents this, explaining the way to happiness:

“He who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only-out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be not to recognize that the beauty in every form is and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to birth thoughts which may improve the young, until he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a slave mean and narrow-minded, but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere.”
From this we can see how the Platonic philosophy of education began with Music and Gymnastics, where beautiful sounds and bodies were studied and then moved up into the liberal arts: Grammar, Dialectic, etc. Plato sought to lead students by steps from the love of earthly beauty to the ultimate love of absolute Beauty in divine contemplation.

However, it is here where the Platonic doctrine fails. In stating that happiness consists in divine contemplation, Platonism is added to Buddhism as a system that teaches that happiness is a state of rest. God, however, is an agent, a working and active being. We as human beings have hands and feet and are capable of our own action and deeds. How then can we believe that the contemplation of God is better than the imitation of God? The inactivity of Platonism leads us to seek a still more perfect definition of happiness.

We find this definition of happiness in many schools. Everyone is zealous to talk about God, read about God, read about the saints, visit shrines and relics, watch Christian videos...but there is no concern for Christian action. The curriculum consists of a list of subjects of study, but no necessary practical objectives. This idle Christianity was that which St. James famously criticized, when he said, “Faith without works is dead.” Happiness is not limited to thoughts of God, but includes the imitation of god-like actions. Happiness is not found in a book or video.

**Happiness: Eternal Beatitude**

Aristotle, Plato’s greatest disciple, disagreed with his master’s all-or-nothing vision of happiness. According to Plato’s idea, only philosophers can experience human happiness for they alone have climbed the ladder of loves to reach the contemplative state which he identifies as happiness. Aristotle believed that happiness was relative, for not all men could attain to Plato’s ideal--which Aristotle agreed was the highest happiness possible for man. Therefore, Aristotle concluded that the majority of men in the world would have to be content with the inferior forms of happiness that were available through an active, ethically upright life. Men are to do the best with the highest faculty they are able to in this life: if not the soul, then the mind and the body.

Aristotle’s view approaches closest to the perfect Christian definition of happiness—but this is where the Catechism comes to our aid. Most Christians can recite the doctrine “God made us to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world; and to be happy with Him forever in the next.”, but the doctrine fails to make it much further than their lips. Those who are not aware of the ancient discussion which this Catechism teaching answers do not appreciate the details of it, but admit many things in their lives that this teaching contradicts.
What the Catechism is ultimately teaching us is that God intends for ALL human beings to enjoy perfect happiness—not only the philosophers, the healthy or the wealthy. The Hedonists see that the poor cannot afford to enjoy lives of health and wealth and therefore happiness must be the privilege of the wealthy. Plato and Aristotle realized that the majority of men couldn’t reach the highest happiness available in this world and therefore proposed that the rest must be content with whatever they can get. These philosophies were all limited by one important assumption: death is the end of human life. Thus, the Catechism identifies the Christian answer to the question of happiness: “to be happy with God forever in the next life”.

When Christ came into the world, He did not randomly drop in without regard for the rest of the world or for human history. He arrived “in the fullness of time” and that time is best understood as the fullness of time philosophically. Aristotle had brought human wisdom as far as it could get without the revelation of the Word Himself with the final lessons. When Christ comes, he provides the final answer to the question of human happiness in the Sermon on the Mount, where he confounds all of the philosophers with the full revelation of the Kingdom of God.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 
Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.
Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart: they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven.”

It is the last term that sets the truth apart from all that went before: in heaven. This transforms all of human life. Everything is redefined and reorganized. All of the former goals of human life are darkened by the shadow of the Kingdom of God. All of the former aversions of human life are enlightened by its rays. Happy are the poor? Happy are the meek and mourning? Happy are the hungry and thirsty? Happy are the persecuted and reviled? Yes! For the Kingdom of God is at hand. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains,

“The Beatitudes are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ’s disciples.” (CCC, 1717)
However, the implications of this doctrine of happiness are far more drastic than the differences in the definition itself. The Catechism explains:

“The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to see the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement--however beneficial it may be--such as science, technology and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love.”

**HOW HAPPINESS DIRECTS CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

When we establish the true definition of happiness, we must direct education at it as at a target. We must fix our eyes upon it and let nothing else distract us. God has created us free to serve Him and we must preserve our freedom that we may not be robbed of the happiness God freely offers us.

Standing in the 21st century, however, we are not free. Families are enslaved by ideas and customs that are not directed at human happiness, but are the fruits of anti-Christian beliefs that undermine human happiness. In fact, we are in worse condition today than any Aristotelian or Platonist ever was. Modern society, because of its reliance upon the scientific method is hedonistic. This requires us to fix our eyes on the target even more--and to refuse to let the pressure around draw us away from it.

Our happiness being in God alone, we must do what He requires of us to enter into the Kingdom of God. Therefore, if the goal of education is to lead children to happiness, it may then be redefined as leading children into the kingdom of God. If they are fit for the kingdom of God, they have all happiness, whether they be rich, poor, famous, persecuted, healthy, sick, etc.. This is happiness and this is all that matters. We must establish our thoughts here because all that surrounds us aims at other ends. The obsession with college admission flows from imperfect views of happiness. Parents see wealth as the way to happiness and college admission as the way to wealth. This is not to be our focus.

The focus of true education, in light of the Christian definition of happiness, is on God Himself. It consists of three objectives, again, laid out for us in the Baltimore Catechism.
WE MUST KNOW GOD

The most simply understood path to the knowledge of God consists of the study of Sacred Scripture and of formal catechesis. St. Augustine defined for us the way to understand Scripture and it is through the same course of liberal arts studies that wise men employed throughout history. As we will see, this is taught explicitly in the CLAA’s Biblical Studies program. Catechesis is provided formally through the Church’s Baltimore Catechism, which contains a complete and systematic presentation of the Christian faith.

Students are encouraged to pray the Act of Faith as part of their daily prayers:

O my God! I firmly believe that Thou art one God in three divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe that thy divine Son became man and died for our sins and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.

WE MUST SERVE GOD

However, the knowledge of God is not limited to book study. Our desire is intimate, experiential knowledge. This naturally leads to the second objective. Entrance into the kingdom of God is the means of our true happiness and this entrance is guarded by the judgment seat of Christ. To enter the kingdom God, we must obey the commandments of God. Thus, no education is true Christian education that is not active in training children to serve God by obeying His commandments.

In the CLAA, the commandments of God are studied in the Catechism and later in Moral Theology. The goal of these courses is to provide children with a clear understanding of the will of God.

In addition to the study of the commandments, the CLAA works diligently to teach parents how to order their homes to allow children to obey God. This begins with regular prayer, which is why the CLAA promotes the Liturgy of the Hours among families. We work to discourage worldly activities and distractions that keep children from serving God and allow bad habits to grow in them. We discourage pressure parents place on children to participate in too many activities, to focus on secular careers and to be impressive in the eyes of the world, and teach them to protect the freedom of the child to serve God today and for the rest of his life. We provide opportunities for students to learn about Catholic missions work and to participate in it as a family and as individuals. All of this seeks to motivate children to serve God that they may enter the kingdom of God.
Students are encouraged to pray the Act of Contrition as part of their daily prayers as it stirs us up to serve the Lord fully:

O my God! I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee and I detest my sins. Because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and worthy of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance and to amend my life. Amen.

WE MUST LOVE GOD

Jesus said, “Those who are forgiven much, love much.” and this challenges us to recognize self-examination, confession and penance as very important components in cultivating the love of God. Love does not need to be taught when a child is well catechized, well-studied in the Scriptures and active in the service of God. Diligent use of the sacrament of Reconciliation will help to foster the student’s sense of the greatness of his sin and the readiness of God’s mercy to forgive. We see here the great importance of a faithful Confessor in the education of the child. A holy Confessor, by helping the child to see the greatness of his sin and the great mercy of God, can thereby inspire in the child a great love for God. As St. John teaches us, “We love Him because He first loved us.”

Students are encouraged to pray the Act of Love as part of their daily prayers:

O my God! I love Thee above all things, with my whole heart and soul because Thou art all good and worthy of all my love. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of Thee. I forgive all who have injured me, and ask pardon of all whom I have injured. Amen.

WE MUST HOPE IN GOD

Hope is the confidence that happiness is close at hand. As we have learned, our happiness is not to be found in this life, but the hope that we have of entering into that happiness is a source of great joy and comfort in this life. When temptations come upon us, when tribulations come, we must hope in the everlasting beatitude that God has promised to those who know, love and serve Him. We must encourage ourselves and our students with the comfort that St. Paul offered the Christians in his care:

“The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come.” (Romans 8:18)
Students are encouraged to pray the Act of Hope as part of their daily prayers:

O my God! Relying on thy almighty power and infinite goodness and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of all my sins, the help of Thy grace, and the life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

**SUMMARY**

Having studied the history of the Classical Liberal Arts Academy, we have in this lesson delved into the goal of all education: Happiness. We looked at the three major definitions of happiness before Christ taught us the truth. Happiness is the eternal enjoyment of God in the kingdom of Heaven. It is accessible to all men, but must be sought with the whole heart, soul, mind and strength.
CHAPTER 16. THE MEANS TO TRUE HAPPINESS

In our last lesson, we discussed the true goal of education. We said that it is happiness— but not “happiness” poorly defined, or “happiness” according to the lying imaginations of fallen men. The goal of education is true happiness; the happiness for which man was created by God; the happiness which alone answers to the eternal nature of the human soul and the reality of the misery of a fallen race. The goal of education is not college admission or employment as though education were a ladder to temporal health and wealth. Happiness is far more mysterious than this for many healthy men are miserable and many suffering men are full of joy. Many wealthy men are contemplating suicide and many poor men are singing and dancing. Education, then, cannot be aimed at the acquisition of things which are not essential to happiness.

We learned that this true happiness is available to all human beings, but is available in heaven, not necessarily on earth. On earth, we have four objectives to focus on that will enable us to enjoy God forever in heaven:

- we must know God
- we must love God
- we must serve God
- we must hope in God

These four objectives are inseparable because we cannot love or serve a God we do not know. There is no use knowing a God we do not love and there is no motivation to serve a God we do not love. We must know and love and serve God that we may earn the happiness He has prepared for us in heaven and promises to bless our good intentions. This is our life’s work as individual Christians, as spouses and as parents. Education is nothing more than bringing our children along with us in fulfilling these objectives that we all may attain to the goal: eternal happiness in the presence of God. In fact, the word pedagogy, literally means “child leading”.

The question that faces us now is how we can turn these objectives into annual, monthly, weekly, daily and hourly tasks. After all, we must get these objectives down on the ground where we can work on them! In understanding this, you will understand what the CLAA is seeking to achieve in its educational program. It is not a college preparatory program. It is not a means of preparing students to participate competitively in constantly changing global economy. It is a means of leading children to know, love and serve God at the most practical level.
MEANS OF KNOWING GOD

As soon as we begin to consider how we are to come to know God, we find ourselves immersed in a mystery. How can a creature know its creator? Can a house “know” the man who designed and built it? Can a computer “know” the programmer who creates and controls it? A created thing, by its very nature as a creature, is inferior to its creator and can know only what its nature allows it to. God tells us plainly that we cannot know him in any comprehensive way as we know a plant or an animal. To the arrogance of men who presume to know Him he asks:

“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Didst thou since thy birth command the morning, and shew the dawning of the day its place? Hast thou entered into the depths of the sea, and walked in the lowest parts of the deep? Have the gates of death been opened to thee, and hast thou seen the darksome doors? Hast thou considered the breadth of the earth? Tell me, if thou knowest all things? Didst thou know then that thou shouldst be born? and didst thou know the number of thy days? Dost thou know the order of heaven, and canst thou set down the reason thereof on the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that an abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, and will they go, and will they return and say to thee: Here we are? Who hath put wisdom in the heart of man? Who can declare the order of the heavens, or who can make the harmony of heaven to sleep?” (Job 39-40)

It is clear that we can know of God only what He reveals to us. The question, then, is this: What has God made knowable to man of Himself?

THE FACULTY OF REASON

First, God generously gave to man the faculty of Reason. Reason naturally combines information received through the mind and senses to form judgments that then are combined with other judgments to form syllogisms (arguments). Syllogisms then are combined with syllogisms to form whole systems of knowledge. This faculty was freely given to men by God and therefore man does this as naturally as a baby nurses after birth. Man learns by the action of reason working on information perceived through the senses.

Included within the faculty is the conscience. The Church describes conscience for us as follows:
“Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed...It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law.” (CCC, 1778)

This gift of Reason then is a compass which God has given to man to direct him not only to truth but also to moral goodness. Inasmuch as truth and moral goodness cannot be separated from God, Reason is a gift that leads men to know God.

THE MESSAGE OF CREATION

Second, in creating the world, God designed the world in such a way that reasoning man (homo sapiens) couldn’t look at the created world for any amount of time with having his thoughts quickly run towards the knowledge of its Creator. Psalm 18 explains this beautifully:

“The heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night sheweth knowledge. There are no speeches nor languages, where their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth: and their words unto the ends of the world.”

St. Paul likewise explains:

“That which is known of God is manifest in [men]. For God hath manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. His eternal power also and divinity: so that they are inexcusable.” (Romans 1)

Thus, the physical world around us--the earth, heavens, plants, animals and other human beings--has a message for us and that message can lead us reasoning creatures to the knowledge of God.

HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Third, God has given to man the opportunity to learn about the world and its creator by experience. God has allotted to men 70 or so years to live and learn by experience. For this reason, old men in the ancient world were generally said to be wise. The book of Sirach provides us with the balance needed to rightly appreciate the value of experience:
“O how comely is judgment for a grey head, and for ancients to know counsel! O how comely is wisdom for the aged, and understanding and counsel to men of honour! Much experience is the crown of old men, and the fear of God is their glory.”

Unfortunately, before this passage, Sirach warned:

“The things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shalt thou find them in thy old age?”

Therefore old age alone is no proof of understanding. The true benefits of experience are gained through man’s ability to remember and record his experiences for future generations to benefit from. Thus, an old man can journal his experience of many years for his great-grandchildren to learn from in a few hours. Reason assists in allowing men to summarize and teach the achievements of the past in a systematic way to allow the young to learn from the old very efficiently.

The message of human experience teaches very clearly that God is alive and active in the world, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Heb. 11:6).

DIVINE REVELATION

If man were left to these three sources of knowledge: Reason, Creation and Experience, he could learn a great deal about the true God--and God intended it to be so. As St. Paul said, even without any divine revelation there would be no excuse for man’s ignorance of God’s power and presence in the affairs of men.

However, man is not alone with Reason, Creation and experience to seek the knowledge of God. There are evil influences in the world, beginning with the devil and going on to include evil spirits, evil people and false appearances. Moreover, man is plagued by concupiscence and must overcome it if he will make good use of the faculties and sources of truth that God has made available to him. Many do not resist the temptations that surround them and thus fall into great confusion and error. In the worst cases, men go as far as to call “good” what is evil, and “evil” what is good. Such a condition results when men are under such control of their desires and emotions that they will abandon reason and even experience to judge and act in contradiction to the truth.

Aware of the malice and shrewdness of the devil, the difficulty of “hearing” the message of the heavens and the brevity of human life, God was moved by His great mercy to give man assistance in learning the truth about himself, about God and about the world. God has done this and continues to do this through divine revelation. The Church teaches us:
“It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom, to reveal Himself and to make known the mystery of His will...that men should have access to the Father, through Christ...in the Holy Spirit and thus become sharers in the divine nature.” (CCC 51)

EDUCATION FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

As we reasoned above, inasmuch as happiness--our own and that of all men--consists in enjoying eternal life in the presence of God, we must fulfill the four objectives by which that happiness can be attained. We must know, love and serve God. Let us concentrate on the first objective: knowing God.

We learned above that there are four means by which man is able to acquire knowledge of God:

1. Reason
2. Creation
3. Experience
4. Revelation

As far as our concern in this course focuses on education, we are forced to answer the question: How is education arranged to meet this objective through these four means?

Obviously, Christian history suggests to us that the classical liberal arts curriculum is the form of education best suited to meet our objective using these means...but how so? That is the question we must answer if we would understand the classical liberal arts rightly and appreciate them as they deserve.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF REASON

First, though man is endowed with the faculty of reason, it is like a muscle in that it must be developed and strengthened to do all that it was designed to do. Human beings are said to arrive at the age of reasoning at around 7 years of age, which is when formal education generally begins. The education of a human must, first of all, develop and strengthen the faculty of reason in the child as it the primary instrument by which God intended that child to seek truth and goodness. Now, looking back over the history of the development of the classical liberal arts, we can see how the arts developed and how they related to Reason, Creation, Experience and Revelation.

It would seem that as Reason is native to man, that education would begin with the study of reason. However, as men sought to study reason over time, it became clear
that the biggest obstacle to sound reasoning was the accurate use of language. Therefore, Grammar developed as the first of arts to be mastered. Once students were able to articulate complex ideas in all their shades and distinctions, they were ready to enter into the study of Reasoning. This study began with dialectical reasoning, which dealt with matters that were normally debated by men and about which all men have opinions. This was developed in the main by Socrates in Greece in the 4th century BC as he—at the cost of his own life—sought truth. He found that in most cases, men’s disagreements were caused by sloppy language and careless articulation of their ideas. Men often contradicted themselves and were easily confused by men who were cunning with words. Socrates brought attention to the importance of the study of Dialectic and over time, the use of man’s reason was able, in a short amount of time, to grow much stronger than it had been in times past.

The problem was soon realized that while Dialectic allowed men to reason out many complex truths, persuading other men of their truth was far more complicated. The judgment and actions of men are not influenced by reason (logos) alone but also by emotion (pathos) and respect of persons (ethos). Thus, a false idea taught by an impressive man often had more influence than truth itself. An emotional man would act contrary to reason under the influence of his feelings. Reason alone wasn’t enough to lead other men in well-doing. Therefore, the art of persuasion developed, called “Rhetoric”, after the Greek word for a speaker: rhetor. Wise men studied all of the factors that made some men more persuasive than others and eventually produced a system of principles and rules that would allow one to persuade by art even when nature didn’t help him.

These three arts—Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric—all pertain to the use of Reason in the pursuit of truth and happiness.

**The Study of Creation**

Since the beginning of the world, reason and experience allowed men to discern the order and purpose present in creation. The sun did not rise and set at random. The weather did not change in an unpredictable way. Men naturally sought to discover that order so that he might live in harmony with the “music of the spheres”. The ancients knew that the fundamental concept that ordered the world was number. Therefore, the study of the art of numbers, was pursued since the beginning of time.

Arithmetic was the first study, as men sought to measure quantities by which they could then measure the times and distances needed to understand the order present in creation. As numbers and unites were established, the next study was of Geometry, the “measurement of the earth”. As the art of measuring with lines, angles and figures was mastered, it was applied to the heavens for a yet more complex study of creation. Since the heavens were in motion, a new Geometry was...
needed that applied to the stars, which was called Astronomy--the rules of the heavens.

Numbers were applied to an even more mysterious study than the earth and stars. Since the earliest days of human life, men were musical creatures and experienced the effect of music on their minds and souls. Over time, however, reason allowed men to discover the rules of the art of Music and bring it under their control. As Astronomy is the application of Geometry to more complex objects, so is Music to Arithmetic. Music is the art of relative quantities, for we measure the relationships between the lengths of the strings of a harp and the harmony of their sounds. We measure the relative quantities of different tones and their relationship to pleasant melodies.

Through these four mathematical arts, man studied to discover the design present in creation, to make use of it for man’s happiness and to teach it to rising generations. Through these mathematical arts the wisdom of God embedded in His creation was slowly unveiled and men of all nations acknowledged what King David had when sang:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: O Lord my God, thou art exceedingly great. Thou hast put on praise and beauty: And art clothed with light as with a garment. Who stretchest out the heaven like a pavilion...Who hast founded the earth upon its own bases: it shall not be moved for ever and ever. The deep like a garment is its clothing: above the mountains shall the waters stand. At thy rebuke they shall flee: at the voice of thy thunder they shall fear. The mountains ascend, and the plains descend into the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound which they shall not pass over; neither shall they return to cover the earth. Thou sendest forth springs in the vales: between the midst of the hills the waters shall pass. All the beasts of the field shall drink: the wild asses shall expect in their thirst. Over them the birds of the air shall dwell: from the midst of the rocks they shall give forth their voices. Thou waterest the hills from thy upper rooms: the earth shall be filled with the fruit of thy works: Bringing forth grass for cattle, and herb for the service of men. That thou mayst bring bread out of the earth: And that wine may cheer the heart of man. That he may make the face cheerful with oil: and that bread may strengthen man’s heart...He hath made the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou hast appointed darkness, and it is night: in it shall all the beasts of the woods go about: The sun ariseth, and they are gathered together: and they shall lie down in their dens. Man shall go forth to his work, and to his labour until the evening. How great are thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom.”
HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Human experience, if limited to our own personal experience would be quite useless. As we move through life we hardly remain in the same state, with the same people and in the same environment. We begin as babies, grow into toddlers, then children, then continue to develop into young adults, peak in adulthood, then wither away on our way back to “our mother’s womb” (Job 1:21). Just as we begin to gain experience in one state of life, we move on to another with completely different needs. In fact, we are hardly the same person as we move from one stage to another. If by human experience, all we had was our own, it would be of no use to us at all.

The benefits of human experience come to us through the study of human history. However, as we study human history we must remember that it is not the story of how things should be, but of how things were. Therefore, history can never provide us with a rule for life. The warning that “history repeats itself” is to be ignored because the same conditions are hardly ever repeated in history and fearing that what happened to someone else is bound to happen to oneself could do as much harm as good.

What the student of history ideally studies is what was discovered by wise men before we were born. We’re not searching for historical trivia or for deeds and institutions that we can brainlessly copy today. We’re not reading literature to familiarize ourselves with every story every written—or even the better ones. Solomon explains to us the goal of our studies in the book of Ecclesiastes:

“The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails deeply fastened in, which by the counsel of masters are given from one shepherd. More than these, my son, require not. Of making many books there is no end: and much study is an affliction of the flesh.”

Thus, in the CLAA you will not find lists and lists of books to be read or history textbooks flooding students with trivia. First, in World Chronology, we will seek to provide an efficient timeline of the most influential events in human history, with salvation history as the focus. We also seek to study causes and effects carefully so that we can discern what historical events may be sought out for examples to imitate and which ones are unlike our conditions. In World Geography, we seek to understand the effect of Geography on the events in history, again, that we may discern whether or not events were analogous to our own actions or not.

However, the entire CLAA curriculum is a study of human experience. We study a systematic Grammar that is the result of centuries of grammatical studies by wise men who share our worldview. Dialectic is a study of the historical discoveries of the Greeks in the art of Dialectic. Rhetoric is a systematical study of the historical
development of the art of Rhetoric, which reached its perfection in the works of Homer (poetry), Caesar (prose) and Cicero (oratory). In Arithmetic, we study the history of principles and rules discovered by wise men in the art of numbers. In Geometry, we study the history of the art, summarized most famously by Euclid. In Astronomy, we enjoy the benefit of studying the experience of wise men such as Ptolemy, Copernicus and Kepler. In Music, we save ourselves the burden of re-discovering the rules of music by studying them in Boethius and Church writings on music theory.

In Philosophy, we enjoy the advantage reading the summaries of the discussions and meditations of history’s wisest men--after their decades of debates, meditations and readings. Not only can we read the conclusions of the great teachers of each different school of philosophy--Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius the Epicurean; Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca the Stoics, and so on, but we can also study the criticisms that disproved each of them in history. We can read the Church fathers, who attacked and dismantled the pagan philosophies--even though the pagans’ efforts were praiseworthy. We don’t have to enter into the world of ideas as ignorant children, hearing everything for the first time and unable to identify the sources of different ideas and practices. We can study history.

Lastly, in Theology we have the greatest advantage of all, which we will consider in the next section.

DIVINE REVELATION

When most people think about divine revelation, they think about the Bible. However, divine revelation is not limited to the pages of Scripture. God has revealed Himself to man in two ways, just as any father makes his ways known to his sons: by his words and by his ways. We call these two forms of divine revelation “Sacred Scripture” and “Sacred Tradition”.

When it comes to the education of children in the CLAA, we must see that--above all other studies--they are most diligently trained in these two subjects. There will be saints in heaven enjoying perfect happiness who have never studied Grammar or Rhetoric. However, there will be no saints in heaven who were ignorant of divine revelation. Most schools and study programs resemble Martha in Luke 10—“careful and troubled about many things”. The CLAA prefers to resemble Mary, who had “chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her”. What was Mary doing? Sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His words.

Now, some people get upset because the CLAA states that a truly classical education is available only to Catholic students, but this is the plain and simple truth. The Catholic Church alone has been entrusted with both Sacred Tradition and thereby the authoritative interpretation of Sacred Scripture. What this means is that
outside of the Catholic Church’s explanation of the meaning and right application of Scripture, one may indeed have and read the Bible, but their understanding of its meaning may be false. God never intended to throw a book down to the earth for men to study. He revealed Himself to men over thousands of years, always revealing Himself within an existing community that He established and preserved for the safe-keeping of His self-revelation. Jesus advised his followers not to “cast your pearls before swine” and God likewise did not send His word to the pagan booksellers to sell alongside their nonsense, but gave it direct to and through the nation and priesthood He himself had established.

Therefore, we present divine revelation to our students in a way that is consistent with the nature of divine revelation—through the Catholic faith. We begin with Classic Catechism, which provides each student with a systematic overview of the Catholic faith. Students then enter into our Biblical Studies program, which is taught from within a Catholic system of faith and practice, following the rules of biblical interpretation published by St. Augustine in his classic work, On Christian Doctrine.

As students progress through the classical liberal arts and philosophy, they enter into the study of Moral Theology and Scholastic Theology. While moral philosophy (ethics) considers morality from the perspective of human reason, moral theology considers morality in light of what God has commanded and modeled for us in the history of revelation. There are many matters where the hardness of man’s heart has required that God make His will explicit so as to leave men without excuse. Ultimately, the final word on morals rests with Christ, who will judge the world.

Scholastic Theology consists of the union of reason and divine revelation. While metaphysics is a branch of philosophy through which we study the natural world through the faculty of reason, Scholastic Theology is the systematic study and explanation of the true faith (i.e., Catholicism) that proves it to be in every way consistent with reason. This study is the study of all studies and the end of the classical curriculum and all of the liberal arts, along with humanities studies and philosophy. Here man draws most intimately into the knowledge of God through the full exercise of all of his faculties.

EDUCATION FOR THE LOVE OF GOD

It is probably obvious how we might communicate the knowledge of God in education to our children/students. However, as we turn now to raising children who LOVE God, things get more difficult. Can we teach love?

Yes, we can teach the love of God, so long as we understand it rightly. It is far more difficult to teach a man to love his wife or to love his children than it is to
teach him to love God. The love a man has for his wife and children is different than the love a man has for God. A man is to love his wife as her husband--her provider and superior. A man is to love his children as their father--their provider and superior. A man is to love God as His spouse and child, with a love of gratitude. “We love God because He first loved us.”

Thus, the knowledge of God and the history of salvation is the prerequisite for our love of God. As we come to know God and learn of His goodness, we grow in love for Him. As we grow in love for God, we become more capable of knowing Him. As we grow to know Him more, we will be led to love Him more. Knowledge of love of God grow together.

For example, consider the effect of the account of the Garden of Eden. Imagine the Lord creating the world to be inhabited by man and providing everything he could ever need--freely and generously of His own bounty. Imagine the beautiful richness of the garden, lush and full of healthful food for man. Then, read as the serpent enters and deceives the woman, who in turn tempts the man and continue to read of God’s need to banish the creature He made in His own image, like a loving father sending away His own son. It is a terribly sad story when read carefully and it stirs in us a love for God and a hatred for evil. The same effect is experienced throughout all of sacred Scripture and in all of the sources by which we come to know God.

EDUCATION FOR THE SERVICE OF GOD

You’ve been around the CLAA long enough to know that our work in academics is the tip of the iceberg as far as Christian work is concerned. The service of God is inseparable from the process by which we come to know and love God. As we come to know God, we will simultaneously come to know His will--what things are close to His heart and what things He commands us to be doing without time, talent and treasure. As we come to love God, we will want to see Him honored and pleased. We will want to serve Him and do His will. As we serve Him, we will come to know Him more intimately and share His heart and thoughts. As we come to know Him more intimately, we will love Him more intimately and be yet more zealous to serve Him more diligently.

When we look at the Great Commission, we find that Christian discipleship (i.e., education) is not an academic exercise. Before ascending into heaven, Our Lord said to the Church:

“Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”
Christian education, therefore, is partly academic, but primarily active. It is a training in observance of the commands of Jesus Christ. Therefore, inasmuch as Our Lord intended for His disciples (students) to be taught to observe His commands, we can certainly expect that service to God can be taught. Otherwise, the Great Commission would make no sense.

It is important to note that serving God has its own curriculum. The service of God consists of the doing of those things which Christ has commanded. Thus, the study and practice of the Gospels is central to Christian education. There, along with the rest of sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition, we learn what it means to serve God.

EDUCATION FOR HOPE IN GOD

As you have seen, education that leads us to happiness centers in God and the different elements of that education are inseparable. As we consider how a true Christian education leads children to hope in God, we must remember that we are assuming these children are learning to know, love and serve God. Children so raised will have countless opportunities to read of and experience God’s faithfulness in keeping His promises to us. Children who pray experience the excitement of seeing prayers answered. Children who work for good experience the satisfaction of seeing God grant success to their work. Children who are successful in little things begin to gain confidence that they can also succeed in great things. We see this in the famous story of David and Goliath. Whence comes David’s confidence to take on Goliath? Read 1 Kings:

“Let not any man’s heart be dismayed in him: I thy servant will go, and will fight against the Philistine. And Saul said to David: Thou art not able to withstand this Philistine, nor to fight against him: for thou art but a boy, but he is a warrior from his youth. And David said to Saul: Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, or a bear, and took a ram out of the midst of the flock: And I pursued after them, and struck them, and delivered it out of their mouth: and they rose up against me, and I caught them by the throat, and I strangled and killed them.

For I thy servant have killed both a lion and a bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be also as one of them. I will go now, and take away the reproach of the people: for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, who hath dared to curse the army of the living God? And David said: The Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.”

Thus, we can see that it is from the lesser successes that children experience that their confidence in God before greater challenges develops. There is no way for children to develop the hope that was in David without being faithful in little things
as they grow up. This hope in God can certainly be taught, but only where the knowledge, love and service of God are already being taught. All four of these elements of Christian education must be present in the life of a child and this is what we seek to provide for families in the CLAA.

SUMMARY

Since the beginning of human history Christianity has revealed to men the source of true happiness. The means by which we and our children may attain this happiness are by knowing, loving, serving and hoping in God. While these duties are indivisible in reality, we can look at them one-by-one for the sake of understanding the objectives of education. We studied the four ways by which men obtain the knowledge of God: the use of Reason, the study of Creation, the reflection on human experience and the study of divine revelation. We also studied the means by which mean learn to love, serve and hope in God. The CLAA addresses each of these ways directly through its courses but also through the life and service opportunities it makes available to students. By understanding these objectives and committing ourselves to focus our attention and energy on them, we can both understand the reasoning behind the content and programs of the Classical Liberal Arts Academy and we can avoid adding things that ultimately prevent our children from growing in true wisdom and happiness.

THE END