

THE CLASSICAL

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 2 | SPECIAL ISSUE

BRINGING LIFE TO THE CLASSROOM

DifferenceTM

**EIGHT
IDEAS
YOU CAN'T
LIVE WITHOUT**

SPECIAL ISSUE:

Explore the
TRANSCENDENCE
and **ENDURANCE**
of the Western Tradition

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Classical Christian Era

We hear about the trivium, the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty, virtue and the quadrivium. Where did they come from, and why focus on them today? At the time of America’s founding, classical Christian education was the only form of education practiced in the West. Because of this, nearly all of the founding fathers of this country were classically educated. The quality of leaders this system of education has produced throughout history is nothing short of stunning.

“At the time this nation was formed, our population stood at around 3 million. And we produced out of that 3 million people perhaps six leaders of world class—Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, and Hamilton. Today, our population stands at 245 million, so we might expect at least 80 times as many world-class leaders—480 Jeffersons, Madisons, Adams, Washingtons, Hamiltons, and Franklins. Where are they?”

—JOHN GARDNER, American author and Medieval historian, *On Leadership*



When did it start? Why did it create America’s great leaders? What happened? For a brief history of classical Christian education, visit: ClassicalChristian.org/history

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8 GREAT IDEAS

of the WEST

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Our idea about God seems so natural to us today that we take it for granted.

2 — Logos p. 8

The Greek “Logos” let us imagine the transcendent, but we could never get there ...

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The Hebrew idea of God and the Greek idea of the Logos were merged into the greatest idea in any culture, anywhere.

4 — Kingdoms p. 12

The West reworks the idea of a king as a subject to Christ. The world will never be the same—unless we forget.

5 — The University p. 14

Theology became the “Queen of the Sciences.” This brought unity to everything. Modern universities are returning to pre-Christian chaos.

6 — Priests p. 20

What if every child were theologically trained as a priest? Luther thought they should be. “School” was for everyone, not just the elite and the monks.

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Are you really thankful?



8 IDEAS

You Can't Live Without

An idea is like a virus. Resilient. Highly contagious. And even the smallest seed of an idea can grow. It can grow to define or destroy you.

—*Inception*, Christopher Nolan

Welcome to the first Special Issue of *The Classical Difference* (TCD). Some questions we hear at TCD defy a quick explanation, and this issue reflects one of those questions: “Why build an educational system with an emphasis on the ideas of the West?” Or sometimes: “Why do we spend so much time reading the thoughts of old, dead white guys?”

Imagine you’ve purchased a luxury cabin aboard a cruise liner headed to the Northwest Passage of Alaska. You’ve enjoyed a day of lounging by the pool, playing deck games, and attending a musical performance on board before you have dinner in one of five ship restaurants. After a few too many drinks at dinner, you go to the stern of the boat at midnight and you notice the cool summer breeze and moon reflecting across the water from the horizon. More than slightly impaired, you jump overboard to enjoy the beautiful water. After the shock of falling 150 feet and resurfacing in an icy cold sea, you come to your senses as you watch the ship disappear in the distance. Your newfound sobriety suddenly reveals that you took a few too many things for granted about that ship.

Westerners have done this with the West. (See definition on page 5.) We’re jumping off the Western boat because of its evils, or because the progressives tell us there’s something better out there. The promised moon looks close enough to touch. The progressive water looks beautiful and inviting. But our real problem is that we’ve taken the West too much for granted. In fact, we’re taught to loathe the very idea of Western classical history these days.

Nothing seems so easy to take for granted as an idea. In the 2010 thriller *Inception*, a team of technological mind-readers makes a good living stealing ideas from the minds of executives. Then, they are given an even more powerful challenge. Instead of stealing ideas, they are asked to plant an idea into the mind. This turns out to be far more powerful. Think about how many times you’ve encountered this effect in groups. The family is gathered around to choose a vacation for the coming summer. No one is excited until mom remembers that ad for a national park or some such thing. Immediately, everyone latches on and the excitement begins. After a great vacation, someone says,

“Whose idea was that?” Often, debate breaks out because no one can remember.

When students grapple with Western ideas, they develop an understanding of them. This understanding helps perpetuate the good life as we have known it in the West for over a millennium. It’s a gift your kids will thank you for long after they’re out on their own. If we think we can adapt Christianity without them, we are in peril. The Kingdom of Christ is animated by its ideas.

Ancient Greece is rightfully considered the cradle of Western civilization. To the ancient Greeks we trace the origins of Western philosophy, literature, and public institutions—and, of course, democracy.

—Biblical Archaeology Society

The stakes are high with Western ideas. For example, divine “justice” is an idea deeply set across Western history, with roots in the earliest verses of Genesis. Today, the idea of “justice” is recast based on Marxist ideas, called “social justice.” Without a solid basis of understanding, our children will not be able to discern between the two.

Dystopian stories abound today. For some, like *The Hunger Games*, a tyrant regime is the cause of decline. For others, like *Mad Max*, nuclear war is the cause. As our culture declines, we might miss the most likely dystopian cause of all—forgetting. A failure to remember the ideas that civilize us has taken us to dark places before. And, it will again. Perhaps this is why Christian people have always valued “remembering.”

We commissioned this special issue to look at just eight ideas, without which we cannot sustain our civilization. Mortimer Adler, in his Great Books of the Western World, identified 103 ideas that make up the West. But, he had to distill those down from over 1000 originally proposed. When I was the head of a classical school, we distilled these ideas down to about 55. In this issue, we’ll explore just eight, very briefly. You’ll see a hint of what we take for granted.

At the end of each of the eight ideas, you’ll see how this impacts your way of thinking today. If you find this intriguing, I suggest you follow the web links for a more full explanation. If your children are at a classical high school, they might even want to discuss these ideas! ■■

DAVID GOODWIN is the president of the Association of Classical Christian Schools.

TWO WAYS TO LEARN MORE about the ideas that shape us: First, read the introduction essays of volumes III and IV of the Great Books of the Western World (titled *The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon I and II*, respectively). Second, Jaques Barzun’s epic *From Dawn to Decadence* explains how ideas shape our current landscape.



The Geneva School of
Manhattan, New York, NY

Not an occidental accident

THE TERM “THE WEST” CAN BE A BIT UNCLEAR. Do we mean the western U.S.? Western Europe? Everything west of China? White Europeans? Herein, when we refer to the West, or the Occident, we mean historic Christendom and its seminal cultures—several of which are not white or European. In fact, this includes parts of the Near and Middle East, and parts of northern and eastern Africa. It’s not about race, nor is it about any one culture. The West, as we use it, means all of Christendom as it spread until the 18th or 19th century. Why stop there? In the future, China and the East will undoubtedly contribute. We recently watched as the African churches faithfully pulled European and American denominations toward orthodoxy. The story of Christendom is still being authored. And everyone can play a role. But, over 7000 years of Christian history is tied to what we call “the West,” or “the Occident.” So, let’s get started.

THE NOT SO OBVIOUS
IDEA ABOUT GOD

Transcendent

BY DOUGLAS WILSON



If you are willing to indulge me for a moment, picture two different whales. One of the whales inhabits an ocean that we might call “reality,” or “all that exists.” He is the biggest and strongest resident of that ocean, but he is nevertheless contained by that ocean. If you like, you may call that whale Zeus.

Now picture another whale—and let us call him Moby Dick—as a creature invented by an author named Herman Melville, inhabiting an ocean in which he is pursued by a fictional man named Ahab. With the first whale, everything that exists does so on the same plane—in the same ocean. Differences between things have to do with location and size, but the differences are merely quantitative. But with the second whale, the author and the whale do not inhabit the same

reality—there is a fundamental and qualitative difference between them. The second whale, Moby Dick, interacts with an author outside of his reality—outside of his ocean. And, he does so on Melville’s terms. These terms matter very much to Moby Dick because Melville has a plan.

The former assumption is the natural default assumption of the pagan mind. The latter is a concept that we

of a completely different tradition, a completely alien way of thinking. And they actually bore testimony to this in the first words of their sacred Torah.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

Or put another way, in the beginning God spoke and out of nothing He created that which is not God. So from the very start, we had two

Continues on page 19 ...

Many do not understand how precarious Western civilization is and what a joy it is. From it, we get real democracy. From it, we get the sort of intellectual tolerance that allows me to propound something that may be completely alien to you.

—John Rhys-Davies

owe entirely to the ancient Hebrews, and which has been kept alive down to the present day by the Christians. Christians call this the Creator/creature divide, and it is of profound importance. It is the basis for any possible understanding of transcendence.

In the ancient pagan mindset, ultimate reality just “was.” It was just assumed. As a general rule, they had no proper idea or doctrine of creation. Following the ancient poet Ovid, in the beginning there was chaos, and one day chaos gave birth to the gods. Or maybe not. Maybe it happened some other way. But in any case, there was no sense of an ultimate transcendence at all. And this is why evolution, or this thing morphing into that one, is so natural to the unbelieving mind. Matter is just there, and stuff naturally rearranges over time.

So one of the easier assumptions to make about the world—from our earthly vantage point, at any rate—is that it is one. In this ancient pagan world, the Hebrews were the bearers

Looking Up



WITHOUT THIS IDEA, we would still worship gods who are invisible, or with magical powers, but not a single, infinite God who is “other.” Some believe we are headed back. In the name of “science,” we once again refuse to believe anything exists that transcends our universe. We wonder at the “magical” power of evolution, or particle physics, or technology to transform our lives. Paganism has risen again—along with its characteristic barbarity and unrest. This sort of belief has always been humanity’s default.



ROSS DOUTHAT DESCRIBES THIS in his *New York Times* article “The Return of Paganism.”

“... The term ‘paganism’ might be reasonably revived to describe the new American religion, currently struggling to be born. ... What is that conception? Simply this: that divinity is fundamentally inside the world rather than outside it ... and that meaning and morality and metaphysical experience are to be sought in a fuller communion with the immanent world rather than a leap toward the transcendent ... it is skeptical of the idea that there exists some ascetic, world-denying moral standard to which we should aspire.”



WHILE PUBLIC EDUCATION is a strong proponent of this “new American religion,” classical Christian schools teach transcendence—that we are loved more than we know, that our five senses are not the measure of all that exists, and that our value will continue long after the sunlight that allows us to explore the earth is gone.

In the Beginning Was the **WORD**

A REVOLUTIONARY IDEA, LOST

BY LOUIS MARKOS

“Behold,” wrote the ancient Greek philosopher Plato some 2400 years ago, “we are deceived about the very nature of the world in which we live. We are like men who have been imprisoned since birth in the deep belly of a cave. All our lives, we have been chained to chairs, forced to look ever ahead at the back of the cave wall.

“Behind us a raging fire gives off light and heat, while between us and the fire, puppeteers parade stick figures of all the real things that exist outside the cave: trees and rocks, stars and clouds, mammals and birds. The light from the fire casts the shadows of those puppets on the wall, and we, who have never known anything else, consider those shadows to be reality.

“And then, one fateful day, a prisoner breaks his chains and turns around in his chair. At first he is blinded by the fire, but, as his eyes adjust, he realizes that he has spent his life staring at shadows of things that are themselves shadows. If he has the courage and the faith, he will eventually struggle his way out of the cave and gaze upon the real trees and stars and animals that exist in the real world. Then, if he has even greater courage and faith, he will

make his way back into the cave and attempt to enlighten the other prisoners as to the true nature of the world—even if that attempt costs him his life!”

Thus does Plato illustrate, through a myth known as the Allegory of the Cave (Republic VII), his revolutionary theory of the Forms. In contrast to the secular academics of his day (the sophists) who claimed that our ideas of goodness, truth, and beauty are merely man-made notions that vary widely from culture to culture and city to city, Plato taught that behind these ideas lie absolute standards of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty that do not fade or change or decay.

As Plato explains it, our world is filled with a plethora of different trees and chairs and human beings, but we all recognize them as such, because behind them is the perfect, transcendent Idea of the Tree, the Chair, and the Person. All earthly trees and chairs and persons participate in those Ideas. And the same goes for such abstract nouns as justice, goodness, truth, beauty, love, courage, friendship, and so forth. We may encounter any number of relative, man-made, culturally-determined definitions of justice, but that does not take away from the reality of the Form (or Idea) of Justice that transcends our partial and limited understanding.



To hear more about how the Forms relate to classical education, listen to Davies Owens' talk from the 2018 Repairing the Ruins conference: ClassicalDifference.com/ancient-future

To most humans, curiosity about higher things comes naturally, it's indifference to them that must be learned.

— James K.A. Smith

and Euclid) did, that behind the rough, man-made triangles that we draw on paper or whiteboards or computer screens, lies the perfect, invisible Form or Idea of the Triangle that transcends our physical world and does not fade or change or decay. So-called abstract math has delivered some very concrete realities in our modern world! Unfortunately, transcendent forms have become increasingly lost to professors of ethics (the good), philosophy (the true), and the arts (the beautiful).

Despite what the moral, philosophical, and aesthetic relativists would have us believe, standards do exist and are binding on us—even if we refuse to acknowledge them. Absolute moral standards, like those recorded in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, are like the theorems and principles of geometry.

In math, those transcendent, unchanging truths are conveyed to us by numbers; in most other areas of life, however, they are conveyed by words. And that is vital, for the Bible teaches both that God created the universe by means of words (Genesis 1), and that Christ, through whom all things were made and who enlightens every man, was himself the Word of God (John 1). In the face of postmodernism and deconstruction, Christianity insists, together with Plato, that absolute Truth exists and that it can be known and communicated through words.

If that Truth does not exist, or if we are incapable of communicating it by means of human language, then we are left adrift in a world without boundaries or touchstones. The

sophists of today are hell-bent on dethroning and debunking all rules of moral behavior, fixed standards of beauty, and propositional truth claims. If they succeed, we will find ourselves stranded in an ugly world incapable of regulating desire or preserving the traditions that make human life and civilization possible.

Do we need Plato and his theory of Forms today? Yes, more than we ever have! ■■

Looking Up



WITHOUT THIS IDEA, we probably wouldn't have geometry, musical theater, or countless other inventions and organizations whose inception can be traced in whole or in part to the Greeks and Western tradition. Why? The Greeks taught us to look for a perfect divine "form" of everything—and they wanted to find it.

The idea itself creates a sense of wonder and acts like a magnet, pulling ideas and inventions toward it. Without it, we cannot transcend the narrow confines of self-expression or material gain. Or, when individuals believe they are the magnet, they repel all other ideas but their own.



This article is an excerpt.
To read the full article, visit
ClassicalDifference.com/west.

Plato fought hard to lead his fellow Athenians out of the Cave, and, in so doing, he prepared the ancient Greco-Roman world for the coming of Christ and the divinely revealed truths of the New Testament. That is why 800 years later, the great Christian philosopher Augustine, rather than throw out Plato's pre-Christian idea of the Forms, took those Forms and put them in the mind of God.

Why, the modern reader might ask, is all of this important to people living in the twenty-first century? It is vitally important, for we are living in an age when sophistry has returned with a vengeance, and our schools and colleges teach their students that all things are relative, that there are no absolute standards of goodness or truth or beauty.

It is true that most mathematicians still recognize, as Plato (and Pythagoras

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THE AXIS AROUND WHICH ALL OTHER IDEAS REVOLVE

The Crux

BY BRIAN A. WILLIAMS

Have you ever known you had a problem, but didn't know the solution? Maybe it was how to solve some algebraic equation, reconcile your bank account with your bills, or help your child choose a college.

“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ... For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

—1 Corinthians 1

“His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.”

—Ephesians 2

Or perhaps you've wrestled with knotty issues like restructuring the healthcare system or achieving peace in the Middle East. The problems are clear. The solutions are not. And sometimes, even when we arrive at an answer, we're pretty sure some part of it is still wrong.

Usually, it just takes one person, with one idea, to make everything come into focus. Both Jerusalem and Athens were in a similar situation before the coming of Christ.

Israel knew that the holy God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the Lord of the heavens and the earth. All other supposed deities like the sun, moon, and stars were merely his creations. The Hebrews also knew that he initiated a unique relationship with

them so that they would be his people through whom he would bless other nations. However, how that was going to happen wasn't entirely clear. Nor was it clear how God's promises would be fulfilled, nor how Torah should be followed, nor how they should worship after the temple was destroyed, nor how they should relate to the pagan nations—Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Macedonian Greeks, and Romans—that had conquered them. And though they knew God's character, they did not know that he was triune nor did they imagine that he could become human and die. That was yet to come.

The Greeks were in a worse plight. They were like people walking in the half-light of dusk. They saw some

Study conducted by Christian Smith with the National Study of Youth and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Synopsis by Albert Mohler.



See all citations and read the full article at:
ClassicalDifference.com/2019-summer



Other Greeks saw a little more clearly. They rightly recognized that the world had a physical, moral, and metaphysical order, or *logos*. Justice, truth, beauty, and goodness were real things that could, and should, be known in all of life—private, public, and political. According to St. Augustine, the Greek philosophers could point to the mountaintop, but couldn't tell anyone how to get there.

The light may have been brighter in Jerusalem than in Athens, but neither enjoyed the noonday sun. Then Christ came. The transcendent, eternal *Logos* half-known by the Greeks was revealed to be the Holy One of Israel long known by the Hebrews. And the Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Justice that Greek philosophers desired were found in the God who created the material world.

Even more surprising was that this transcendent *logos*, who was with God and was God, had become flesh and dwelt among them in order to reconcile them to God and to one another. To bring Jews and Greeks together, Christ performs three tasks: he reveals, reconciles, and rules.

First, he is the most complete revelation of both God and humanity. And he comes to draw us into relationship with him.

true things, but usually just the mere outlines and shadows of them. Some Greeks believed in divine beings, but they were capricious gods, lustful and violent. Plato had good reasons for banning stories of these gods from his ideal city. Humans want to live like gods, and these gods weren't holy.

Second, Christ not only reveals, but also reconciles the gap between fallen creation and the transcendent. He is the fully human person in whose image every other human was created. And by being fully human, he represents us before God the Father, bearing in his own person the alienation and punishment that no other human could fully bear. And when

Continues on page 19 ...

Looking Up

WITHOUT THIS IDEA, we would lose the mind-bending idea that earned early Christians the label “crazy.”



When the gospel started to spread in the first century, it carried with it an idea that was just plain nonsense—to almost everyone. Both Greeks and Hebrews rejected the very idea that God could be a man. Christ is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks (1 Corinthians 1:23). Even today, this idea is counterintuitive.



A recent study* identified the overwhelmingly “dominant religion of this American age,” especially among teenagers who identify as Christians, to be something new—Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. It is “exceedingly tolerant” and “radically undemanding,” and can be summed up in a single word: Whatever.



Based on the study's findings, Albert Mohler warns, “We face a succession of generations who have transformed Christianity into something that bears no resemblance to the faith revealed in the Bible. ... Our failure to teach this generation of teenagers the realities and convictions of biblical Christianity will mean that their children will know even less This study offers irrefutable evidence of the challenge we now face. As the motto reminds us, ‘Knowledge is power.’”*



*Citations: Visit ClassicalDifference.com/2019-summer

Historical amnesia is a declaration of unmitigated pride. ... If the church—by the neglect of history—doesn't understand itself, how can it be expected to provide a faithful and true representation of Jesus Christ to a world devoted to ‘exclusive humanism’? How can [it] expect to provide a compelling answer to the difficult questions of young Christian doubters who live in a world where believing doesn't come easy?

—Jason Cherry, Providence Classical School, Huntsville, AL

KINGS Who Are Subjects



AND SUBJECTS WHO ARE KINGS

BY DAVID GOODWIN

In the year 410 AD, a new “order” for governing nations emerged, not from a king, but from a theologian. His idea remained with us into the twentieth century. Its slow loss threatens our freedom in the twenty-first.

The sacking of Rome by Aleric the Visigoth inspired St. Augustine to write his grand thesis—*The City of God*. Romans blamed “Christianization” for their peril, but Augustine saw things another way.

Aleric, ironically, represented the old order of power that had dominated for thousands of years. He was a Gothic king, descended from a tribal chieftain. For millennia, this type of power structure dominated the world: a tribe rose in military might to form large armies that would grow

by conquest and eventually form kingdoms and empires. Emperors then claimed themselves deities to secure their power—think Ramses (Egypt), Xerxes (Persia), or Augustus (Rome). A variation of this story is alive today in underdeveloped parts of the world. We call them dictators.

Ambrose of Milan, Augustine’s mentor, first pioneered the new order that

Augustine would later express in *The City of God*. Ambrose, a lowly Christian bishop, brought Theodosius, the Emperor of Rome, literally to his knees in repentance for an unjust massacre in 390 AD. No previous Roman Caesar could have imagined this. It would have seemed, frankly, crazy. And dangerous.

In response, Augustine wrote of two cities, or two kingdoms. In “the city of man” earthly rulers are subject to a second, greater kingdom: “the city of God.” So, every Christian had dual citizenship. Every earthly king must serve the higher kingdom. And an earthly king’s subjects were also the royal family in this higher kingdom. In this view, Christians were not the cause of Rome’s problems, but rather its best hope.

We will again be governed by those who seek power to advance their earthly agenda.



Fortunately, this essentially Western idea of two kingdoms changed our world. America was founded under a derivative idea—we are a republic under God’s kingdom. Without a true understanding of Western ideas like this, we will return to the darkness of a pre-Augustinian world. We will again be governed by those who seek power only to advance their earthly agenda.

The only basis for genuine human rights and dignity is a fully biblical worldview. Because Christianity begins with a transcendent Creator, it does not idolize any part of creation. And therefore it does not deny or denigrate any other parts. As a result, it has the conceptual resources to provide a holistic, inclusive worldview that is humane and life affirming. This is good news indeed. It is the only approach capable of healing the split in the Western mind and restoring liberty in Western society.

—NANCY PEARCEY, *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, and Meaning* ■■

DAVID GOODWIN is president of the Association of Classical Christian Schools.

500 years after Augustine planted this idea, it tangibly changed the Western world. Two kings—Charles the Great in Europe and Alfred the Great of England—embraced the idea. They were regents in the service of a greater King, with responsibilities for their subjects. As Augustine’s idea aged, it grew in power as it became mythical.

“St. George and the Dragon” became a mythical representation of the idea in the Middle Ages across Europe and England. St. George, a great king, saves his people by sacrificially slaying a dragon, the symbol of Satan. The “Legend of King Arthur” further spread this idea. Nations and kingdoms had been reimagined. Without this reimagination, we would probably still be ruled by dictators and god-kings.



Gordon Griffiths, King's School Arch, CC BY-SA 2.0

Looking Up



WITHOUT THIS IDEA, we might not have the legacy of classical Christian education. And there is a distinct difference. Recent research on ACCS alumni shows that students of classical Christian schools are much more likely than other Christians to believe religion should inform our social and political life. And, ACCS alumni are much less likely to look to the government to solve all social problems.

We believe that ideas matter. Our students, we hope, will be less likely to embrace a modern “new world order.” And, they will be more likely to appreciate the supremacy of the true King.

THE CROSS OF ST. GEORGE still flies in Georgia and in England. It was emblazoned on the shields of the Knights Templar. And, most European flags bear imagery that symbolizes their earthly kingdom’s subjection to the Kingdom of Christ. The very dating system we use, “in the year of our Lord” (AD), originates from Augustine’s idea. This idea eventually gave rise to the Magna Carta and to the U.S. Declaration of Independence, both of which claimed that there were rights granted from God which no king or government could usurp.

BOTH KING ALFRED and Charles the Great started some of the first widely available classical Christian schools! At the time, they were called “cathedral schools.” Some are still in operation today. Alcuin, one of the early pioneers of classical Christian education under Alfred the Great, was headmaster at the school in York which still operates as St. Peter’s School today. Alcuin later was recruited by Charles the Great to start schools across northern Europe. These acts of kings to provide education to their subjects were unprecedented before Augustine’s idea of the regent-king became widely followed.

◀ The entrance to The King’s School. Founded as a cathedral school in 597 AD in Kent, England, it is widely held to be the oldest continuously operating school in the world.

MAKING IT ALL MAKE SENSE

The Formation of the First “University”

BY ANTHONY ESOLEN



The first time I visited the Sistine Chapel, I didn't know much about Christian painting. I let the crowds pass me by, and stayed a long time, looking everywhere. I knew that Christian painters and architects and sculptors took to heart this saying: God made the world “in measure, weight, and number.” And, as I encountered the chapel, it was clear that they had brought together into one coherent whole all of the features of human life and of the story of salvation.

God is not the author of confusion, says Paul. This meant more than that God was orderly. A pagan god could be orderly, sometimes. A pagan god could see stuff lying about, and mold

Christians need to say, again and again: all truth is one. But it's a lot easier to say it than to see it. That's where theology comes in.

it to shape a world. But God does not do that. God makes the world by a free act of love, out of nothing.

God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." In Hebrew, it's as if God said, "Light, be!" John, too, says that "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." God lends to his creation a share in his being. For the invisible God is known by the visible things he has made.

But Christians seem to have forgotten the unity. When you go to school, you learn about history over here, biology over there, some art on the side, maybe some literature (often not very good), and whatever else you please. Does that describe a university? In name only. There is no unity—no sense that all knowledge is one, and that it all points to Christ.

Christians used to build churches and write poems and engage in works of the mind that were like that Sistine Chapel. You enter them and you know that you are in the midst of a vast and complex unity. That's Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. It's Dante's *Divine Comedy*. It is Thomas Aquinas' two great works, the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.

To enter Thomas' works is like entering a temple or a cathedral where everything that has to do with creation, man, and God may be found. And not in shadows, but in the good bright light of reason and of God's revelation to man. For the whole universe

Looking Up



WITHOUT THIS IDEA, the university would never have existed. From its beginnings in Europe, the idea spread. All subjects were unified—grammar, rhetoric, logic, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy—to encapsulate human knowledge. The queen of the university—seeking the truth about God—would crown and guide it. To fully understand these subjects, the study of literature, languages, philosophy, the sciences, and history was included. The "Faculties" sat at the highest level: Medicine, Law, and Theology.



The first three major "universities" were the University of Bologna which coined the term in 1058, the University of Paris (1150, operating in conjunction with the Notre-Dame cathedral school), and Oxford University (1167). Without them, our world would be very different. How different? You wouldn't be reading an article like this. You probably wouldn't be reading anything. Nor is it likely you would have electric lights to read by. Consider this short list of graduates from these original colleges: John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Sir Walter Raleigh, Erasmus, John Locke, Adam Smith, William Penn, John Ruskin, Lewis Carroll, JRR Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers, C.S. Lewis, Aldus Huxley, Stephen Hawking, T.S. Eliot, St. Thomas Aquinas, Marie Curie, John Calvin, Victor Hugo, Elie Wiesel. Interestingly, Sir Isaac Newton attended the King's School (see pg. 13), and then Cambridge.



Most of the institutions that call themselves a "university" today are like a black and white photo copy of *Starry Night*—you might be able to identify it, but you will never move beyond that to wonder and truth. The ideas that created the university have been lost, and so will their benefits, except by those who choose to remember.

is a temple, and our bodies are to be temples of the Holy Spirit. It's hard to think of a question that Thomas does not address. Can we prove that God exists? Yes, says Thomas, by five ways. Is human law the same as the divine



The first university was not in Morocco. Learn more at: ClassicalDifference.com/first-university

It was when I was happiest that I longed most ... The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing ... to find the place where all the beauty came from.

—C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*

IN THE 13TH CENTURY, a crew of planners and artists in Laon, France, spent hundreds of hours building this stained glass window. The north tower window of Laon Cathedral became a testament to the trivium and quadrivium—the outside circle of images—and their queen, theology, in the center.* This 7 liberal arts theme is found throughout Europe’s medieval cathedrals because of their centrality to the faithful life.

Most people’s desire for greatness is for human, earthly gain. When we see the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages, we see an effort to reach beyond any one pocketbook or any one life. Each of us longs for higher, lasting things. The Western Christian tradition is like a searchlight helping us find our way because it shines beyond what our limited senses can perceive. As the writer of Ecclesiastes states, “God set eternity in our hearts.”



To learn more about this and other architectural and artistic representations of the trivium and quadrivium, visit ClassicalDifference.com/TriviumArt.

law? No, says Thomas, but we are supposed to craft our laws with the divine law in mind. Is there such a thing as the common good? Yes, says Thomas, because man by nature is a social

The word “science” meant “knowledge,” in the broadest sense. Why then the Queen? Because every other science is both partial and subordinate. If you’re studying fish, you’re

Where God is not acknowledged, the sciences fall into disunity and confusion, as we see in our schools today. It isn’t just that almost nobody will read Thomas. It’s that our ideas are in fragments. We cannot imagine putting them back together. Michelangelo could paint what he did, because Thomas and other Christians saw what they did. But comparatively our works today are meager, because our eyes are dim.

Someday, I hope, Christians will build the university all over again. Let it be soon. ☒

When we talk about the Creator, we are talking about the One who gave being to all things. There can be no higher study than that, and no more unifying study.

animal. Is it fitting that our souls should be reunited with our bodies? Yes, says Thomas, because that is what we are: body and soul together.

So Christians need to say, again and again: all truth is one. But it’s a lot easier to say it than to see it. That’s where theology comes in.

Theology used to be called the “Queen of the Sciences.” Think about that for a moment. I don’t mean that you thumbed through Proverbs to find out about iron in your blood.

not studying birds. If you’re studying birds, you’re not studying mankind. Nobody says, “I’m studying the art of Michelangelo to learn more about a just society.”

But when we talk about God, the Creator, we are talking about the One who gave being to all these things. There can be no higher study than that, and no more unifying study. Even philosophy, the pursuit of wisdom, cannot rise higher, though it can take us to the borderlands of theology.



This article is an excerpt.
To read the full article, visit ClassicalDifference.com/west.

ANTHONY M. ESOLEN is a writer, social commentator, translator of classical poetry, and professor of English Renaissance and classical literature at Thomas More College of Liberal Arts. He is the author of many books, including *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Western Civilization* and *Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child*.



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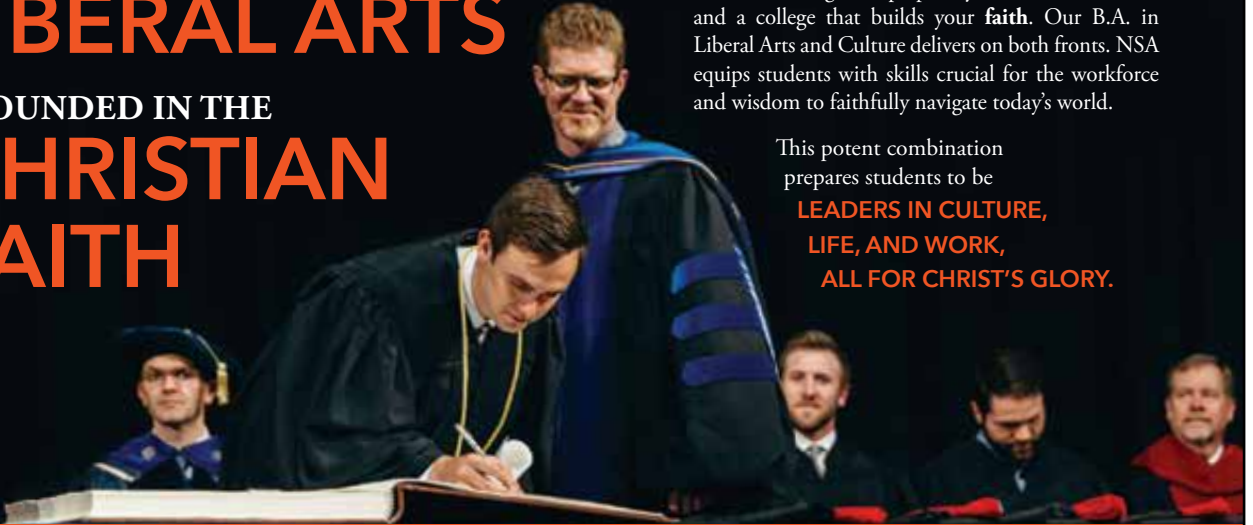


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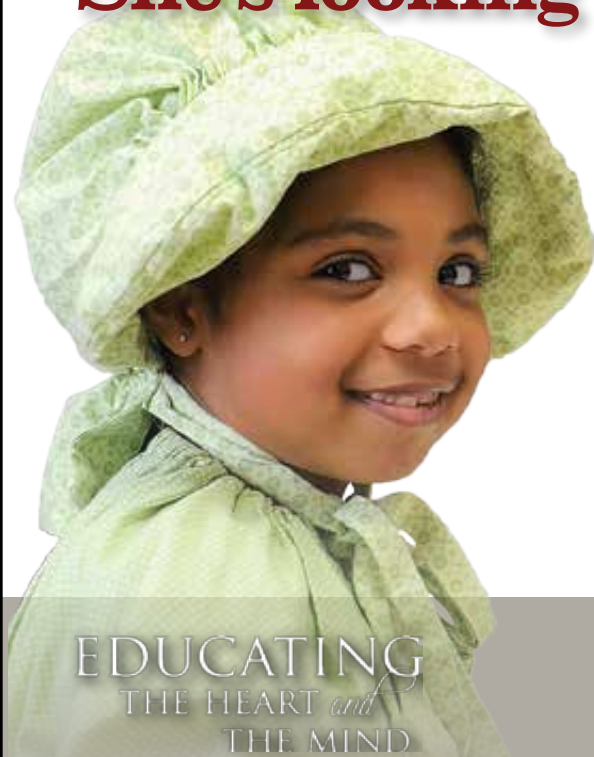
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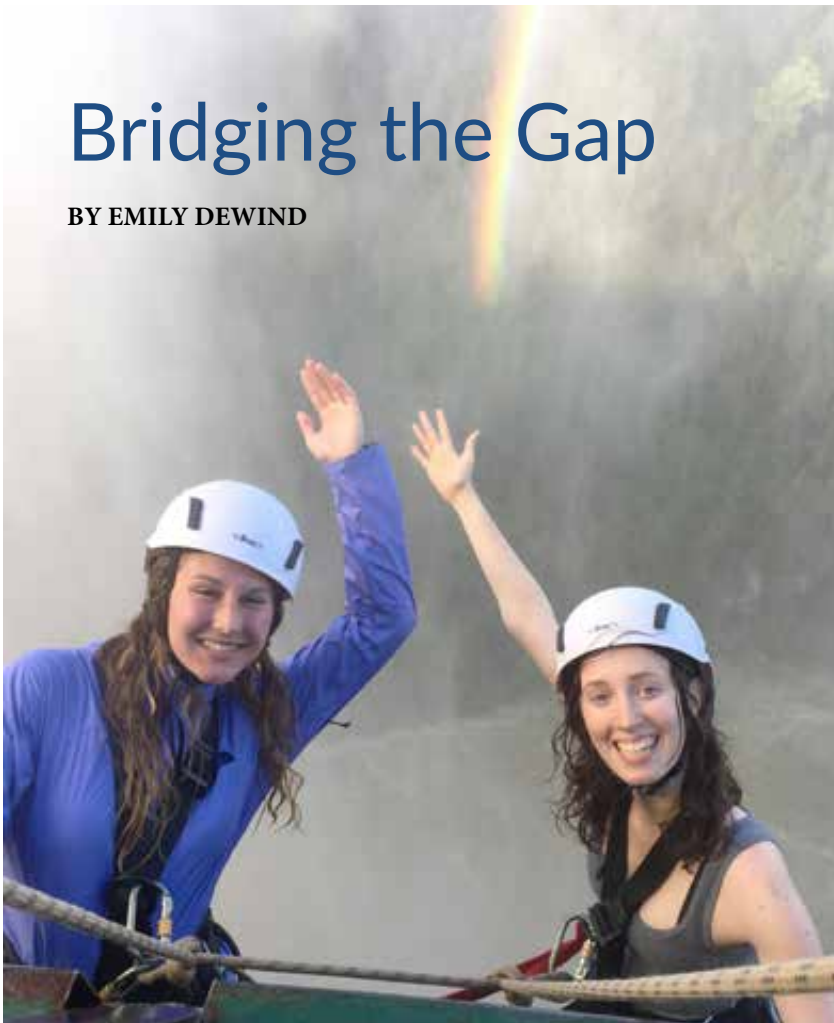
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Bridging the Gap

BY EMILY DEWIND



“Attention ladies and gentlemen. Because of the Islamic holiday of Ramadan, an international day

of fasting is taking place today. Eating and drinking of any kind will not be permitted in public. Thank you.” This was the cheerful announcement made through the thick accent of a flight attendant upon my arrival in Doha, Qatar, this past May.

Sitting next to me was my roommate, Julia, who did not seem particularly impressed at the prospect of refraining from food after a 12.5-hour

flight from Johannesburg, South Africa. Although Qatar airlines was more than satisfactory in terms of amenities, we had both looked forward to grabbing some Middle Eastern food before the 15-hour plane ride back to Atlanta. My roommate is from France, and is definitely a far more traveled individual than I am, and yet she seemed to be more surprised at the announcement. “I don’t understand Islam,” Julia remarked, and at that moment I was reminded of the time I had spent studying that very idea in high school.

When I tell people I went to a classical Christian school they often ask, “What is that?” or “How is that different from regular school?” These questions always resonate with me

because, if there is not a difference, then what is the point? Was it worth the extra time spent studying or taking required classes with names that other high school students had never even heard of? I could tell them that I was better prepared to transition into college than a lot of my university friends in Tennessee, or that my knowledge of Latin has made memorizing biology terminology a breeze. Those things would be true. But I think that the real difference, the real benefit of my classical Christian education, is that it bridged the gap between learning and faith.

Although I never cease to be intrigued by events such as those I encountered in Qatar, I am not confused by them.

Proverbs 4:11 says, “I instruct you in the way of wisdom.” Because of Libertas, I believe my faith is what gives learning its purpose. I love learning and strive to be a lifelong learner because I see every aspect of the process as understanding a piece of God’s mind. Understanding topics like math, language, science, and art is understanding bits of who God is. That’s why He gave them to us, but it doesn’t stop there. Each one of these topics contributes in unique ways that are specific to diverse worldviews and cultural perspectives.

This is a significant piece of what made my classical Christian education so valuable; it not only provided me with a biblical understanding of course material, but also taught me to ask bigger questions and traverse the expanse of our humanity. Although we are all human, the very idea of humanity itself has profoundly different connotations for varying people groups around the globe.



Personally, I don't think it is necessarily an ignorance of Islamic culture that made the circumstances that day so puzzling to many people, but rather a sort of ignorance of religion as a whole. As Christians, we often tend to think of religion only in terms of our personal beliefs, when in actuality religion is an incredibly vast and complex idea. I am not implying that

Christianity should be generalized in our personal faith. However, I do think we have a tendency to narrow our perspectives and focus on what we see as directly related to us. Sometimes ignorance really is bliss.

As a high school student at Libertas, I took two years of apologetics classes from Mr. Davis. Although I thoroughly enjoyed every moment, I had no

idea the long-term effects these classes would have on my life post-graduation. The skills I was equipped with in high school have served me countless times, from standing up to progressive college professors all the way to winsomely sharing my faith in a Zimbabwean hut!

This approach to education was worthwhile to me because it grew me both spiritually and culturally. My faith was so fervently affirmed in high school that I don't have to struggle with questions that come up in college, because I already know the answers. Being equipped with knowledge is the most important earthly gift anyone could have given me, because it is a gift that keeps on growing.

As a result of my academic upbringing I have had the privilege of world traveling while in college, which is how I ended up in Doha during Ramadan. Before I ever set foot in South America, Africa, or Asia, I was culturally and intellectually informed. Although I never cease to be intrigued by events such as those I encountered in Qatar, I am not confused by them. That was the true beauty of my classical Christian education. It prepared me not just to go on to college, it prepared me to go on to the world. ■■

EMILY DEWIND graduated from Libertas Christian School, Hudsonville, MI.





The light may have been brighter in Jerusalem than in Athens, but neither enjoyed the noonday sun. Then Christ came.

we would be lost. And without a full appreciation of the events and ideas that formed it, we risk a shallow understanding given easily to error. ❏



This article is an excerpt. To read the full article, visit ClassicalDifference.com/west.

... continued from page 11

the peoples of the world are reconciled through him to God they are also reconciled to one another. The world knew Gentiles and it knew Jews, but this new people, called Christians, was something different altogether.

Third, Christ not only reveals and reconciles, he also rules over humanity's real oppressors—sin, death, and the devil—and eventually sits down on the throne of Heaven. Whether Jew or Gentile, American, European, Asian, or African, Christ's people now have

their primary citizenship in Heaven—dual citizens bringing the culture of their true homeland to the various outposts where they live temporarily.

“The Christ event” becomes the pivotal point of human history and the still point of the turning world, uniting two cultures through one gospel. The tradition that flows from this idea is not simply Greek or Hebrew, or even “Western,” but profoundly “Christian.” Without it,

DR. BRIAN A. WILLIAMS is Dean of the Templeton Honors College and Assistant Professor of Ethics and Liberal Studies at Eastern University in Pennsylvania. Prior to this, he was Departmental Lecturer in Theology and Christian Ethics at the University of Oxford and Humanities Teacher at Cair Paravel Latin School in Topeka, KS.



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... continued from page 7

very different kinds of existence. God's existence was uncreated and necessary, while the existence of everything else was created and contingent. And this meant, with reference to the world and all that it contained, that God was transcendent.

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place” (Is. 57:15).

A second revolutionary idea from these passages might not be so obvious. The one who lives in this high and holy place is a person, and he speaks to us. The idea of a truly transcendent, personal God who speaks to us seems so natural to us now that we take it for granted.

So what difference does it all make? For parents who are thinking straight, if they want the best education for their children, they should want a school that is dedicated to the pursuit

of truth. And by truth, I mean objective, absolute truth. If there is no transcendent God, such truth is impossible, and denial of this God is how modern education has found itself in a morass of relativistic nonsense. Without a sure God inhabiting eternity, there can be no sure word—about anything—for us.

“For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:9). ❏



This article is an excerpt. To read the full article, visit ClassicalDifference.com/west.



Public domain. Ancient Assyrian relief, ca. 883-859. Found in the Palace at Nimrud built by Ashurnasirpal II.

DOUG WILSON is the pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho, and he serves on the board of two classical schools—Logos School and New Saint Andrews College. He is married to Nancy, and has written numerous books.

A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

Luther's Transformation of Western Civilization

BY CHRISTOPHER MAIOCCA

"Everyone is responsible for his own faith, and he must see to it for himself that he believes rightly."

—Martin Luther

Many of us remember our teachers drawing “social triangles” on the board to help illustrate the hierarchy of ancient civilizations. At the bottom of the pyramid—the widest part—were the farmers. On the next level stood the craftsmen, then the nobles, and finally the king. Yet above all these were the priests, their position on the chart clearly indicating that they were not only the most influential members of society, but the bridge between heaven and earth as well.

The tremendous influence of the priestly guild did not end with the closing of the classical era. In India today, the priests remain atop the social order. Called Brahmin, they spend their lives in the temple, studying the sacred texts and instructing others in the Hindu religion. Conversely, four levels down are the Dalits, better known as the “untouchables.”


Here in the West we have our own tradition of clerical orders. The prime example was the medieval Roman Church, which enjoyed one of the most powerful priesthoods the world has ever seen. Measured in terms of wealth, monopolization of ideas, and control over the public conscience, the priests were unparalleled by any religious institution in history.

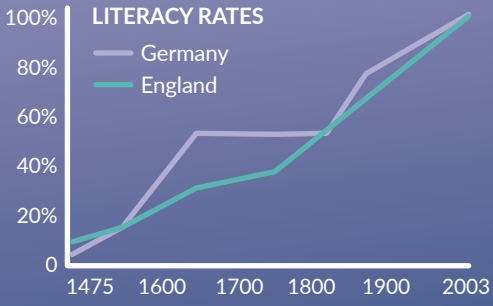
THE BREAKDOWN OF WESTERN CHRISTIANITY

No one loved the Roman church more than the great humanist scholar Erasmus, and yet his critique of its clergy was scathing: “Ah the common herd of priests! They comb through the writings of the ancients whereby they may find something to terrify the common people and convince them that more than a tenth is due!”


One of the worst ideas—papal indulgences—helped bring a reformation and a return to a Christian idea that had gone dormant in the West for several centuries. With literacy rates hovering around five percent, theological ignorance covered the land like a thick

Looking Up

 **WITHOUT LUTHER'S IDEA**, you probably would not be reading this! From the start of the Reformation in 1519, literacy rates across the West skyrocketed.* Here, you can see the literacy rates of the two seats of the reformation—Germany and England.



Year	Germany (%)	England (%)
1475	5	5
1600	55	30
1700	55	35
1800	55	50
1900	80	80
2003	100	100

 Explore the interactive literacy chart at ClassicalDifference.com/literacy.

*Citations: Visit ClassicalDifference.com/2019-summer

darkness. Thankfully, in the year 1517, an old idea, long forgotten, was revived.

THE REFORMATION IN EUROPE

Martin Luther understood that as long as forgiveness of sins depended on a priest, we were without hope in this world.

The Ninety-five Theses decimated the idea that a priesthood was necessary to mediate the grace of God. “Every true Christian directly participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters,” said Luther, in thesis thirty-seven. To suggest that man could have free access to God without the intercession of a priest, if believed, would transform Western civilization—and that is exactly what happened.

Luther’s goal was not to abolish the priesthood but rather to democratize it,

Continues on page 26 ...

Powerful and Dangerous

BY JACKSON YENOR

“The great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.”

—Federalist Papers: 51

Thomas Hobbes, describing a condition without government called the “state of nature,” said that the life of man without authority is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” Human beings are naturally ambitious, greedy, interested in their own good,

and unlikely to be “public spirited.” No amount of moral education can fully eradicate human vice.

The Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution, the foundational documents of our country, are based on a view of human na-

ture that originated with the Christian idea of original sin.

“If men were angels,” James Madison wrote, “no government would be necessary.” Individuals would simply respect the rights of their fellows. The difficulty in designing a government



of men, instead of angels, is to “oblige it to control itself.”


This un-angelic view of man is why individual rights are central to the American Experiment. A government concerned to secure individual rights is limited in its character: it need not, and

should not, shape the soul of individuals nor take care of their every need.


A “dependence on the people” through elections—representative government—is the primary control

Continues on page 27 ...

Looking Up

 **WITHOUT THIS IDEA**, how would we effectively fight against those who wish to destroy freedom? Consider the Islamic terrorist organization Boko Haram. The name is often translated, “Western education is a sin” or “Western education is forbidden.”* It’s no wonder the militant group has reportedly killed at least 611 teachers and has forced 19,000 to flee Nigeria since 2009.* According to UNICEF, since January 1, 2017, 83 children have been used by Boko Haram to carry out suicide bombings.

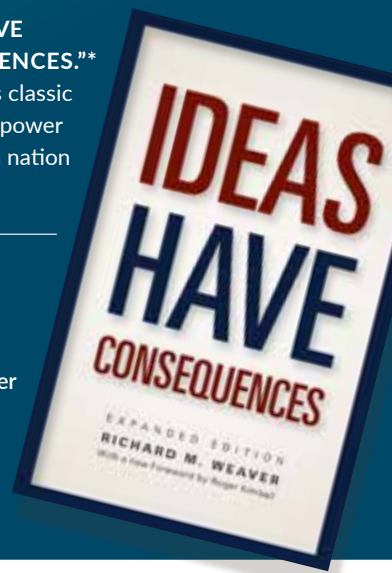
Disregard and hatred of the West seems to frame the doorposts of many American schools and universities today, institutions declining as they take swing after swing at their own foundations.

 **WHAT DO YOU SAY** that will replace a belief system that leads to Boko Haram? You cannot simply denounce ideas, you have to provide better ones. John Rhys-Davies, who portrayed Gimli in the movie version of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, sums up our situation well. “It’s easy to lose a civilization. The values of Western civilization have brought so much good to the world: the notions of equality, democracy, tolerance, abolition of slavery... Tolkien knew that civilization is worth fighting for. There are times when a generation is challenged and must fight to defend their civilization.”

“IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES.”*

Richard Weaver’s classic work reveals the power of ideas to form a nation and a people.

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From Bach to THANKFULNESS

A CLARION CALL

BY JARROD RICHEY

In 1824, fifteen-year-old Felix Mendelssohn received a copy of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*. Little did he know, five years later that gift would provide a global gift—the revival of Bach.



Geneva Academy, West Monroe, LA

In the twilight of Bach's life, there was a shift in thought that became the movement we know as the Enlightenment. The result is that music's value is now defined by the individual who hears it, making it snobbery to suggest any greater connection to others and creation. This relativism is as prominent in the areas of aesthetics and beauty as it has been in truth and goodness over past decades. Christians have begun to realize the importance of God's truth and goodness in creation. We have not been as productive in rooting out relativism when it comes to beauty. Bringing God into Lordship over beauty and aesthetics seems unimportant.

Music lying dormant for almost 80 years was brought to life when Mendelssohn opened the world's eyes and ears to it. Far beyond the musical richness lies a greater trait—a clarion call to be aware of what has come before us and to stand on the shoulders of our brothers and sisters in the faith.

The chief reason that Bach is a household name today mirrors the reason we study the Western classics in this thing known as classical Christian education. That trait, simply put, is thankfulness. Thankfulness builds on the understanding of what has come before, using that to move further up and in, never despising its foundation.


This is not how our Christian brothers and sisters in centuries past thought about their art. Any cursory glance at the history of the cantatas and symphonies of Western composers from the time of Bach and Vivaldi will show a deep grounding in the past which supplied their ability to move from glory to glory. What surprised me as I began to study Bach's music more closely was the amount based on existing material. Arguably the greatest composer to have lived did not start from scratch.

As Christians who seek to anchor our children in the faith that has been so richly given to us, we would do well


Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death. ... I, at any rate, cannot separate the two ideas of democracy and tradition.

—G.K. Chesterton

Looking Up

 **WITHOUT THIS IDEA**, very few of our kids would be taking music lessons. And few parents would endure the years of audio assault. The question, "Can you explain color to a blind person?" can be rephrased with, "Can you explain music to someone deaf from birth?" You can't. You have to experience it. And because much of art cannot be tied to practicalities, art (as we mean it today) is an inefficient endeavor. Yet most of us would say it gives life its richest meaning.

The Western world has always prized the arts, and that is reflected in its seemingly unlimited supply of literature, libraries, universities, museums of art and antiquities, plays and musicals, and symphonies.

 **IN THE 80s, WE SAW** school music programs decline. Then, they began a comeback after data implied that "music exposure" increases IQ and academic success. Will the next study remove music again? Will the quality of the arts diminish and fade over time (or is it happening already) as this idea is abandoned? ACCS schools are working to prevent just that.

to imitate previous generations who lived and thrived in thankful awareness of what came before.

It is for this reason that classical Christian education rightly applied is rooted in the best of the past.

They gave thanks in a way that is all but forgotten—study, glorify, and pass it on! ■■



This article is an excerpt.
To read the full article, visit
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JARROD RICHEY is the director of choral activities and music program director at Geneva Academy in West Monroe, LA, where he teaches general music and choir. He has been active in ACCS national conferences over the years presenting workshops and encouraging music teachers. He is the author of *BACH to the Future: Fostering Music Literacy Today*. He and his wife, Sarah, have six young choristers in training.



Cedar Tree Classical Christian School, Ridgefield, WA

and to bring it in line with the teaching of the New Testament where all Christians are counted as “priests unto God” (Rev. 1:6). “A priest in the New Testament,” Luther explained, “is not made but is born. He is created, not ordained. Indeed, all Christians are priests and all priests are Christian.”

AN IDEA AT WORK EVERY DAY

Today there are large swaths of Christendom that still reject the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers. They struggle to understand the transcendent nature of Christianity and how spiritual realities inform everyday life. Religion is often confined to a subject or to a Sunday, and is quickly put away once these duties are done.

On the other hand, wherever the priesthood of all believers has been embraced and cultivated, the transformation of entire continents has often been the result. Bibles are translated into the vernacular and cherished. Christianity becomes vital and contagious. Religion is holistic and diffused through every facet of life. Yet beyond question, the most obvious consequence of a democratized priesthood is the establishment and maintenance of Christian schools.

WHEN IT COMES TO GREAT IDEAS, some kids resonate. Others don't. How much difference does family life make?



A headmaster shares his observations about kids, ideas, and home. Visit ClassicalDifference.com/AtHome.

We see this so clearly in the opening chapters of America's history. Viewing their arrival to “New England” as perhaps the best opportunity to create a theocratic society since Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the forefathers took their calling as priests very seriously. Therefore, almost immediately after anchors were dropped, they established schools.

“We longed to advance learning and perpetuate it to our children,” said one godly settler in 1635 when Massachusetts was little more than a jungle of uncut brush and immigrants were dying at a rate of one for every two. A year later this desire was fulfilled with the establishment of Harvard College where the original mission statement was simply, “To Glorify Jesus Christ.”

In another example, consider the first sentence of the student handbook given to incoming classes at Yale College, nearly a hundred years before we became a sovereign nation: “Every

student shall exercise himself in reading the Holy Scriptures by himself everyday that the word of Christ may dwell in him richly and that he may be filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Almost every other colonial school had similar expectations of their attendees.

The establishment of Christian schools against tremendous obstacles demonstrated that our forefathers understood their choice: educate their progeny or allow their nation to revert to barbarism. Our choice today is precisely the same. ■■



This article is an excerpt. To read the full article, visit ClassicalDifference.com/west.

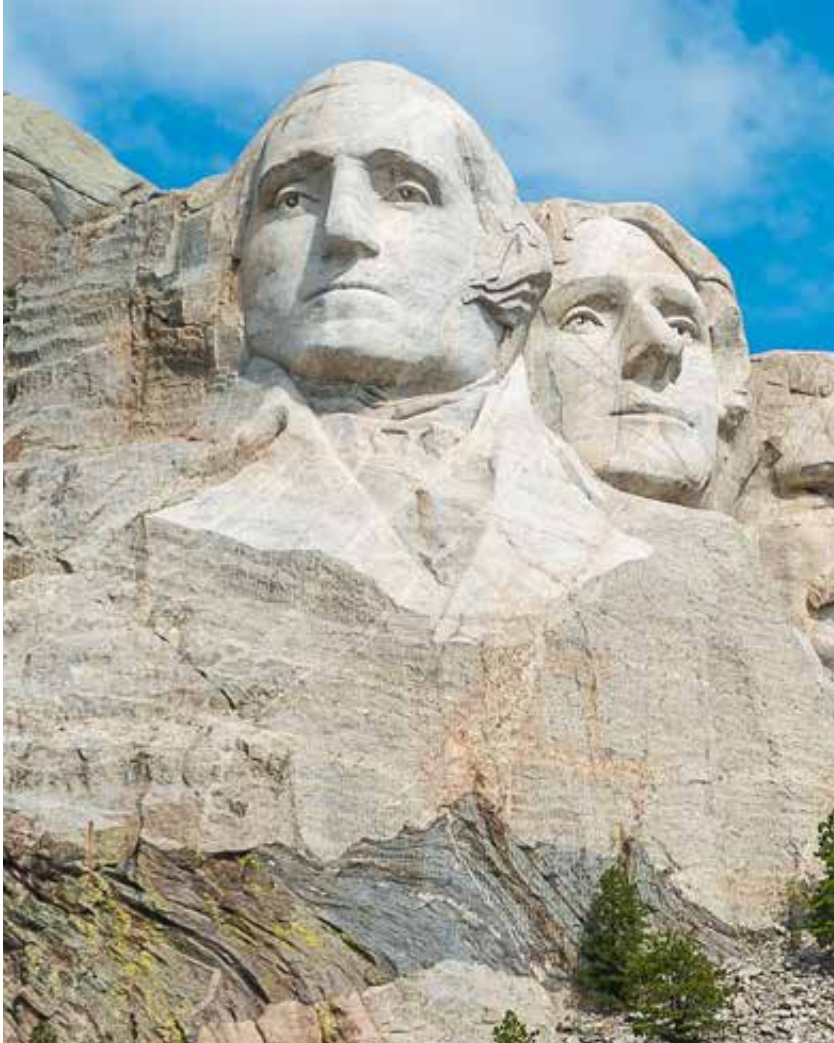
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"OF THE 55 DELEGATES who attended the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, 30 were college graduates. That is an impressive feat given the challenging entrance requirements of 18th-century universities. ... Those colleges stipulated that entering freshmen be able to read, translate and expound the Greco-Roman classical works [in their original languages]. Such requirements were nearly universal in America and remained unchanged for generations."*

—Dr. Joe Wolverton II, *The Founding Fathers and the Classics*



*Citations: ClassicalDifference.com/2019-Summer



on government. Thinkers like Madison were right, and it shows.

These ideas applied in the market have brought advances in health, life span, quality of life, and wealth that no other age has ever known. In the post-Madison age, we have witnessed a worldwide decline in poverty, hun-

ger, rape, disease, illiteracy, torture, and slavery.

Today, with a moderate salary and average intelligence, you can fly on a giant bus across the country, drink coffee imported from Columbia, and visit your grandmother who would already be dead if it weren't for her heart monitor.

Three centuries ago, you were lucky to survive childbirth. All this because Madison and his kin knew men were not angels, and never would be.

Today, prosperity has also led many to believe that, having conquered nature, we can turn to conquer human nature. We have forgotten to teach our children this old, Christian, Western idea about ourselves which makes us vulnerable to this new, bad idea. Man is no longer thought to be sinful; he is thought to be "perfectible" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau's phrase).

The American Founders espoused an understanding of natural law and human nature largely consistent with the classical and medieval traditions that, in their time, formed the public consensus. "Ambition counteracting ambition" and "men are not angels" came from people who knew what Milton and Augustine knew about human beings.

All the Founders received some form of a classical Christian education, reading Latin, studying Augustine, Cicero and Aquinas, and the classical Greeks. These works helped them to discern the limits of human nature and rule themselves with moderation and prudence. To quote Newton, we were "standing on the shoulders of giants." John Adams said it best: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people."

In his office at Monticello, Thomas Jefferson had a small shrine to the "trinity of the three greatest men the world has ever produced...Bacon, Locke, and Newton." But perhaps a better assessment of who we worship is in order. ■■



This article is an excerpt.
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JACKSON YENOR is a project manager for the ACCS.



THE STACKS



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WEST vs. EAST

LIVE FROM LONDON WITH 12TH GRADE TEACHER AND PASTOR TOM VELASCO

London embodies the ancient and the modern in its skyline from St. Paul’s Cathedral to the new jagged Shard skyscraper. It is equally diverse in its people and beliefs, but London was for centuries leading Western thought. How are our loves for God and the world best formed through an understanding of the great writers, thinkers, scientists and theologians from the West more than any other cultural tradition? There is a difference and it matters in forming what young people love today.

Taking Notes

Reclaiming the University

WISDOM FIRST, JOB SKILLS SECOND*

College is often on parents’ radar beginning in grammar school, and sometimes earlier. Christians need to



CLT

address mounting concerns about the college establishment, especially when it comes to the

most fundamental question of all: What is school for?

Consider shifting your mindset. The solidly entrenched SAT test is being challenged by the new CLT (Classic Learning Test), as parents and educators alike seek an alternative to the educational establishment of our day.

“Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.” These words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ... sum up why the education system often fails: we have forgotten that intelligence without morality is not enough. ... The never-ending experimentation by the mainstream education establishment is itself evidence that it has been cut off from any rich tradition from which to draw content that is truly worthy of a student’s attention.

Most high school students are taught that, ultimately, they just need to have a good score on high-stakes testing. ... While these tests are driving curriculum, they are themselves completely devoid of anything related to philosophy, ethics, morality, or simply put, anything that teaches us how and why to live in community.

—*Classic Learning Test, cltexam.com*

“The Classical Learning Test is ... a reminder of what schooling once was (and in some places is becoming again).”

—Dr. Terrence O. Moore, Ph.D., Principal,
Ascent Classical Academy of Douglas County



*Citations: ClassicalDifference.com/2019-summer

Wisdom from the Front

Plutarch once said that “the correct analogy for **THE MIND IS NOT A VESSEL THAT NEEDS FILLING, BUT WOOD THAT NEEDS IGNITING.**” An astounding word-picture! What happens when teachers mistake minds for data-containers, logs for buckets? We soak them with information.

When I meet classically educated students in my courses, I often sense **A SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE**: a thankfulness for teachers who cured them, seasoned them—who even lit the blaze. There is a verve for learning and **A BURNING FOR TRUTH.**

Meeting these students, I’ve received a searing impression of the **CLASSICAL DIFFERENCE**: Yes, there’s that funny thing called the trivium; yes, there’s the great books experience; yes, there’s a curious insistence on Latin—but above all, there’s the heat. In classical education, we warm our water-logged minds around the ardor of the ages. We reach out and feel the ancient glow.

—DR. JOSHUA MAYO, *English professor at Grove City College*

The open-mindedness that inevitably results from deep study of the best literature, primary historical texts, ancient languages, and art itself is a thing that I have come to appreciate, especially. I was a missionary kid for a large portion of my childhood.

Coming back to the United States, I found that, in many classical schools, there were indeed **PEOPLE WHO SAW AND LIVED, WITH OPEN MINDS**, that which exists outside of their States and modern middle class suburbia. Here were people that could understand nearly anyone—just where they are and whence they hail and why they matter in the grand scheme! It is comforting, as a small and ordinary person, to know that, even if children cannot themselves travel to exotic places and learn heaps of eye-opening things, they can do so through classical education.

—MIKALA JENSEN, *St. Andrew’s Academy Alumna*



A PARENT ASKS, WHY THE WEST?

What about multiculturalism? Find out how the West became the collector and archiver of Great Ideas, wherever they are found. ClassicalDifference.com/why-the-west

American Flag

The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousandfold.

—Aristotle

The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future in life.

—Plato

I say, that Power must never be trusted without a check.

—John Adams

Employ your time in improving yourself by other men’s writings, so that you shall gain easily what others have labored hard for.

—Socrates

Give me liberty or give me death!

—Patrick Henry

Those that can give up essential liberty to gain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

—Benjamin Franklin

The sacred rights of mankind are ... written ... by the hand of the divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power.

—Alexander Hamilton

If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. ... May posterity forget that you were our countrymen.

—Samuel Adams

If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.

—Thomas Jefferson

Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.

—James Madison



In Defense of the West

A grammar lesson

Where I live, mention the Great Books or the Western tradition, and you are likely given a polite sneer, at best. At

worst, you'll hear the all too familiar string of adjectives: "racist," "post-colonial," "bigoted." And this is a real conundrum for parents who see the obvious fruits of their local classical Christian school but still aspire to be welcoming and winsome in their community.

How did we get backed against this wall? The truth is actually embedded in a simple grammar lesson. It all boils down to subjects and objects. The "subject" is the "I" or the author. The "object" is the idea discussed or the truth to be told.

Before a certain point in history, there was a consensus that "subjects" could connect with the "objects" out in reality and say something universally meaningful. The Great Conversation of the West spans millennia, discussing the nature of objects. The Great Books aren't great because of the subjects who wrote them. They are great because of the objects they reflect and the Creator to whom all objects point. They move us from our narrow lives of subjectivity and personal identity to transcendent belief and enduring action.

But this grammar lesson takes a dark turn. Modern philosophers ripped apart the "subject" and the "object" so that people could not know anything real about objects—if they exist at all! That tear was never mended. Life is then trapped in a subjective experience—your truth, your preference, your privilege.

Fast forward to today and this break between subject and object has only widened. People no longer dialogue about what is eternally True, Good, and Beautiful. Cut off from the object, people can only shout about the validity of the subject, armed with that endless stream of adjectives. We

are inevitably backed against a wall because history provides a limitless cache of sinful, selfish subjects caught up in power struggles with other subjects. With no objective Creator to change our minds, break our hearts, and direct the world, the only verb allowed is "oppress." It is a repetitive, dead-end turn of phrase.

If we want our children to remain trapped in their subject of self-identity, their base desires, and their powerful egos, then we must keep the Western tradition far from them—separated by a hedge of derogatory adjectives. If we want to nourish our children with lovely and debate-worthy ideas which inspire and endure, then we must confidently open our hands and receive the beautiful objects of our Western heritage.

Classical Christian education humbly acknowledges the faults of the subject, but remains committed to a posture of remembering the object. In doing so, we move out away from that wall, able to share these abiding truths and preserve The Great Conversation for a future generation. ❖

KATHARINE SAVAGE is a Southerner who has spent almost two decades navigating urban life. She is the wife of a good one and a mom to three. Katharine is the founder and head of Philadelphia Classical School.

Winning It Back

Those who devalue the Western tradition in education often do so because they focus on the subjects (the speakers) rather than the objects (the ideas). The ideas of the West are inseparable from Christianity. As Christianity falls out of favor, opposition to traditional Western education takes root. We have connected you with only eight ideas that are important to preserve. We hope you will find joy in countless others as you help with your children's homework at your ACCS school!

“TRADITION
is not the worship
of ashes but
the preservation
of **FIRE.**”

—Gustav Mahler

IF WE WANT TO NOURISH OUR CHILDREN
with lovely and debate-worthy ideas which inspire and endure, then we must confidently open our hands and receive the beautiful objects of our **WESTERN HERITAGE**.

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Read more on page 30.

