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Hospitality and Questions in Classical Christian Education

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Master of Arts - Southeastern University

EDUC 5393 Capstone Thesis Course

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Signature Page

Hospitality and Questions in Classical Christian Education

This thesis has been approved by the committee members below, who recommend it be accepted by the faculty of Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

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Abstract

Christian parents continue to have few education options suitable for kingdom children. While textbooks and test scores hold prominent consideration for many Christian parents, neither cultivate a love of learning nor human flourishing. Rather, it is the language used in the learning environment that invites or repels engagement and learning. An expository exploration of sentence purposes and the type of sentence most commonly used by Christ to engage His learners reveals the power of the question. Appropriately asked, questions welcome learners to actively participate as well as to attentively listen. It is the workhorse of humility, for the question is a continual reminder that humans cannot know everything: they are not omniscient. In such an educational setting, neither the student nor the teacher occupies center stage. Practicing the art of the question on the mysteries of creation inspires the imagination and cultivates the wisdom necessary to transcend the inadequacies of a modern education.

Keywords: education, classical, Christian, pedagogy, hospitality, questions, mysteries of creation, wisdom

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Chapter I

Introduction

In the United States, typical kindergarten through twelfth grade students spend a minimum of 16,000 hours of their lives in school, not counting travel time, extracurricular activities, homework assignments nor pre-school attendance (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). While most Americans accept school attendance as customary and mandatory, it is questionable whether parents consider the purpose and type of education their children receive, especially regarding the sizable amount of time spent on school activities. Is the time spent in school achieving the educational goals parents have for their own children or even the educational goals of the school itself? Or considered in another manner, as asked by Classical Conversations founder, Leigh Bortins, of her audience in the online book club, *Unfragmented*, “Is school synonymous with education” (1/26/23)?

The U.S. Department of Education has the task of setting the purpose for all public schools which is stated “[T]o promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” (*Overview and mission statement*, 2022). To accomplish this mission, a pedagogy of constructionism, measured by standardized testing that is equally required for all students, is rigorously tabulated to determine success. While the U.S. Department of Education’s mission, pedagogy and measurement methods may be embraced by non-Christian parents, Christian parents profess a different purpose for their children’s education. According to a Barna Study asking Christian parents to rank educational goals for their children, the top two purposes for education include the learning of (1) strong values (68%) and (2) a love for God and His people (65%). The

educational purposes least desired include learning how to (1) achieve financial success (10%) and (2) increased social mobility (1%) (*What Parents Look for in Christian Schools*, 2017).

These Christian parents' top purposes are biblically undergirded as shown in Deuteronomy 6:5-7: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children" (*English Standard Version*, 2001/2016).

But it is not only the purpose of education that differs for Christians but also the pedagogy, content and assessment. Regarding content, it is not so important what one knows, but rather Who one knows. How does knowing the God of all creation prioritize the education subject matter? When considering pedagogy, how does a teacher welcome a student to discover truth? And finally, how does a teacher assess the students' grasp of the values God has provided in scripture? While a student's answers on a multiple-choice exam may demonstrate head knowledge, Christians are warned that mere head knowledge makes human beings proud of themselves, while love makes human beings helpful to others (*Contemporary English Version*, 1995, 1 Corinthians 8:1).

Using an expository methodology to further explore these questions demonstrates that the humble sentence, proffered in the manner of a question, does the heavy lifting required to ensure God honoring content, a pedagogy of hospitality and self-assessment for every student, Christian or not. Such an educational journey, guided by questions concerning the mysteries of creation promote the Christian virtues of hospitality and humility, both which prepare students to judge themselves and others rightly. It is an education that enables students to discern their purpose as co-regents with God and each other, over themselves and all of creation (ESV., Gen. 1:26).

Chapter II

Literature Review

Modern Education

Historically, American government schools were expected to cultivate virtuous and competent citizens. By the 20th century, the schools' mission shifted from that of a political role in creating good citizens to that of an economic focus that is training capable workers to achieve broad prosperity (Labaree, 2018, p. 2). To ensure students were fitted to a job or continued education after high school graduation, schools began providing separate tracks to afford students the ability to specialize for their career path while still in high school. There was an industrial track for blue collar workers, a business track for clerical workers and an academic track to prepare students for college. Such specialization was an attempt to realize the United States' Department of Education's mission "to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (*Overview and Mission Statement*, 2022). But despite efforts to create a competent workforce, students began to focus on the measurements of success rather than learning and preparing to lead. In his article, *Public Schools for Private Gain*, Professor of Education, David Labaree, states that rather than mastering skills, "students learn early on that the goal is to acquire as many grades, credits, and degrees as possible... to maximize their own ranking" (2018, p. 6).

To execute the Department of Education's mission, teachers draw upon the ideas of a constructivist pedagogy to teach students in their classrooms. Student - centered constructionism has its foundation in the ideas of educational giants such as philosophers Jean Jacques Rosseau

and John Dewey. Unlike objective forms of learning which assert truth exists independent of the learner, the subjective form of learning promoted in constructivism, encourages students to interpret all learning on their own terms and construct its meaning in the student's own mind. As warned by Dr. K. S. Krahenbuhl, the results of such teaching will not promote truthful learning: "Discoveries' will simply be untrue, incorrect, and unless addressed quickly will become not merely obstacles to avoid but misconceptions stored in long-term memory that are even more difficult to rectify" (2016, pp. 4-5).

Despite the student focus and the subjective method of learning, modern education diligently measures students' progress in learning through standardized testing. While such objective measurement seems contrary to a subjective pedagogy, both coexist in a strained relationship. According to the most recent National Center for Education results "only 35% of 4th graders and 34% of 8th graders are proficient in reading, and 41% of 4th graders and 34% of 8th graders are proficient in mathematics" (NAEP, 2019; Basham et al., 2020, p. 5). Updated testing results for 2022 fared worse for fourth and eighth graders in both subject areas: "[I]n 2022, average mathematics scores for the nation were lower by 5 points at fourth grade and lower by 8 points at eighth grade compared to scores in 2019." Reading scores for 2022 fared no better: "the average reading score at both fourth and eighth grade decreased by 3 points compared to 2019" (*The Nation's Report Card | NAEP, 2022*).

The decreasing test scores have sounded an alarm in modern education and remedies are being sought via a more progressive pedagogy in the classroom. Two new classroom practices

that capitalize on technology are Universal Design for Learning (UDL)¹ and Neoliberal² pedagogy. Using technology, UDL teachers present material in a variety of ways including lectures, videos, board games or an online forum discussion. Each student's online interaction and progress is tracked and subsequently evaluated by technology or a teacher to tailor the student's next learning experience. Neoliberal pedagogy more securely binds students to technology in that every keystroke is recorded and stored. The student is "made machine-readable and modifiable" (Ball & Grimaldi, 2021, P. 5). Pupils are thought of as passive vessels in which the teacher then pours a certain amount of knowledge. In this process, the pupil has no initiative. "The pupil learns from what the teacher has said, and that is it" (Dami et al, 2019 p 17).

While it is commendable that school administrators have been stirred into action to reverse students' falling test scores, it seems the focus is on a symptom rather than on a problem. To help students achieve higher test scores, the aforementioned pedagogical remedies focus on an increased use of technology. Would it be wiser to implement a pedagogy that promotes student learning rather than what produces better test scores? Both the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS) and the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education (ICLE) think so and have birthed hundreds of classical schools across the nation (Lindquist, 2019). They are joined

¹ "To apply UDI, instructors should consider the potential variation in individual skills, learning styles and preferences, age, gender, sexual orientation, culture, abilities, and disabilities as they select appropriate content and strategies for the delivery of instruction and then apply universal design to all course activities and resources" (Burgstahler, 2020).

² "Neoliberal pedagogy teaches that the entire process of education is determined by three things, namely, the systematization of learning, absolute memorization, and compulsory tests" (Dami et al., 2021, p. 17).

by a growing number of classical offerings in government schools as well. There are at least 30 classical charters in Arizona and Texas, and another 30 countrywide founded by Hillsdale College of Michigan (Richard, 2022, p. 4).

Classical Education

Parents looking for an alternative to modern public and private schools have another option steadily gaining traction. Reaching back into a more historical form of education, classical schools offer an orientation towards the liberal arts often grounded in the Western canon of great books and ideas. The classical model emphasizes academic rigor as well as civic duty and is found in private and charter schools, homeschooling, and micro-schooling (McCoy, 2021, pp. 1–5). Classical schooling insists that the purpose of education is to cultivate the mind in pursuit of truth. Students practice seeking truth through their coursework in Latin or Greek, music, debate, literature and the visual arts (McCoy, 2021, p3).

Despite their label, Classical options are not duplicated ancient Greek Socratic circles or long walks in flowing chitons. Traditional classical education has been revived to fit into a typical kindergarten through twelfth grade school. Well known published proponents of the classical education in modern schools include Dorothy Sayers, Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins. In Richard's dissertation, "What is Classical Education?", she credits Sayers with sparking a revival of classical education in the U. S. based on her 1947 Oxford address, *The Lost Tools of Learning*" (2022, p. 11). In her address, Sayers asks her audience if they have noticed that "although we often succeed in teaching our pupils 'subjects,' we fail lamentably on the whole in teaching them how to think? They learn everything, except the art of learning" (1948, p.

6). Sayers proposed educators return to an educational framework based on the trivium, or the three roads, which highlighted the grammar, dialectical and rhetorical arts of learning. Each learning art, when paired with the developmental learning stage of the student, enables and requires students to learn how to learn anything. Many current classical educators overlay the classical curriculum onto the three arts of the trivium so that it all fits into “elementary, middle, and high school grade levels and believe that they reflect the natural development and learning preferences of children” (1948, p. 11).

Despite the difference in the purpose and pedagogy, classical schools continue to use the same testing to measure their students’ academic success. The testing scores in a sampling of students from three diverse classical charter schools have shown higher results than from students in traditional public schools. In these three “classical charter schools that enroll students from challenging neighborhoods such as Nashville Classical Charter, South Bronx Classical Charter and Washington Latin Public Charter, students scored well above their nonclassical counterparts in both the ELA (English Language Arts) and Mathematics Tests” (McCoy, 2021, p. 8). It is a wonder with such successful testing results that more schools are not adopting a classical approach rather than seeking a remedy from technology.

Classical Christian Education

While classical educators focused on academic excellence and public responsibility, a group of Christian educators such as David Hicks, Douglas Wilson and Leigh Bortins added a distinctive Christian aspect to classical learning. Focusing more on the purpose of education,

Classical Christian educators emphasized the ideas of virtuous living based on the tenets of scripture. The fusion of faith and academics differentiates the classical Christian offering from the classical and modern options.

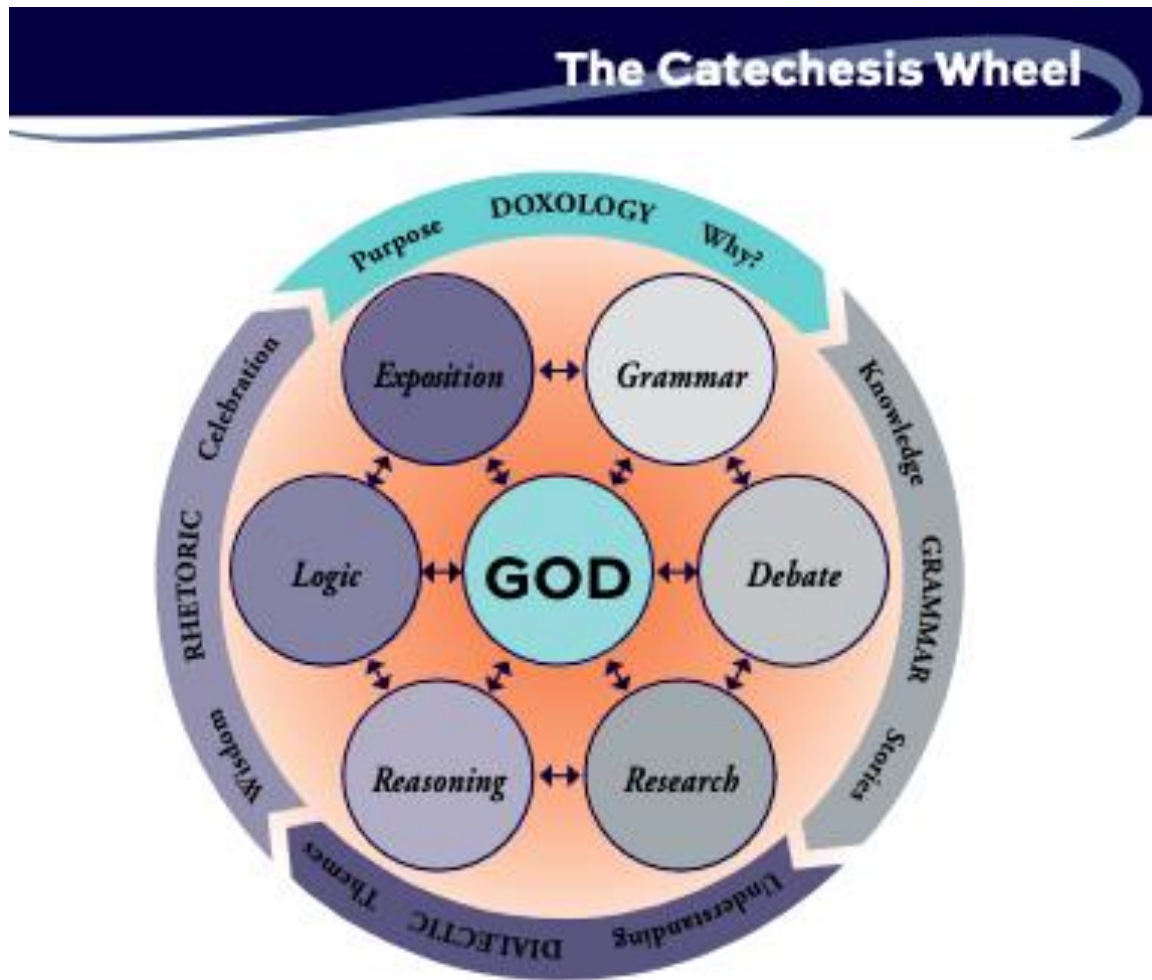
In his book, *Norms and Nobility*, Classical Christian proponent David V. Hicks notes that the reform of modern education centers on the teacher as one who must become a “‘practitioner of the art of learning.’ Schools only become places where students learn when schools are already places where teachers learn” (Hicks, 1999, pp. 18–19).

In the homeschooling world, Classical Conversations founder Leigh Bortins published the book, *Classical Christian Education Made Approachable*, which highlights the difference between secular and Christian education by noting who is at the center of learning. The secular model revolves learning around the student while the Christian model revolves learning around God. Additionally, the Christian model unifies and integrates subjects with God and with each other whereas the secular model of education sequesters each subject onto itself. The visual of a Christian classical education is termed the Catechesis Wheel (see Figure 1, p. 9) which reminds families that all education begins and ends in the goals of Doxology or praise to God who is at the center of all learning and gives all learning its full meaning (*Classical Christian Education Made Approachable*, 2011, p. 30).

There are several other considerations worthy of attention when blueprinting a Christian learning experience. In a manner that no text, website or worksheet ever could, several often-neglected items such as questions, the mysteries of creation, and Christian hospitality, weave the welcome mat that delightfully admits teachers and students alike to the learning experience.

Figure 1

The Catechesis Wheel: Where is mystery?



These portable components create a Christian pedagogy worth emulating both in and out of the classroom.

Questions

Retired president of Andover Newton Theological School, Martin B. Copenhagen was so intrigued that the omniscient Jesus would choose to ask questions more than He answered, that he wrote a book subtitled *The 307 questions Jesus asked and the 3 He answered*. Jesus' practice

of asking questions portray the Great Teacher as one who prefers to speak in the interrogatory more than provide declarative responses (Copenhaver, 2014, p. xviii). Since Jesus is more about transformation than information, He uses questions to invite reflection.

Just as important as Jesus' questions are to Copenhaver, Hicks' classical model begins with the spirit of inquiry which is marked by "general curiosity, imagination in forming hypotheses and method in testing them" (1999, p. 18). In her trilogy series *The Core, The Question* and *The Conversation*, Bortins consistently references the tools of learning. While the tools of learning are of a declarative nature, questions can easily be pulled from these tools to supply questions of exploration regarding any and every topic. They are the catalyst for the spirit of inquiry.

Mysteries of Creation as curriculum

In his paper, *Being Human*, Hicks calls attention to the constant, yet often unnoticed mystery that encompasses the daily Christian life.

To be human, truly human, it seems to me, is to live in paradox. To see all sides, yet to choose one. This should not surprise Orthodox Christians who have embraced the mysteries of their faith, choosing to believe in Christ both as a free act *and* as an act that is wholly from God. The secular world, on the other hand, perhaps reflecting the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in the Western church over "free will," and certainly as a result of its love of rationalism, struggles with paradox and shuns mystery. (2022, p. 8)

While the Christian faith itself is a mystery, there is little available evidence that the general

topic of mystery or the mysteries in creation are an integral or common component of a Christian education.

Mystery is a central theme in scripture. In 1 Timothy 3:16, the apostle Paul confesses how great are the mysteries of godliness and of Christ. Christ Himself is referred to as God's mystery in Colossians 2:2. Understanding how God created everything (or anything) in existence before anything material existed is a mystery that has sparked countless debates over countless years. Even the secular world recognizes education's lack of attention to the natural world. In his research titled, *Education for Wonder*, Haydn Washington notes that current political policies regarding nature, tragically ignore the wonder of nature, to its detriment. Hence the need for ecocentric education which "places intrinsic value on all living organisms and their natural environment (including geodiversity), regardless of their perceived usefulness or importance to human beings" (2018, p. 1).

Christian hospitality in the Classroom

Christian authors Rebecca Burwell and Mackenzie Huyser explore the meaning and practice of Christian hospitality in their article *Practicing Hospitality in the classroom*. Citing Christine Pohl's book, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality in the Christian Tradition* (1999), they discuss biblical interpretations of hospitality and how it is understood and practiced differently today. As far back as the prophet Moses, God instructs His people to treat the foreigner among them as one of their own and to love the stranger as they love themselves (Leviticus 19:33-34). The New Testament continues this understanding of hospitality in Romans 12:13 by directing Christ followers to practice hospitality by sharing with those who are in need and again in Hebrews 13:2 by not neglecting to show hospitality to strangers. Unlike the

contemporary understanding of hospitality as inviting familiar guests to be entertained on the host's terms, the biblical meaning of hospitality concerns treatment of the stranger that often involves "sacrifice and mutual sharing" (Burwell & Huyser, 2013, p. 2).

The article further explores the vulnerability created when hospitality is extended to someone unfamiliar. The experience becomes more of a discovery of how to interact with the other. Translated into a classroom setting, the host, or professor, "is charged with the task of opening students up to the idea that they have something to offer—that they are not just the recipients of knowledge but makers of it" (Burwell & Huyser, 2013, p. 12). Considering that students are often strangers to the discoveries they should expect to encounter in the classroom, Christian hospitality ought to be a key component of a Christian education.

Chapter III

Pedagogy

The How: Hospitality of the Question

A common fear bringing the newest and youngest students to tears are the first days, first weeks and first months of school. At varying degrees, students acclimate; some thrive, some whither and some just want to be anywhere else. In designing a classical Christian education, a paramount consideration is the modifier, Christian. What is it that makes a place of learning, Christian? The first consideration is the humans involved in the learning. No human is omniscient. Every human, regardless of age, is a student, facing something new and unknown, with every subsequent minute, hour and day, for human beings have not been gifted with the ability to know the future. As such, all humans are like children in need of a guide to learn how to navigate the unknown future by considering the past as well as what is presently in front of them. Christ is quoted in scripture, reminding humanity that He is the guide for all facets of learning the unknown, regardless of time: “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). Should the learner forget such an ever-present resource, Christ has promised each Christian that, “the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you” (John 14:26). Even the act of learning is a pleasure that God’s kingdom-people are invited into as discovered in Proverbs 25:2: “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out”.

As creatures made in God’s image, how do the human teachers welcome learners in the same manner as, Christ, the Rabbi of scripture (John 3:2)? Christ has given His followers an

example that they also should do just as He has done with them (John 13:15). So, what did Christ model? What was His pedagogy or method of teaching that extended hospitality to all types of people, inviting them into a conversation? More than a modern image of students gaining knowledge directly from their teachers' required texts or lectures, Christ's teaching method is better understood using the original Greek word, *paidagōgos* which referred to a servant who taught boys manners while leading the boys to and from school and who tutored these students after school ("Pedagogy," 2023). Unlike a teacher of declarative information, Christ incline His learners towards the manners of discovery and inquiry as a preparation for learning. Christ modeled such preparation with the sentence purpose of question. More than the exclamatory, declarative or imperative sentence, the interrogative invites the learner to participate in dialogue and discovery. Not only does it invite the student to actively learn, but the interrogative also affords the expectation that the teacher can and will learn from the student in a sense of collaborative learning. It allows the mortal teacher the proper posture before the Master Teacher, Christ. Christ is omniscient, the mortal teacher is not. The mortal teacher has greater experience and often more knowledge than his student, but still, the teacher's human limitations prevent him from knowing the future. Reminiscent of Mary in the Gospel of Luke, listening at the feet of Jesus while her sister Martha busily bustled and fretted, the human teacher must continue to sit at the feet of the Master Teacher to ever cultivate his own learning (Luke 10:39-42).

Despite the forty-five instances in the Gospels of Jesus referring to himself as teacher and being referred to as teacher by his friends, sympathizers, and enemies, Professor Williams articulates that there "is no system to His teachings" (2016, pp. 1 & 6). According to Merriam-

Webster's, a system is "a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole" ("System," 2023). As the following will show, Christ used an integrated system of questions and answers to holistically invite His students into understanding and learning and self-assessment. This integrated system of questions and answers would become his pedagogy which in turn modeled to His followers the pedagogy they should emulate in their own teaching.

According to Copenhaver, Jesus asked a lot of questions while on earth: He asked 307, was asked 183 and directly responded to eight (2014, p. xviii)³. Considering quantity, questions are far more prevalent in how Jesus spoke and taught than parables. While parables were an integral component of Jesus' teaching, the forty-four parables ascribed to Jesus are far fewer than the questions woven through Jesus's conversations in the four Gospels (Fletcher, 2019). Also, parables cannot be considered an appropriate teaching tool for every student if the intent of teaching is to impart learning. After an afternoon of telling parables to crowds of people on the beach, Saint Matthew references Jesus' comments to his disciples that not everyone will understand His parables:

Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand...For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. (Matthew 13:13)

³ In his subtitle, Copenhaver references three questions that Jesus answers and sites two studies regarding these three questions, yet a discrepancy arises when Copenhaver declares the following in his introduction "According to my count, Jesus directly answers as many as 8 of the questions he asked, but whichever count you go with, it is an astonishing small number" (2014, p. xvii).

Jesus' universal application of questions across gender, age, topic and worldview was the invitation that He used to welcome students to learn, understand and assess truth and themselves. The spirit of inquiry was His habit of hospitality.

Author Hicks asserts that a classical education “stands for a spirit of inquiry” that extends learning beyond the classroom not only for the learner but for fellow learners as well (Hicks, 1999, p. 18). While the teacher can appraise the outward demeanor of his student's smiles, attentiveness, fidgeting or rolling eyes, he is often a stranger to what is happening in his own mind as well as that of his students. When referring to the Final Judgment, Jesus commends those who welcome the stranger with an invitation: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... For I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:34-35).

Just as important as the type of sentence to hospitality in the classroom, is the type of question. Questions that illicit a pat, correct response end communal thinking and thus the journey. For example, questions about a boat could be the type that have a single correct answer. How many inches long is it? What color is it? Where is the bow and the stern? Each answer closes the question. It is answered. It is finished. It is time to move on. Questions of a different type summon the imagination to wonder beyond the material attributes of the thing itself. Where could one travel in a boat? What kind of boat would be best for a particular destination? Would the voyage be different in an airplane? How would one retell a story involving a boat? Both sets of questions center on the topic of boats, but the latter set furnishes an opportunity to fulfill the quest in question and broaden the understanding of all facets of boat. To draw learners further into a personal connection with the topic, Hicks argues that “The best questions are not limited

by what can be done; they ask what ought to be done knowing that the former question – although scientifically correct – can only make a poor education worse by narrowing the range of inquiry and by limiting the possibilities for improvement” (Hicks, 1999, p. 123). In his book, *Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child*, author Anthony Esolen likens such a limiting experience as one of confining the student’s “mind to a room with a low ceiling” (2013, p. 231). Expansively, with questions of ought, students must enter the realm of moral judgments. Ought Jesus sleep in the boat during the storm? Should Peter step out of the boat onto the lake when he sees Jesus? Or, ought Noah to build the ark?

While the question is paramount, the teacher’s attitude towards the respondent is also key to Christian hospitality. According to Andrew Kern, founder and president of The CiRCE Institute, “whenever a student says or does anything in your presence, he is offering himself to you to see what you will do to or with his offering” (personal communication, January 25, 2023). As the teacher and other learners in the classroom practice accepting others’ responses to questions as gifts, responders gain the understanding that they have something of value to offer.

Scripture depicts Jesus as both a teacher who asked thought provoking questions as well as one who listened attentively to those who responded. In asking open ended questions in which answers are neither obvious nor implied, Jesus invited listeners to join in the conversation -- in other words, Jesus employed questions to invite his listeners to present a thought filled offering. Such questions asked by Jesus include

- What are you seeking? (Jn 1:38)
- Why were you looking for me? (Lk 2:49)

- Who do people say that I am? (Mk 8:29, Lk 9:18, Mt 16:13)
- But who do you say that I am? (Mk 8:29, Lk 9:20, Mt 16:15)
- Why do you seek to kill me? (Jn 7:19)
- And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? (Lk 12:57)
- Why do you call me “Lord, Lord,” and do not what I tell you? (Lk 6:46)
- For which of them [good works] do you stone me? (Jn 10:32)
- Where is your faith? (Lk 8:25)

In these few examples, as in most of Jesus’ questions, the goal was not to impart information.

The goal was transformation (Copenhaver, 2014, p. xxiii).

It is reasonable that Jesus should ask his listeners questions in order to help them discover profound truths. But from the perspective of an omniscient, incarnate God, it is not reasonable. What kind of all-knowing God asks questions when He already knows the answers? Rather it is the triune God extending to His creation an invitation to reason together (Isaiah 1:18), with Himself and each other – not to conform to this world but to be transformed by the renewed mind, able to discern the will of God (Rm 12:2). And Christ came to Earth to visibly display the Father: “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38). As God modeled questions to his first children in the garden and attended to their responses, so too Jesus asked questions of Jews and non-Jews alike, attending to their answers, inviting communion with each other and the transcendent. As Christ followers, Christian teachers are to assume the same posture and be an extender of appropriate questions and one who welcomes answers, for as previously noted, the responder is “offering himself to you to see what

you will do to or with his offering” (Kern, 2023). It is in this type of conversation that relationships find their beginning, end or continue to grow.

The classical model of the trivium and the tools of learning are the perfect safeguards to assist the teacher in setting up a classroom that welcomes his pupils in the way students are created to learn anything and everything. Inspired by Dorothy Sayers’ 1947 address to Oxford, *The Lost Tools of Learning*, classical educator Leigh Bortins bases her homeschool community day classroom structure on the trivium and the students’ aptitudes. The trivium was a Latin word denoting the three paths of the learning journey. Regardless of a learner’s age, these three paths transport a student from the first exposure to a fact or idea all the way to wisdom in understanding how to treat that fact or idea in a way that holistically honors it for its inherent truth, goodness and beauty. A learner, new to any subject, begins in the grammar arts. For example, discovering a colorful garden, a learner may observe a daisy and learn all the grammar or facts about the daisy: color, number of petals, leaf and petal shape, and all its regenerative parts. From there, the learner’s curiosity enters her into the dialectic or wonder arts to deepen her layers of understanding. How is the daisy the same and different from other flowers? Will it grow in all seasons, all soils, and all sunlight variations? Who or what is friend or foe to the daisy? Those learners wanting to broaden their understanding further will naturally enter the rhetorical arts – the arts of wisdom, which furnish the learner with understanding sufficient to cultivate robust daisies, a ready harvest for the loveliest of salad garnishes and to delight the industrious bees.

These learning arts are not necessarily practiced linearly. Information and ideas bombard students from every angle at any given moment. Learning with the trivium arts is an

unchoreographed dance. All first steps may be an initial piece of grammar, but subsequent steps defy an exact pattern. It could be grammar turns to dialectic to rhetoric in a single day or a lifetime. Learning could be arrested after grammar never reaching a rhetorical sense. A student could traverse from grammar to dialectic back to grammar forward to rhetoric back to dialectic. The beauty of learning within the structure of the trivium arts is the opportunity and encouragement for a student's growth. The desire is that the student's "mind progresses from accumulating facts to making sense of the facts to making wise virtuous choices which honor God" in a manner that honors the learner (Bortins, 2011, p. 20).

While the arts of the trivium allow each student to participate at their own level, it is the spirit of inquiry that welcomes each student to offer what they have. But where do all the questions come from? Bortins's homeschool community classroom model and her training of teachers (parents), loosely partner numerous tools of learning with the arts of the trivium to ensure not only that teachers never exhaust their supply of questions but neither do the students. These tools of learning untether students from experts in subject matter so that a student is able to learn anything at any time, in or out of the classroom. (An expert in subject matter may be warranted in certain endeavors but a student will no longer feel compelled to acquire knowledge and understanding solely from an expert in every field.)

The Tools of Learning

In the following chart, taken from the Classical Conversations homeschool catalog, the arts of the trivium are paired with the tools of learning most appropriate to the student's stage of academic development. These tools are labeled the "5 Core Habits of GrammarTM, the 5 Common Topics of Dialectic, and the 5 Canons of Rhetoric" (Figure 2, p. 21). These tools help

Figure 2

Examples of the Trivium and Tools of Learning as an Inquiry Resource

Examples of the Trivium		
THE 5 CORE HABITS™ OF GRAMMAR: THE REPETITION THAT BUILDS KNOWLEDGE		
FOR PREPARATION FOR MEMORY		
NAMING	Know the appropriate word.	<i>Seagull first, then introduce the black-billed gull.</i>
ATTENDING	Differentiate the word from other known ideas.	<i>Seagull with a black bill versus seagull with a red bill.</i>
MEMORIZING	Remember the definition to build a knowledge base.	<i>Black-billed gull versus red-billed gull.</i>
EXPRESSING	Use the body and senses to share knowledge.	<i>Draw or photograph a black-billed gull and a red-billed gull.</i>
STORYTELLING	Use words, specifically written or spoken, to share knowledge.	<i>Explain the differences between the birds to a parent.</i>
THE 5 COMMON TOPICS OF DIALECTIC: THE QUESTIONS THAT DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING		
FOR PREPARATION FOR INVENTION		
DEFINITION	Discover what something is.	<i>What is a bird? What is a seagull?</i>
COMPARISON	Discover similarities first, then differences.	<i>How are birds and seagulls similar? How are they different?</i>
RELATIONSHIP	Discover causes and effects.	<i>What causes a bird to fly? What are the effects of birds flying?</i>
CIRCUMSTANCE	Discover what else is happening at the same time in other places.	<i>When the bird is flying, what is happening below? What is happening above?</i>
TESTIMONY	Discover what others say.	<i>What does Peterson Field Guide tell me about the bird?</i>
THE 5 CANONS OF RHETORIC: THE ARTIFACT THAT DEMONSTRATES WISDOM		
MEMORY <i>memoria</i>	The flooding of words and sensory stimuli associated with an idea	<i>I want to share my birding adventures, so I'll cull through my bird list, recordings, maps, and photographs.</i>
INVENTION <i>inventio</i>	The asking of questions through the Five Common Topics	<i>Which birds from which biomes will allow me to share my knowledge?</i>
ARRANGEMENT <i>dispositio</i>	The sorting of invention into organized thoughts	<i>I can't share them all, so I'll limit my topics to rare seabirds.</i>
STYLE <i>elocutio</i>	The choosing of the best way to present the thoughts	<i>I'll write an essay exploring its name, features, and habitat and sketch an image of the bird.</i>
DELIVERY <i>promuntiatio</i>	The practicing of presenting the best thoughts	<i>I'll practice saying the common and Latin names, pause to listen to the call, and then limit myself to a two-minute description of this bird.</i>

learners and teachers alike explore all manner of content with appropriate questions while simultaneously honoring the learner's current grasp of the subject. Whether a student is five years old or fifty, the initial conversation about a topic assists a learner new to the subject, to participate in the active discovery. For example, a grandparent visiting a pet store to purchase a first goldfish with his grandchild, has all manner of questions from the 5 Core Habits of Grammar™ to engage the child when looking into the aquarium. Naming: What kind of fish is it? Attending: Which fish should they take home? Memory: Does grandchild know anyone who has had a pet goldfish? Expressing: Should the goldfish stay in the water or out of the water? And storytelling: What did the store clerk say would be needed to take care of the goldfish? With such questions, a grandparent can easily assess a grandchild's readiness to take responsibility for the knowledge he has for such a pet. If the grandchild is not eager and excited about the goldfish discussion, the outing may end with a book about goldfish rather than a live pet. But should the grandchild express all that is goldfish and display readiness for its responsibility, going home with the fish begins the delightful journey into goldfish dialectic.

Determining a child's understanding may take time but there is no rush in this relational world of learning. Conversations ignited via questions from the 5 Common Topics of Dialectic demonstrate grandchild's understanding as he offers observations to his grandparent's queries. What are all the parts of the goldfish? How is the goldfish alike or different from other fish and other animals? Why do goldfish swim and why don't they fly? What is happening in the fishbowl: would goldfish like or not like a companion fish? What do veterinarians, aquarium keepers and Ichthyologists tell one about goldfish? Likely grandparent is discovering along with grandchild until, as interest waxes, both apply their understanding to honor God's creature,

helping goldfish live a healthy, happy, long life as well as helping others to care for their own goldfish.

Despite understanding sufficient to yield wisdom, a learner always remains a learner regarding the natural world. Grandchild and grandparent alike could wisely care for their goldfish, demonstrated by their conversation inspired by questions from the 5 Canons of Rhetoric. What is all the remembered knowledge about goldfish? What does this information help one do and think regarding goldfish, other fish, other animals? When sharing with others what information should begin and end a goldfish presentation? Should the presentation be facts about goldfish in general or more a story about having a pet goldfish? What parts can grandchild memorize so as not to lose eye contact with the audience? While the questions have centered around a singular creature in God's creation, responses likely reveal an integration of all manner of subject matter. For example, mathematics: how much water and food; science: how does a goldfish work; history: where was the first goldfish; geography: China; language arts: Latin *Carassius gibelio* and theology: Who created the fish? Because of the unbounded content, the natural world holds exemplary subject matter with which to practice the tools of learning. As previously noted, once practiced and learned, the limitless, unfettered questions surfacing from the tools of learning advance exploration without the constriction from such artificial boundaries as class-ending bells or "it is science class now, tuck all history thoughts aside."

The What: The Mysteries of Creation

Just as important as the pedagogy of the spirit of inquiry to the hospitality of a Christian classroom is the content used to educate the students. What subjects welcome the students to learn and encourage the practice of questions? During an online talk, classical education author,

David Hicks, commented on a Catechesis Wheel which visually encompassed the components in a Classical Christian classroom (Figure 1, p.9). Despite the wheel's thoroughness to include God's centrality while exploring exposition, logic, debate, research, grammar and reasoning within the arts of the trivium, Hicks noted the lack of the word mystery. Its absence implies that students have the tools to know everything. In fact, human beings have no such tools and are unable to know everything (Hicks, 2021). The presence of mystery sets an expectation of the unknown which, explored rightly, triggers wonder.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, mystery is "something not understood or something beyond understanding" ("Mystery," n.d.). A nineteenth century definition from *Webster's Dictionary 1828* also includes the idea that mystery is "something that excites wonder" ("Mystery," n.d.). Such mystery is inherent in creation which by its very nature "excites wonder" even in the youngest learners. It is common for children to crouch for a closer inspection of the industrious ants or to scamper after fluttering butterflies or even to call out in delight as their own voice bounces in echo off neighboring cliffs. It is unimaginable that the mysteries of creation would ever lack sufficient material to welcome and delight every learner. Such a curriculum would promote the habit of inquiry and humility, thus qualifying it fit to set the culture of the classroom. Questions such as, how does an acorn become an oak tree? Why do some white flowers grow into limes and others grow into strawberries and still others fail to grow into fruit at all but perfume the world gloriously? Is it true that no two snowflakes are alike but each one is hexagonal in structure? How do honeybees build honeycomb with waxy hexagonal prismatic perfection? Why don't clouds fall from the sky? Just how many stars are there, how many snowflakes and how does one count them all? Such questions of wonder about

the mysteries of creation lead to discovery and thus to more questions and more discovery rather than to exact answers.

While the mysteries of creation need not be the only curriculum, mystery itself should hold a prominent place in the classroom schedule. First, the idea of mystery is biblical. The apostle Paul declares to the church in Corinth that God's wisdom is a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined it for man's glory before time began (*New International Version* 1973/2011, 1 Corinthians 2:7). He later tells these same Corinthian Christians that people "should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1). Thus, not only is God's wisdom a mystery destined by God to be discovered by humans, but Christians are to be care-takers of God's mysteries. In a conference hosted in Tallin Estonia, Hicks exhorts educators to include the natural world in their studies for to remove nature is paramount to removing God. The modern classroom, separated from the natural world is a dehumanizing one in which students are "surrounded by gadgets, ruled by a timepiece, and entertained by a video screen on which [they] can interact with chatbots" (Hicks, 2022, p. 4). Conversely, the mysteries in creation are such that they invite students to "bask in their beauty, soak up their silence, delight in their exquisite detailing" (Hicks, 2022, p. 7). What more perfect example to accomplish such delight than God's creation?

Secondly, the mysteries of creation foster humility in learners. As previously noted, the apostle Paul declares that knowledge alone "puffs up". In his subsequent statement, Saint Paul proclaims that "If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:1 & 2). It is in the humble acknowledgement that there is always something to learn that a proper attitude towards knowledge and learning is realized. Even the

most accomplished students admit their ineptness when asked to create from the pool of natural mysteries. Whether something as elemental and invisible as the positively charged atom or as grand and apparent as the blazing noonday sun, none can consistently duplicate these wonders of nature. Human beings can but gaze in wonder and confront their own lack of knowledge and ability. They are not God. How majestic He must be.

According to early twentieth century French mystic, Simone Weil, “humility is attentive patience” (Weil, 2009, p. 20). It is in the cultivation of attention (also known as prayer) that learning occurs since when a student attends, the student suspends his own thought, “leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object” (Weil, 2009, p. 62). Weil is insistent that the student who clamors after grades cannot claim true learning since such an aggressive pursuit of knowledge is a contradiction to patient waiting. Furthermore, it is a particular type of waiting – an expectant waiting, pregnant with faith that when the student asks the Father for bread, He does not give the student a stone (Matthew 7:9). Paradoxically, as the student bends to the posture of a slave, watching and listening patiently for His master to give him understanding, the Master will only then “make his slave sit down and himself serve [the student] with meat” (Weil, 2009, p. 63).

Such attention not only extends hospitality to what is being studied and to the Father as an integral part of learning but that same practice of attending develops the learner’s ability to love one’s neighbor. In modern settings, especially those in social media, people post myriad opinions despite being unable to know their audience. How can one be expected to know all who may view their posts or comments? How then can one give appropriate voice or written content to honor their audience? Attending to another person requires the learner to empty herself of her

own thoughts and desires so as to ask questions of understanding to the other and to listen to the responses in a desire to learn of the other more fully (Weil, 2009, p. 65).

Weil likens such an education of attending to a sacrament (2009, p. 63). This is not a new idea. Fourth-century theologian St. Augustine formulated the definition of sacraments as visible signs of invisible grace in his proposition that a sacrament is “the Word of God made visible and tangible, as well as audible” (“I Am His”: Signs of Grace. (n.d.). The origin of this idea is older still. From the first chapter of Genesis, God speaks creation into being that was not previously visible. While there is disagreement between Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians regarding the number of sacraments, all agree on the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It seems fitting that as learners gaze upon the visible mysteries of creation, they are learning about their invisible Creator just as in baptism and Holy Communion. Students are invited to give their full attention to these mysteries and be welcomed into a world beyond the three-dimensional material cosmos involving length, width and height. This is a classroom that invites students to discern the invisible from the visible, the transcendent from the present.

The Why: Wisdom

And finally, the practice of blue printing an educational setting with questions regarding the mysteries of creation within the arts of the trivium supports the Christian parents’ purpose for their child’s education: cultivating strong values and a love for God and His people (*What Parents Look for in Christian Schools*, 2017). Both intentions convey the idea of wisdom (thinking God’s thoughts after Him) but wisdom is not easily discovered. Colossians 2:3 cautions readers that in Christ alone are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. God’s promise in James 1:5 qualifies the pursuit of the Author of wisdom with asking a question: If any of you

lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”

Learning to pray for wisdom as well as learning to discern if answers are from God is a life-long cultivation of the imagination, for this is the location of decision-making. In an online lecture regarding Christian pedagogy, the Revd. Dr. David L. Masterson defines the imagination as “the meeting ground between the senses of the body and the intellect or the nous of the soul” (2021, 7.04). He further differentiates knowledge as discursive reasoning from that of the knowledge in the intellect. Discursive reasoning is an inherent mental faculty which assists humans to draw conclusions from facts about something or someone, such as God. Conversely, knowledge in the intellect is gained from communion *with* God. This communal knowledge of God is the same type of knowledge that scripture presents in 2 Peter 1:3: “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence”. Such communal knowledge is acquired from both the Word of God and the works of God -- the mysteries of creation.

As in all arts, the art of developing this higher order of communal knowledge in the intellect requires lifelong practice in training the imagination to seek after God to attain wisdom. Referring again to Dr. Masterson’s lecture, he states that

The imagination can be nourished on what is good, beautiful and true or it can be stultified and deadened by depriving it of the beautiful, good and true and allowing it to feed on that which is ugly, base, and false. As the body and mind take in information, the imagination forms ideas about reality. (2021, 7:12)

What better nourishment than the holy scriptures alongside the mysteries of nature to stock the imagination with the beautiful, good and true. It is in the imagination that images of all manner are stored and brought forth at the proper time. Saint Augustine referred to this store house of memory as the “the great cave of memory” which collected all treasures sensed by the body:

[A]s light and all colors and bodily shapes through the eyes; all varieties of sound through the ears; all odors by the portal of the nostrils; all tastes by the portal of the mouth; and, by the sense diffused throughout the whole body what is hard, what is soft, what is hot or cold, smooth or sharp, heavy or light, whether outside or inside the body.

(The Confessions of Saint Augustine, 1960, loc. 4130)

Writer and classical poetry translator, Anthony Esolen, notes that a sure method of diminishing the effectiveness of human beings is to “keep the memory weak and empty” to ensure “the imagination simply does not have much to think about, or to play with” (2013, p. 9). Esolen further notes that “A fact, by itself, does not seem to rouse the imagination. It merely is. It sits there like a rock” (2013, p. 5). Yet, Esolen encourages, should that fact be recalled and stimulated in the imagination via questions, one puts the imagination to work. The ho hum fact, ‘the Colorado River is 1,450 miles long’ is stirred to life by questions proffered by the 5 Common Topics of Dialectic: What is a river? How is it similar to or different from a mountain lion? What creatures thrive in its muddy floor? Which states does the river run through? Who is responsible for caring for the river?

Harkening back to Hicks’ argument, good teachers aspire to develop the best questions to prompt what ought to be done to prepare the body for action. These actions (or inactions) are the

visible rhetoric resulting from the questions posed to the grammar and wrestled within the imagination. It is in the imagination that choices involving moral judgment are made. Just as Dr. Masterson reasoned from a scriptural stance that spiritual warfare is primarily fought in the imagination and only secondarily in the body, so too argues Hicks as he notes that choices made in the mind produce the future actuality for each learner and those around him:

[T]he choice of our friends, of how we spend our leisure time, of the work we decide to do, of the habits we acquire — these are what change us. The young person who smokes his first joint or decides to remain silent while an unpopular classmate is being ridiculed — this person has made a choice without asking himself whether that choice will change him for the better or for the worse. But of course, this is the question he should be asking. A question that goes right to the heart of his humanness. A question that we want our students to be in the habit of asking. (Hicks, 2022, p. 9)

Just as God spoke good into being as outlined in the first chapters of Genesis, Christian cognitive neuroscientist, Dr. Caroline Leaf, maintains that Christians, created in the image of God, have not only the capacity but also the responsibility to renew their minds and choose life over death. She contends that every decision has its foundation in one of “two types of emotion – love and fear – and all other emotions stem from these, each derivative forming its own chemical ‘signature’” (Leaf et al., 2019, p. 59). These chemical signatures create pathways leading to decisions of action in accordance with the fruit of the spirit as identified in Galatians 5:22-23 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) or in accordance with chaos evidenced by symptoms of fear such as “impatience and unkindness, irritability, pride

and boastfulness, bitterness, unforgiveness, wrong choices, and trauma” (Leaf et al., 2019, p. 34). Thus, human memory, well provisioned with God’s word and the mysteries of creation, alongside a consistent humble practice of inquiry, furnishes the learner the ability to decide in favor of the courageous acts that love demands. What better education will guide the learner to readily understand that self-sacrifice and acts of service are signs of love rather than signs of weakness? The imagination cultivated in this manner will manifest itself in a state of worship of the one true God for humans will become whatever they focus on most (Leaf et al., 2019, p. 36). And the world will know them as set apart -- as holy, by this love.

Another way the spirit of inquiry cultivates wisdom in students is through the inevitable self-assessment that naturally occurs as each student responds to questions and presents questions to the learning community. Such conversation ensures evaluation is transparent and timely as the classroom teacher and peers can attend to each other’s offerings, listen, and assess each other and themselves often during the day. The student also has opportunity to self-assess. This consistent exercise in attending and assessment assists students to practice making sound judgments: was the content and conversation honoring, truthful, and encouraging towards goodness and beauty? If it was, a “well done” is deserved. If it was not, what precisely was not and what does the student specifically need to consider to transform her work to good? This habit of self-assessing is easily carried into all other activities such as sports, friendship, employment and marriage. It is a habit that renders students triumphant in the virtue of self-control. The standardized testing of modern education requires students to exercise their short-term memory and achieve a certain number of correct predetermined answers to attain a good

grade. But besides a grade, what does the standardized test accomplish in students? It does not promote the practice of listening or helping a learner know how to improve her thoughts and certainly does not require a judgment of goodness or beauty, for these are the actions cultivated through assessment.

Not consigned to the classroom, wisdom is the attribute that encompasses all that is godly and serves human beings in all circumstances and at every age. Spending hours in the company of others, learners practice the art of sound decision-making through prayer, by prospering the imagination with all that is good and by assessing their own thoughts and those of others. It is the faculty that prepares every human to traverse into the unknown with confidence that they can know the will of God as well as replicate on earth what is in heaven. It is the enterprise of God's image bearers.

Chapter IV

Findings and Conclusion

Despite the benefits of a Classical Christian journey for both students and teacher in goodness, truth and beauty, it is improbable that a pedagogy of humility by way of inquiry and the mysteries of creation would or could be implemented in a non-Christian education. To do so would require that the whole arrangement of non-Christian education be reorganized. Applying the canon of arrangement (from the 5 Canons of Rhetoric) to the classroom, permits one to note that how ideas are arranged promotes a particular worldview which affects how students act towards themselves and others both in and out of the classroom. In the modern education setting, the student is arranged or placed at the center of all educational considerations (*Classical Christian Education*, 2011, p. 7). All other educational facets revolve around the student and what is needed to promote each student's achievement and their preparation for global competitiveness (*Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) | U.S. Department of Education*, n.d.). While the student remains the cornerstone around which everything else revolves, the goal to prepare the student for global competitiveness seems to require a modicum of focus on others and how to meet or even anticipate the needs of others. It is assumed that global competitiveness will improve the quality of life around the world, but such an outcome is unlikely considering 16,000 hours of constructivist understanding centered around the self. It is more probable that these 16,000 hours will yield a self-centered consumer with little understanding about the world except how they feel about any given topic. In his talk to educators, while in Tallin Estonia, Hicks paints a chilling reality of students and their teachers who have used their imaginations to elevate the self in replacement of God.

[T]hese are the individuals who are reconstructing *our* world in the image of *their* imagined selves. They are rewriting history, re- envisioning education, ...restructuring institutions as basic as the family, school, and the church, ...re-imagining the future, and in short, reconstructing culture and recreating the world. This is what we mean by the secular world order. (2022, p. 4)

How then does one educate human beings at any age, in any setting, to reject the schooling that yields a harmful secular world order and to embrace the learning that prepares them to act, not for global competitiveness, but rather for the global good? It is after all Christ's commission to His own: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded" (Mt 28:19). It all begins with Christian hospitality – an invitation to fast from pride and feast on the of mysteries of creation served up by LORD of Hosts. In attending and exploring the copious mysteries of creation, human beings develop a sense of wonder and a spirit of inquiry that elevates their imagination to glimpse the true nature of the Heavenly Father of it all. They are released from the low ceiling of strict materialism that dismisses the dialectic arts found in the trivium. Honoring how a human being naturally learns, the classical model slows down the process of learning to commit a body of knowledge to memory, to train the imagination to honor the nature of what is being thought about and to assess whether one ought to act a certain way. As the classical method is intertwined with God's ways and word, the imagination soars to think God's thoughts after Him and act accordingly. He is the Author of all that is good, true and beautiful of which a classical Christian education alone harvests. Once tasted, nothing else satisfies. To search anywhere else but classical Christian education for human flourishing and global well-being is reminiscent of the Apostle Peter's own

realization when asked by Christ if he wanted to follow those who had turned away from Christ:

“Lord, there is no one else that we can go to! Your words give eternal life... We have faith in you” (John 6:68 CEV).

Chapter V

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