

Endorsements for *The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education*

We needed this book and now it's here. Clark and Jain explain the inner logic of classical education in a manner fully consistent with the heritage of classical education with no ideological twists and turns and a level of scholarly inquiry that will enrich the classical renewal for a long time. Once you've read a book or two to introduce you to classical education and have started to ask the deeper questions about its history and nature, get this book and use it as a permanent reference.

—**Andrew Kern**  
President  
Circe Institute

Clark and Jain have produced a wonderful book that lays out clearly where classical Christian education needs to go from here. This volume marks the successful passing of the torch lit by Sayers and Wilson to a new generation. All involved in classical Christian education would benefit highly from heeding these new voices.

I teach a course on classical Christian education [in which] students read many of the pillars of the movement such as Sayers, Wilson, Littlejohn, and Evans, but the book that resonated with them the most was Clark and Jain's. This slim volume should prove going forward to be essential reading for anyone connected with the classical Christian school movement.

Clark and Jain, while appreciative of the good work done by the pioneers of contemporary classical Christian schools, have nevertheless produced a revolutionary book for the movement. By digging deeply into the history and theology of the Trivium and the Quadrivium, Clark and Jain demonstrate how classical Christian schools today can and should be so much more than a simple three-part formula for learning. I sincerely hope their words will be heard and heeded.

—**Jason R. Edwards (Ph.D.)**  
Associate Professor of History and Humanities  
Grove City College

This book is an important contribution to the classical education movement in three major ways. At one level, it presents a complete liberal arts curriculum in the context of a holistic vision of Christian formation. At the same time, it offers an account of the liberal arts that extends beyond the customary emphasis on the verbal arts (Trivium) by including the mathematical arts (Quadrivium). As a result, it also notably locates a subtle and practical training in the modern sciences within classical education. The authors speak to these issues based on their unique combination of training in math, science, philosophy, and literature, as well as their crucial experience as classroom teachers. The book suggests what may yet be possible for those answering the call of the scholar-teacher.

—**Phillip J. Donnelly (Ph.D.)**

Director of the Great Texts Program, Honors College  
Baylor University

In an age in which education is generally assumed to be a crassly utilitarian enterprise, Clark and Jain provide a refreshing reminder of what education for centuries has been understood to be. Through astute historical and philosophical analysis, they offer an introduction to the liberal arts tradition that is both accessible and thorough, both theoretical and practical.

—**David Diener (PhD)**

Head of Upper Schools, Covenant Classical School  
Adjunct Philosophy Faculty, Taylor University

Ravi Scott Jain and Kevin Clark have given us a book we have needed for a long time. Scrupulously researched, thoroughly documented, tightly argued—and best of all, readably concise. This is henceforth the “go-to” book for anyone serious about developing an historically accurate and theologically compelling classical Christian education. Our long-standing imbalance has been a classical humanities emphasis accompanied by the limping stepchild of mathematics. We have loved rhetoric and despised geometry. The first half of our curriculum has thus been genuinely ancient; but the latter, modernist. We recovered and elevated the language-based Trivium, so long lost in the ashes of history. For this we must thank Sayers and Wilson, among others. But along the way we

failed to recover the mathematics-based Quadrivium, and thus essentially gutted fully half the classical curriculum of the seven liberal arts that we say we value so much—and I say this as a humanities scholar-teacher. The brilliant classical move of this book is to show us how to complete that second recovery, and why we simply must implement it, including the musico-gymnastic element. But more importantly, the equally brilliant Christian move of the book is to reframe the entire curriculum and its pedagogy with the bookends of piety at the origins and philosophical theology as the goal. We have the blueprint now—let’s get to work!

—**Grant Horner**

Associate Professor of Renaissance and  
Reformation Studies, The Master’s College  
Teacher-Mentor, Trinity Classical Academy  
Santa Clarita, CA

Some of us, after having immersed ourselves in the Trivium, thanks to Dorothy Sayers’s essay and many other wonderful resources, have found ourselves wondering, What else? We know there are seven liberal arts, including the Quadrivium, and we don’t know exactly what to do with these other four, where to go next. Clark and Jain’s <I>The Liberal Arts Tradition</I> has the answers, and provides them in a clear, concise, non-partisan way. If you are wondering, What else? then this is one resource you need to have on your bookshelf.

—**Matt Bianco**

Director of Education  
Classical Conversations

Kevin and Ravi joined The Great Conversation many years ago. They know its rhythms, complexities, elegance, and narrative. In meditative fashion they learn by listening; in teaching they gain clarity; in life these embodied practices flourish in themselves and unto others. In short, these men have made me a better man.

—**Robert F. Ingram**

Headmaster  
The Geneva School

THE LIBERAL ARTS  
TRADITION:  
A PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN  
CLASSICAL EDUCATION



*Foreword by Peter Kreeft*

Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain





***The Liberal Arts Tradition:  
A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education***

© Classical Academic Press, 2013

Version 1

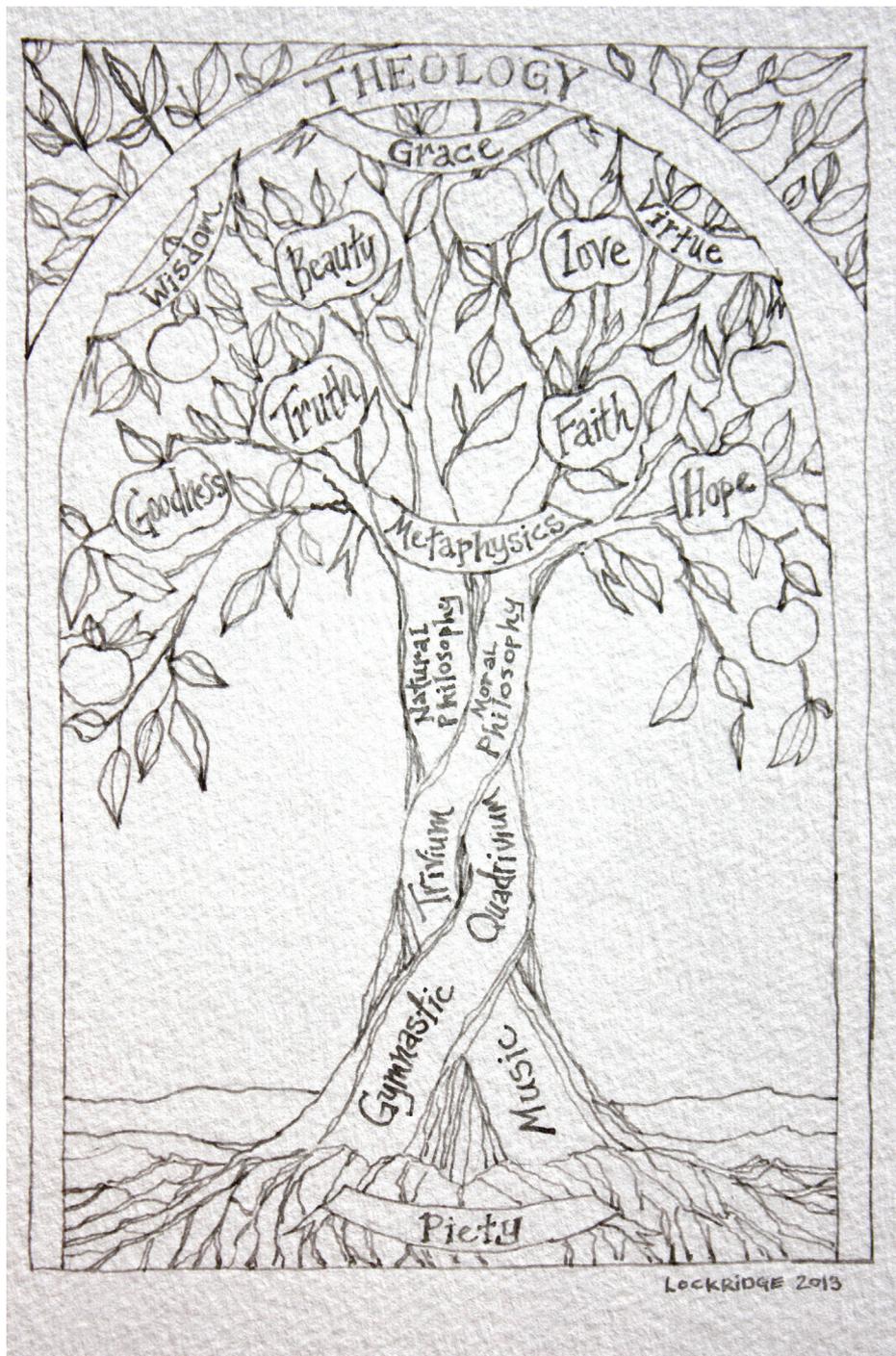
ISBN: 978-1-60051-225-4

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Cover & layout by Rob Baddorf

Classical Academic Press  
2151 Market Street  
Camp Hill, PA 17011  
[www.ClassicalAcademicPress.com](http://www.ClassicalAcademicPress.com)



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# FOREWORD

by Peter Kreeft

Plato said a lot of foolish things in his *Republic* about an ideally just society, but one very central thing that he said in that work was not foolish at all but very wise: the single most important thing that makes a society good, and just, and wise, and happy is education.

Do you want *the very best* middle and high school education for your children? Then read this book and find a school that believes and practices its principles.

This book is about a *complete* education in the “liberal arts,” which are the fundamental subjects that students will need as a foundation to build on for the rest of their educational life, no matter what specialized subjects they take later, in college and graduate school. Most important of all, these are the subjects we need to know for *life*, for a life that is free and not slavish (thus the term “*liberal* education”).

Just look at this book’s table of contents to see how much is included in this. It’s more than the old “seven liberal arts,” but it builds on them.

It is an education of *the whole person*, not just the calculating intellect. But it is not less “intellectual” for that, but more so.

It is based on the “tried and true” tradition of liberal education invented by the greatest minds in history. Here you will meet Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Christ, Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal, C.S. Lewis. It is the best of the old *and* the best of the new. It is not the “politically correct” education offered by our ever-declining and continually dumbed-down state schools. In fact it compares to that as a Jane Austen novel compares to a pothead’s addled dream.

As our culture becomes more decadent, spiritual survival reactions to it become tougher and tighter, just as the body’s white corpuscles or-

ganize to combat an infection. As bad gets worse, good gets better. And the contrast gets clearer and stronger.

This is not “mainstream” education. And the educational establishment feels deeply threatened by it, and offers at least eight silly objections to it that are really advertisements *for* it.

1. It’s “divisive.” It’s not what everyone else is doing. It marches to a different drummer. It cultivates excellence rather than conformity. Yes it does. And this is actually sometimes used as an objection rather than as a selling point!
2. It’s old, outdated, unfashionable. Yes it is, like honor, courage, integrity, and honesty. It doesn’t try to tell the truth with a clock; it doesn’t practice chronological snobbery. In an age which has embraced every novelty, the true rebel is the traditionalist.
3. It’s not in line with modern philosophies: skepticism, cynicism, subjectivism, relativism, naturalism, materialism, reductionism, positivism, scientism, socialism. That’s exactly right. It’s not. It’s countercultural. It harnesses teenagers’ natural proclivity to rebel and turns that force against “the bad guys” who are now the “establishment” instead of against “the good guys.”
4. It’s “judgmental.” It believes there really is good and bad, true and false. The typical modern education is judgmental only against being judgmental, and skeptical of everything except skepticism.
5. It’s small. It’s private. It’s grassroots. It’s implemented mainly in small schools, not big ones. This is true, and it’s another plus rather than a minus. “Small is beautiful.” The bigger the school, the more standardized it has to be and the more the person tends to get lost in the system and get identified with his or her race, economic class, gender, sexual orientation, or political party.
6. It seeks the truth for its own sake, not primarily for pragmatic uses. It aims at wisdom, not wealth. It makes its graduates philosophers instead of millionaires. This is also true. But it’s not a fault. As Chesterton says, “Man’s most practical need is to be more than a pragmatist.”

7. It's not specialized. It doesn't include courses on underwater basket weaving or pickling and fermentation (which was actually a major at Ohio State). It doesn't teach you clever ways to outguess Microsoft word, or the government, or lawyers, or your professor, or the standardized tests. It just teaches you how to think and how to live. But businesses, law schools, and government agencies don't want specialist drudges and drones; they want people who can read and write and think logically and creatively.
8. It's religious. It's Christian. It doesn't pretend that the most important man who ever lived never lived, as our public education now does. It assumes that the supernatural is not the enemy to the natural, that "grace perfects nature rather than demeaning it," as light perfects all colors.

This little book is a description of that educational program. It's precious—because children are precious.

# A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Seeking to recover a lost art or craft is a difficult endeavor. There are few, if any, who are masters of the craft or art and who can teach the necessary skills to those coming behind. Those of us who have been trying to recover the art of classical education have been in that awkward position of trying to craft a curriculum and pedagogy without training and only a few tools. We have tried to give what we were not given ourselves. We are trying to reconstruct a bridge without having studied bridge building.

The good news is that the recovery has been underway for about thirty years now, and some good books have been written and many great old books found and read. Beyond that, there have been many who have been building bridges—actually implementing a recovered classical Christian education in our schools and slowly learning the art, often through a good deal of trial and error. We are slowly finding our footing, finding ourselves walking more confidently on the old paths and finding the old way very much suited to our own new times. The bridge may not be beautiful, but it's now functional and people are crossing over. Slowly the bridge is getting wider and stronger and gradually more attractive to the eye.

Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain are two educator-philosophers who have been reading the old and new books and implementing their ideas at the Geneva School in Winter Park, Florida, for some ten years—building the bridge. What's more, they have discussed their ideas with peers and critics over this span, inviting leading educators and professors from around the country to engage and critique their ideas. In this crucible of give and take, their ideas have evolved and clarified and have resulted in this pithy, clear, and profound book, setting the model of Christian classical education before us in bright light. To those who have read Douglas Wilson's *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* or Evans and Littlejohn's *Wisdom and Eloquence*, this book will prove to be the illuminating third book that helps complete the bridge linking us back to the classical tradition of education.

I have noted that this book is pithy and clear. It is. Clark and Jain took this manuscript through some eight editions, refining the text more each time, knowing that the discussion of classical education is often confusing on many levels. In at least two ways Clark and Jain bring clarity where it has often been lacking. First, they clarify the confusing taxonomy of the classical curriculum (scope and sequence) and they *define terms*. They accomplish this with a historical survey of the classical curriculum as well as a contemporary survey of its application and terminology. Too often we find an unstable blend of modern terminology and traditional classical categories. Generally there is talk of the Trivium and Quadrivium—blended with many other kinds of terminology and classification. We are not sure what is specified by “art,” “science,” “humanities,” “grammar,” or “natural philosophy,” because these various words are used in different ways and already have a wide or uncertain semantic range. Clark and Jain bring much-needed clarity to this discussion.

The second way in which Clark and Jain bring clarity is by showing us the entire context of the classical curriculum—a context that is larger than the seven liberal arts of the Trivium and Quadrivium. In fact, for the first time (for many) they show us explicitly how singing, worship, poetry, recess, stories, drama, and field days are in fact an integral part of a classical education. They show us how history, literature, philosophy, and theology (not liberal arts) are critical to the tradition. They summarize that context for the integrated, holistic, and humanizing curriculum as PGMAPT: piety, gymnastic, music, arts (the liberal arts), philosophy, and theology. In my thinking, PGMAPT has already become the mental overlay I use for reflecting on the general endeavor of classical education—it is the best big picture I have seen.

This model proves to be very helpful to elementary school educators (especially in grades K-2) who do not teach Latin, logic, or rhetoric and who often ask “How do I teach classically?” Well, a Kindergarten teacher is indeed a profoundly classical teacher who helps establish young souls in piety, gymnastic, and music—priming and cultivating the affections, loves, wills, and bodies of children at a time when they are docile, receptive, and eager. It is these teachers of the young who make the

first deep and lasting impression on the souls of children—tuning their hearts and training their bodies, engaging them in a holistic and essentially “musical” education, and educating them in wonder that teaches “passions more than skills and content.” It turns out that the classical primary teachers are the exalted “wonder-workers” of the school. In this respect, the primary teachers lead the entire endeavor, as “wonder” is a condition for all future study.

This model is also helpful to upper school educators who teach literature, history, theology, and philosophy. Training in the liberal arts while humanizing “goods” in themselves nonetheless prepares students for the formal study of philosophy and theology. There is a kind of biblical study that is present even in kindergarten, but the formal study of theology requires the training of the liberal arts to be done with mastery. Thus Clark and Jain say that classical education is “grounded in piety and governed by theology,” which is to say that biblical truth is both the beginning and the end (the *arche* and the *telos*) of Christian classical education. This recovered full model of classical education (PGMAPT) gives the twelfth-grade theological educator his rightful place. Though the formal study of theology comes last in the sequence, she nonetheless is the governess guiding the entire educational enterprise, giving coherence and unity throughout—the “queen” of the arts.

If recovering classical education is like recovering a lost art, it might also be like trying to remember a hazy dream. In the reading of dozens of books on classical education, I often experience the exercise in a kind of dream state. I find myself catching glimpses of things that I know are part of a great whole, as if I once knew that whole but can’t quite remember it. When another book restores some part of that whole, I put that part into place with a flash of recognition—as it fits into place I recognize that I once knew it. Who will restore to me the whole? How can I remember what I once knew? Well, Clark and Jain have helped stir these collective memories, telling us who we once were, restoring our narrative, restoring our rightful inheritance. How do they do this? Over ten years they have somehow succeeded in remembering who we all once were and they can now tell the story that awakens us. PGMAPT is that story, and I think you will immediately recognize it

as your story, as the education for which you have yearned and want to give to your children.

—Christopher A. Perrin, PhD, Publisher  
Classical Academic Press

# PREFACE

The authors have worked together as colleagues for ten years at the Geneva School in Winter Park, Florida. Kevin has primarily taught philosophy and theology but also logic and rhetoric. Ravi, on the other hand, has taught mathematics and science mainly at the level of Advanced Placement classes. While not apparent at first, over time we realized that, though we teach very different subjects, we cherish similar ends. By the third or fourth year of our labors it also became clear to us that the categories of Christian classical education were bursting at the seams and were scarcely able to achieve the ends which first attracted us to them. Moreover while the authors deeply valued the principle of integration, it was unclear how to accomplish that on a practical level between classes. Various teachers were often stepping on each others' intellectual toes, usually inadvertently. This work represents the culmination of five years of dialogue as we searched for solutions to these and related problems. While the authors have certainly not solved all of them, this short book offers the sketch of a direction that we have found promising.

This paradigm accomplishes four things that we are eager to advance. First, it foregrounds the *centrality of Christian formation* as integral to the entire endeavor. In our view, the whole of education ought to proceed from the love of God and neighbor. Education is more than the transference of knowledge, it is the transmission of values, culture, and the proper ordering of loves. Second, this paradigm *celebrates music and art and respects human embodiment*. While most Christian classical schools include these in the curriculum, these aspects are often listed as grammar. This to us seems awkward, unprofitable, and ahistorical, especially when the tradition has much to say on these topics. Third, this paradigm offers *a robust vision of both the language arts and mathematics*. Christian classical schools have often treated mathematics and natural science as awkward and unwanted appendages. The truth is that mathematics has been a key subject of the Western curriculum since the time of Plato. Moreover, it was from this fertile ground that modern natu-

ral science sprung. Both mathematics and natural science can thus be authentically situated within Christian classical education. In addition, while the language arts have been championed by our schools, too little progress has been made on the recovery of Latin, perhaps due to a crisis of vision. Lastly, this paradigm offers a path forward for *integration—in both thought and life*. It identifies how faith and science are complementary and not exclusionary. It appreciates the situatedness of embodied life, the centrality of love, and the life of the mind. It establishes the possibility of discourse between the social sciences and natural sciences. It suggests that the language arts are important to the natural sciences and that mathematics is relevant for human formation. This paradigm values the profundity of tradition and yet offers a path to improve upon that tradition through organic change from within. It respects contemporary academic discourse and yet seeks threads within that discourse which cohere with a traditional Western Christian vision of reality. In a word, this paradigm allows for a high degree of *integration*.

We offer this paradigm not, we pray, as innovators, but as those who have discovered a great lost gem. We have met many educators throughout the country who are pursuing similar goals, and we have realized that they also find the current categories important but too limiting. In order to cast an authentic and compelling vision to parents and newcomers and to avoid turf wars between classrooms, we realized that we needed a dogged commitment to work out the implications of a thoroughly Christian classical education in a context which respected academic scholarship. One reason we have provided so many footnotes is to supply readers with an introduction to the wealth of academic sources that can assist Christian classical schools in their endeavor. We hope that our exploration of the tradition may provide others with resources that will inform and inspire their teaching. We also hope that discussion of these categories will motivate others to search deeper into the tradition themselves in order to find more treasures therein. While we believe that our paradigm is faithful to our Western Christian heritage, we are certain that there is much more to be said. We look forward to working alongside that next generation of teachers who will both say it and teach it to their students.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As teachers we have the opportunity of working alongside a number of engaging and inspiring colleagues as we share with our students our learning, our loves, and in many ways our lives. It is as hopeless a task to thank adequately each of those who have had a role in shaping our understanding of education as it is to identify precisely which parts of that understanding belong more properly to us or have simply arisen in the context of the ever-flowing dialogue that makes the school day. Acknowledging these limitations, we wish simply to offer a heartfelt word of gratitude to our colleagues and students. Without these we could not even begin to account for who we are as men, much less what we have come to understand about the nature and ends of education.

Beyond the borders of the school, Chris Perrin deserves sincere thanks. His tasking us to write a philosophy of Christian classical education for the Alcuin fellowship's review ultimately became the germ of this present book. We also appreciate the efforts of Nathan Raley, a close friend and helpful editor of this work, and those of Christine Perrin, who reviewed an early manuscript. Others who have read and commented on this work at various stages, including David Diener, Adam Lockridge, and Milton Gaither, are also due thanks. We are indebted to Jason Edwards, Peter Kreeft, and Phillip Donnelly both for their enthusiasm for this project and for their critical reviews. Finally, we thank Matthew Clark and Rachel Lockridge for their handsome artwork and Rob Baddorf for his artistic direction of this work.

## KEVIN WOULD ALSO LIKE TO NOTE:

A few particular words of thanks are in order. First here is my co-author Ravi Scott Jain. This project would never have left the whiteboard of his classroom were it not for his determination and tireless effort. I would also like to thank Jim and Dayle Seneff for their encouragement and generosity; Luder Whitlock for his advice and kind attention and oversight; and Bob Ingram for his unflagging support of my work in this

and other projects. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge Chris Perrin's vision for this work, as well as the helpful criticism of many of the Alcuin Fellows—it is difficult to imagine how this work would have seen the light of day without these folks! Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Taryn, for her patience and support. Before anyone else, my work is for her.

#### RAVI WOULD ALSO LIKE TO NOTE:

To write on education is necessarily to reflect on one's own. And because education is, at least in part, a gift from others, there is much thanks to go around. I must first thank the many fine teachers and staff at both the public and private schools which trained me. For my passage from Troy Montessori kindergarten through H.B. Plant High School, I owe these first teachers much thanks. I also appreciate the influence of my professors at Davidson College, who often preserved a remnant of an older, richer vision of education. Further, I would like to thank the professors at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando; I am especially indebted to John Frame, Steven Childers, Charles Mackenzie, and Richard Pratt. Many others have ministered to me and taught me since youth and to all of those pastors and friends who have nurtured in me a love for Christ and a reverence for Scripture I offer thanks. Finally the Geneva School itself has continued to educate me. Bob Ingram, Jim and Dayle Seneff, and Kevin Clark have all played crucial roles in this. I must additionally thank Ken Myers for his intelligent direction on multiple occasions, which has helped hone my vision.

Of all, I am most grateful to my wife, Kelley Jain, who has been a source of constant support, often setting aside her own wishes in order to make time for me to write, edit, or annotate the manuscript. Moreover, I owe to my mother, Peggy Reindl, and my grandmother, Erma Owens, my first intuitions of piety. They taught me to love and be loved by God and man. It is now to my immediate family, Kelley, Judah, and Xavier Jain, that I owe my deepest convictions of filial piety. They remind me that Paul's words regarding the mystery of the unity between Christ and the church are not mere metaphor but speak of a profound reality. It is both for them that I write and on account of them that I am able to do so. For my hope is that the education which our children receive will be a faithful participation in our own inheritance.

# THE PARADIGM OF THE LIBERAL ARTS TRADITION

The Christian classical liberal arts model is as complex and harmonious as the great medieval synthesis that gave birth to it. In his masterpiece *The Discarded Image*, C.S. Lewis writes that the medieval synthesis is “as unified and ordered as the Parthenon or the Oedipus Rex, as crowded and varied as a London terminus on a bank holiday.”<sup>1</sup> Lewis’s image is instructive for us as we emphasize both the unified integrity and the inner connectivity of the liberal arts tradition. The traditional seven liberal arts are part of the wealth we have inherited from the classical world. Many in the Christian classical renewal reflect this heritage by identifying the major divisions in their schools according to the names of the first three of these liberal arts—*grammar, dialectic, rhetoric*—the three arts constituting the medieval *Trivium* (from the Latin meaning “the three paths”). The latter four liberal arts—*arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music*, known as the *Quadrivium* (from the Latin meaning “the four paths”)—have been somewhat less celebrated though they are just as traditional. The ancients believed that these seven “arts” were not merely subjects to be mastered, but sure and certain ways of forming in the soul the intellectual virtue necessary for acquiring true wisdom.

The Christian classical renewal is indebted to the insights Dorothy Sayers enumerated in her famous essay “The Lost Tools of Learning,”<sup>2</sup> and to the vision for the recovery of those tools that Doug Wilson pioneered in his foundational book *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning*.<sup>3</sup> Their identification of the crisis in modern education as the failure to

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1. C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 10.

2. Dorothy L. Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning” (New York: National Review, 1961).

3. Douglas Wilson, *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning: An Approach to Distinctively Christian Education* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991).

cultivate these traditional arts of learning is prophetic. In addition to this, their exposition of the classical educational tradition—especially the Trivium—has effected a seismic shift in Christian education. We are also indebted to the suggestions of Littlejohn and Evans in their stimulating book *Wisdom and Eloquence* for offering a living model.<sup>4</sup> Their contribution could be summarized succinctly, perhaps, by the proposition that the Trivium is not enough: a full-orbed education requires not merely cultivation of the *language arts* of the Trivium, but also the cultivation of the *mathematical arts* of the Quadrivium and the formation of moral virtue as well. There are many other thinkers and teachers who have shaped the movement at various levels, but these three represent well the philosophical trajectory the Christian classical renewal has taken thus far.

*What we present here is a vision of the liberal arts as a central part of a larger and more robust paradigm of Christian classical education.*

Continuing in this trajectory of recovering the tradition and applying it to contemporary contexts, we seek to enlarge upon our predecessors' visions for a classical liberal arts education. Hitherto thinkers in the renewal have understood the Trivium itself (Sayers and Wilson) or the Trivium and Quadrivium together with moral formation (Littlejohn and Evans) *as constituting the Christian classical curriculum*. What we present here is a vision of *the liberal arts as a central part of a larger and more robust paradigm of Christian classical education*. Our thesis is simple, though perhaps controversial: the seven liberal arts were *never meant to stand on their own* as the entire curriculum, for they are designed particularly for cultivating *intellectual virtue*. Since human beings are more than just intellects, however, the curriculum must develop more than just intellectual virtue. Creatures formed in God's image must be cultivated in body and soul—mind, will, and affections. As we will seek to show, the Christian classical educational tradition embodies just the kind of holistic and fully integrated curriculum that

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4. Robert Littlejohn and Charles T. Evans, *Wisdom and Eloquence: A Christian Paradigm for Classical Learning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

a thoroughly Christian understanding of human nature demands. It does so, however, *only when the seven liberal arts are taken as part of a larger model* consisting of what we here term piety, gymnastic, music, liberal arts, philosophy, and theology. This full-orbed education aims at cultivating fully integrated human beings, whose bodies, hearts, and minds are formed respectively by gymnastic, music, and the liberal arts; whose relationships with God, neighbor, and community are marked by piety; whose knowledge of the world, man, and God fit harmoniously within a distinctly Christian philosophy; and whose lives are informed and governed by a theology forged from the revelation of God in Christ Jesus as it has been handed down in historic Christianity. We propose this model for a truly integrated Christian classical education—where the intellectual tools of the seven liberal arts are formed within the context of a Christian life and moral imagination that is governed by a thoroughly Christian philosophy and theology—as at once a faithful summary of the Christian classical educational tradition and a compelling model for schools in the Christian classical renewal.<sup>5</sup>

This paradigm will doubtlessly challenge some of the categories commonly held by our schools. It is, as we said previously, however, a faithful re-presentation of crucial elements of a long and varied tradition. We hope to show that it is also a reflection of the educational philosophy that most Christian classical schools already embrace, whether consciously or not. Our summary of the classical curriculum adapted by the medieval Christian universities and schools can be represented by the ordering of the six curricular categories we have mentioned, each subsequent one depending on and expanding upon the prior. These categories are piety, gymnastic, music, liberal arts, philosophy, and theology reflected by the mnemonic PGMAPT (the *A* stands for liberal arts).<sup>6</sup> Drawing from these categories, one can then offer a brief definition

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5. For more depth on the roots of our approach, Appendix I: Modernity and the Christian Classical Alternative offers a brief but dense critique of modernity and the biblical alternative offered by Christian classical education which reverberates throughout this work.

6. There is a strong parallel between our ordering and what Dr. John Senior refers to as the “Five Modes of Knowledge: Gymnastic...Music...The Liberal Arts...Science...Practical Science.” John Senior, “*The Idea of a School*” (unpublished manuscript, printed copy, consulted March 15, 2013), 19.

of Christian classical education. Grounded in piety, Christian classical education cultivates the virtue of the student in body, heart, and mind, while nurturing a love for wisdom under the lordship of Christ. This thesis can be further explored through four points which we will state in summary in this preface and which will provide a compact snapshot of this book. The ensuing discussion may be too dense for some readers. Those that stumble may profitably move on to the next section and use this preview as a summary after finishing the book. But since following tradition requires us to listen carefully to the dialect of another era, we thought it wise to offer at least a preliminary sketch of how their genius gave us a coherent and holistic education.

### *Grounded in Piety, Governed by Theology*

The foundational distinction between traditional education and modern education is that the ancients believed that education was fundamentally about shaping loves. What one loved and treasured could be right or wrong according to how that love accorded to the structure of reality. A prescribed set of cultural norms reflected this understanding and these values could indeed be taught. It was an education in love. Personal values were not simply explored or discovered on one's own but were passed down and lived out. This required trust and commitment, and thus piety, the proper love and fear of God and man, was the critical virtue. It aligned one's will with the family, society, and God, and expected the young pupils' desires, beliefs, and habits to be shaped over years in the process of incarnating them. Piety required faithful devotion manifested in action. Education was enculturation in piety, virtue, wisdom, and grace, and the curriculum served the culture.

In this context, the words of St. Anselm are intelligible, *credo ut intelligam*, "I believe that I may understand." Thus theology, the science of Scripture, rested at the apex of education after belief and active dependence on faith had been cultivated. Growth in piety was the foundation and preceded by many years the critical study of doctrine which could only be done with great intellectual care and wisdom. But the metaphysical and theological beliefs passed down through the culture,

church, and universities truly governed the form and content of the curriculum as the faculties of universities sought to understand the ways of God at work in the world. Theology was the queen of the sciences, but she was a servant queen. So from Augustine to today the Christian tradition has recurrently affirmed that “grace does not set nature aside but perfects it.” Thus theology was not supposed to intrude upon the lower disciplines from without but to offer nourishment to their basic principles from within, allowing each subject to explore the artistry of a creative God. Education in this manner, coupled with the grace of Christ, was not a matter of indoctrination, but about bringing each nature to its fullest potential in a living and vibrant community. Thus the curriculum was grounded in piety and governed by theology.

### *Gymnastic and Music: The Training of the Bodies, the Tuning of the Hearts*

The ancients recognized that humans are not disembodied minds, but unities of body and soul—mind, will, and affections. The gymnastic and musical educations trained the bodies and tuned the hearts of the young and were the next stage following the early development of piety. Developing the virtue of an athlete was an essential element of the gymnastic training. The musical (coming from the same root word as “museum”) education was an education in wonder. It formed the heart and the moral imagination of the youth. The musical education was not primarily or exclusively about instruments and singing. It studied all the subjects inspired by the Muses (from epic poetry to astronomy) in a pre-critical manner. “Imitation precedes art,” went the ancient maxim. The musical education, directed toward joyful engagement with reality, offered this imitative foundation for the later learning of the arts and sciences. The musical and gymnastic educations fitted the students’ hearts and bodies to reality, thus forming virtue in them. They taught passions more than skills and content. They sowed the seeds which would grow into a lifelong love of learning.

## *The Liberal Arts Are the Tools of Learning, Both Linguistic and Mathematical*

The exponential growth of information today overwhelms the student. The liberal arts, on the other hand, offered a particular canon of seven studies which provided the essential tools for all subsequent learning. The subjects of the liberal arts were not only linguistic but included mathematics and mathematical science as well. The significance of the study of mathematics has often been downplayed by those in the Christian classical renewal, but this represents a misappraisal of its historical prominence. Mathematics is a central discipline of traditional Western education and owes its inclusion in the curriculum to its role at Plato's Academy. Moreover, the role of Latin for the language arts also plays a more significant role than has often been expressed. Recovering the primacy of both the language arts and the mathematical arts is a pivotal piece of this paradigm. Together they help train the student not just in what to think but in how to think.

The liberal arts then winnow the infinity of available arts and sciences to a canonical set of seven crucial liberal arts that provide the tools of learning needed in the three branches of philosophy or science. One may ask, what are *arts*? According to Aristotle, *scientia* (science) is a body of knowledge justified by reason which can be in the mind alone. But an art is imitation (action) joined with reason, or a science joined with practice. An art is, in short, a skill. What then are *liberal arts*? The liberal arts are the seven unique skills used to create and justify *scientia*. How would a scholar justify that his knowledge is true? He would do so through the liberal arts. The arts of the Trivium—grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric—are the tools of language. The arts of the Quadrivium—arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music—are the tools of mathematics.

*Recovering the primacy of both the language arts and the mathematical arts is a pivotal piece of this paradigm. Together they help train the student not just in what to think but in how to think.*

The liberal arts, even coupled with piety, gymnastic, and music, are not enough for an entire education. The liberal arts are only intended to be the *tools* of learning to be used in all other studies. The three branches of philosophy and, in addition, theology, then contain the integrated tapestry of all other knowledge as represented by the innumerable particular sciences, such as biology, ethics, economics, and chemistry. Moreover, professional degrees, to be acquired later, recognize that other skills (arts) are needed for one's vocation. There are as many arts for these other skills (law, medicine, business, etc.) as there are countless sciences, and the skills of these would be understood as the other *techne* (Greek for "arts" or "skills"). It is, in fact, this idea of an art as an applied science that leads to the word *technology* (study of the arts or skills), a wholly legitimate pursuit in the right context. The study of the liberal arts is not intended to substitute for the legitimate later studies of other illiberal arts and sciences. It is, on the contrary, the path that is designed to make the acquisition of all later studies more simple and effective.

### *Philosophy Is the Love of Wisdom in Natural, Moral, and Divine Reality*

The label *philosophy* should not be misunderstood as contemporary academic philosophy, but it is the word used, from the fourth century BC until the turn of the twentieth century, to describe the unity of knowledge which covered all subjects. In the medieval system, philosophy had three branches: natural philosophy, moral philosophy, and divine philosophy (metaphysics). Natural philosophy is the traditional home for modern natural science. Moral philosophy is the traditional home for modern social science. And metaphysics, the study of being, guards the secrets of reality and discloses its transcendental unity. For these reasons the terms *natural science* and *moral science* were often used as cognates for natural and moral philosophy.

Particular natural sciences such as mechanics, biology, and alchemy would have all fallen under the umbrella of natural philosophy. The particular moral sciences such as ethics, politics, or economics would have been contained by moral philosophy (called practical philosophy by

Aristotle). The term *scientia* meant a demonstrable knowledge of causes. For Aristotle there were four causes which were to be studied in science: material, formal, efficient, and final. Formal cause represented the essence of a thing and final cause was an object's purpose. Contemporary natural and social sciences have generally discarded these two types of causes and reduced everything to matter and energy (material and efficient causes). All four of these causes—material, formal, efficient, and final—should be recovered in order to restore a holistic approach to natural, moral, and divine philosophy.

Moreover, if *scientia* is knowledge, according to the standard contemporary definition, all knowledge is true, requires a knower, and must be justified. The prime tools of justification were the liberal arts, since appeals to reason were the strongest form of medieval proof. Appeals to experience and authority were also considered, although the medievals weighted them less than reason. Today application is the central justification given to students for the truth of a matter, which would not have been sufficient demonstration for medieval or ancient *scientia*. In order to recover a robust justification for knowledge, all seven of the liberal arts are required in philosophy and all four causes must be reinstated.

The ancients believed that art imitates nature and therefore the medievals often studied natural philosophy as preparation for moral philosophy. Metaphysics (or divine philosophy) helped connect the moral with the natural as well as the created with the divine. The belief that the transcendent Christ of Colossians 1 could reconcile the one and many, quantity and quality, body and soul is a tenet of theology that would have implications in the sciences. It was the job of metaphysics to guard and adjudicate these kinds of principles. It was also within the subject of metaphysics that the battle between nominalism and realism would play out. Moreover, metaphysics would eventually explore how Christ the incarnate Word could redeem the possibilities of mathematical form for matter. These three philosophies—natural, moral, and divine—would have contained all the subjects and disciplines of a contemporary university, though they would have been geared toward justified knowledge (science) and not application (technology). The other arts could be later learned in professional degrees or apprenticeships. Thus the variety of

contemporary subjects such as chemistry, biology, or economics would largely fall under the ancient and medieval category of philosophy.

*In order to recover a robust justification for knowledge, all seven of the liberal arts are required in philosophy and all four causes must be reinstated.*

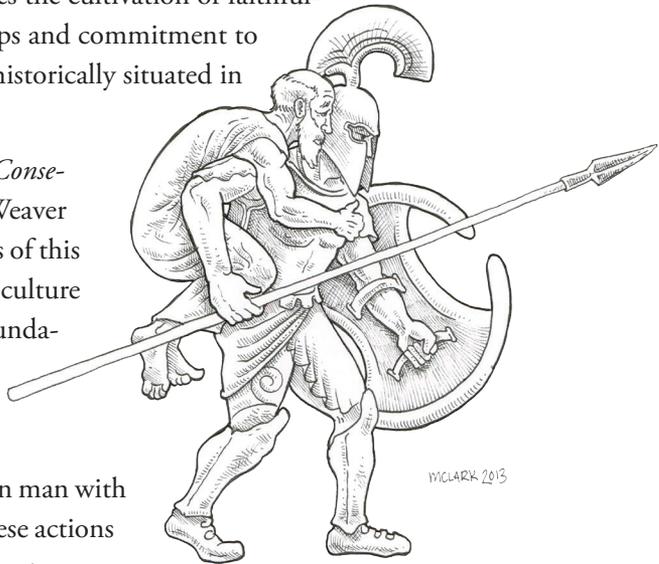
While these four theses are dense, we believe they tersely encapsulate the significance of returning to the tradition. It is certainly a grand endeavor, but one we believe is worthy of our devoted efforts. Let us now begin our exploration of the six categories: piety, gymnastic, music, liberal arts, philosophy, and theology (PGMAPT).

# PIETY

*I see no way to sum up the offense of modern man except to say that he is impious. . . . He has taken up arms against, and he has effectually slain, what former men have regarded with filial veneration. He has not been conscious of crime but has . . . regarded his action as a proof of virtue.* —Richard Weaver<sup>7</sup>

Piety is a word nearly lost on our contemporary culture. It summons pictures of wonderfully sincere Europeans from hundreds of years past whose Christian legacy nevertheless faltered in their homeland. It sounds faintly like an expression from the King James Bible, an expression which has now been replaced by a more exciting turn of phrase. It doesn't have the immediate appeal of a word like "transparency" or "radical." And yet maybe piety is the exact word we need today. Though it is a word eluding simple definition, piety signifies the duty, love, and respect owed to God, parents, and communal authorities past and present. It connotes the cultivation of faithfulness in relationships and commitment to one's tradition as historically situated in place and time.

In *Ideas Have Consequences*, Richard Weaver asserts that the loss of this critical element in culture may be the most fundamental malaise of our contemporary society. He charges modern man with impiety, calling these actions a rebellion against nature, our



7. Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), 172.