

LOGIA

A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY



LUTHERANISM & THE CLASSICS

EASTERTIDE 2012

VOLUME XXI, NUMBER 2

εἴ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια θεοῦ

LOGIA is a journal of Lutheran theology. As such it publishes articles on exegetical, historical, systematic, and liturgical theology that promote the orthodox theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. We cling to God's divinely instituted marks of the church: the gospel, preached purely in all its articles, and the sacraments, administered according to Christ's institution. This name expresses what this journal wants to be. In Greek, ΛΟΓΙΑ functions either as an adjective meaning "eloquent," "learned," or "cultured," or as a plural noun meaning "divine revelations," "words," or "messages." The word is found in 1 Peter 4:11, Acts 7:38, and Romans 3:2. Its compound forms include ὁμολογία (confession), ἀπολογία (defense), and ἀναλογία (right relationship). Each of these concepts and all of them together express the purpose and method of this journal. *LOGIA* considers itself a *free conference in print* and is committed to providing an independent theological forum normed by the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. At the heart of our journal we want our readers to find a love for the sacred Scriptures as the very Word of God, not merely as rule and norm, but especially as Spirit, truth, and life that reveals Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, we confess the church, without apology and without rancor, only with a sincere and fervent love for the precious Bride of Christ, the holy Christian church, "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God," as Martin Luther says in the Large Catechism (LC II, 42). We are animated by the conviction that the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession represents the true expression of the church that we confess as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

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Subscriptions: subscriptions@logia.org U.S.A.: one year (four issues), \$30; two years (eight issues), \$56. **Canada and Mexico:** one year, \$37; two years, \$70. **International:** one year, \$55. All funds in U.S. currency only. Canadian orders Visa or MC only.

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LOGIA (ISSN #1064-0398) is published quarterly by the Luther Academy, 9228 Lavant Drive, St. Louis, MO 63126. Non-profit postage paid (permit #4) at Northville, SD and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to LOGIA, PO Box 81, Northville, SD 57465.

COVER ART shows "Hercules Germanicus": A depiction by Hans Holbein the Younger of Luther in the garb and attitude of the Greco-Roman hero Hercules, doing battle with the traditional authorities. Woodcut from 1520.

LOGIA is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the
American Theological Library Association
250 S. Wacker Drive, Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60606
E-mail: atla@atla.com ~ www.atla.com/

FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

AC [CA]	Augsburg Confession
AE	<i>Luther's Works</i> , American Edition
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
Ep	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
FC	Formula of Concord
LC	Large Catechism
LSB	<i>Lutheran Service Book</i>
LW	<i>Lutheran Worship</i>
SA	Smalcald Articles
SBH	<i>Service Book and Hymnal</i>
SC	Small Catechism
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord
SL	St. Louis Edition of Luther's Works
Tappert	<i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church</i> . Trans. and ed. Theodore G. Tappert
Triglotta	Concordia Triglotta
TLH	<i>The Lutheran Hymnal</i>
Tr	Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope
WA	<i>Luthers Werke</i> , Weimarer Ausgabe [Weimar Edition]
Kolb-Wengert	Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., <i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church</i> (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

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CONTENTS

FOREWARD	5
ARTICLES	
<i>The Greco-Roman Savior: Jesus in the Age of Augustus</i> Peter Scaer	7
<i>Paul's Vision of "A Certain Macedonian" in Troas: How Might Luke's Original Audience Have Heard the Narration of Acts 16:9?</i> Robert Sorensen	11
<i>Luther and the Classical Tradition in the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518</i> E. Christian Kopff	15
<i>Deipnosophistae Reformed: Classical Intertexts in Luther's Tischreden</i> Alden Smith	19
<i>Classical Education as Vocational Education: Luther on the Liberal Arts</i> Gene Edward Veith	23
<i>Wise, Steadfast, and Magnanimous: Patrons of the Classics in Luther's Wittenberg</i> Carl P. E. Springer	27
<i>Philipp Melanchthon and the "Poor Roof" of Wittenberg Humanism</i> Jon Steffen Bruss	33
<i>Making a University Lutheran: Philipp Melanchthon and the Reform of the University of Tübingen in the 1530s</i> Susan Mobley	41
<i>Greek Epic Verse and the Lutheran Liturgy</i> Diane Louise Johnson	47
<i>The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge: Defending Classical Liberal Education from Melanchthon to Newman</i> Mark A. Kalthoff	51
<i>Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in Thought, Word, and Deed: Unleashing the Power of Rhetoric</i> James M. Tallmon	56
<i>Ridentem Dicere Verum: Horatian Satire and God's Law</i> Dale A. Meyer	60
<i>Fundamenta fideliter iecit: Lutheran Eloquence and the Muses of Classical Scholarship</i> Robert W. Ulery Jr.	64
<i>Teaching Greek at the Seminary</i> John G. Nordling	69
ALSO THIS ISSUE	
Call for Manuscripts	10
Inklings by Jim Wilson	59



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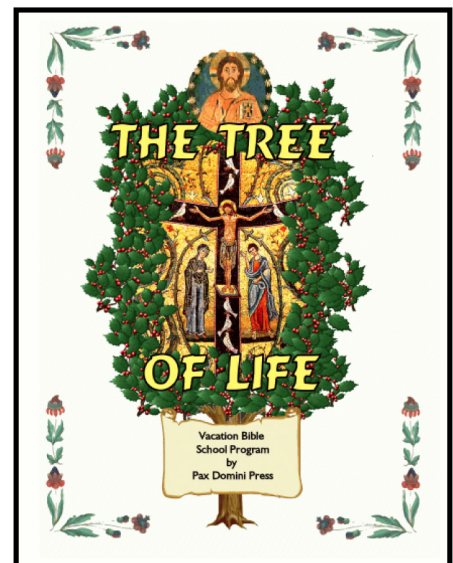
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FOREWARD

Lutheranism & the Classics



THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF *LOGIA*, “Lutheranism & the Classics,” has a much longer history than you might at first glance suspect. The papers assembled here were all delivered by their authors on 1–2 October 2010 at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. That makes the history of this volume at least a year-and-a-half old. But the story of the conference itself goes back more than a decade prior to that when the conference organizers, Jon Bruss, John Nordling, and Carl Springer, would get a chance to chat face to face once a year or so at classics conferences — classicist to classicist, Lutheran to Lutheran. We found ourselves at those meetings because of our shared professional interest in recovering classical *words*, but we gravitated towards each other because the three of us were deeply steeped in Lutheranism, a theological and intellectual culture that is all about the *word* of God.

In these contexts we began to suspect that our interest in the classics had something to do with our common background as Lutherans. Our suspicion gave way to research and reading — as we attempted to recover a shared heritage that was both classical and Lutheran. You could say, of course, that we were acting just as Lutherans always have. Luther’s reformation of the church was not a revolution after all, a dispensing with or overthrowing of the past, but rather a conservative effort to recover what were the most essential and precious and true treasures of the church through the ages. The history of Lutheranism in the States, too, is really a history of repeated if not always successful attempts at recovery. C. F. W. Walther educated a new generation of Lutheran pastors by returning to Luther and his faithful successors. J. P. Koehler in the Wisconsin Synod taught his students to cultivate the critical study of the history of the church, while the state-church Norwegians arrived in the United States to proclaim a restored Lutheran theology learned at the feet of Gisle Johnson and Carl Caspari.

In the best tradition of theological recovery, our research and reading drove at two broad questions: Is the Church of the Augsburg Confession in North America as healthy as it can be? What intellectual resources lie hidden or neglected in the heritage of the Lutheran church that could be recovered and reappropriated to make it better?

Our answer to the first question is, “No, not really.” As much as U.S. Lutheran historiography focuses on towering figures who sought to restore Lutheranism, those figures stand out in the landscape because of their uniqueness, all the more

because to see them you have to look over the heads of their children and grandchildren who have an uncanny knack for losing track of why we did what we used to do. That proclivity explains any number of phenomena within the contemporary North American Church of the Augsburg Confession, from anemic preaching and catechesis to flaccid liturgical work, and beyond, to troubles deep inside the Lutheran mind.

The Lutheran mind sounds like a strange thing to speak of. Is there such a thing? Every mind created by God can undertake certain operations and has the potential to increase or decline. But with the term *the Lutheran mind* we mean those habits of mind that through human, intellectual means Lutherans have sought to foster and that exploit the mind’s divinely created excellences to read, hear, and understand Scripture and the Confessions, to confess with the saints of all times, and finally σοφίζεσθαι εἰς σωτηρίαν (2 Tim 3:15).

Reading, hearing, understanding, confessing, growing wise — at the heart of our bequest from Wittenberg is a profound respect for the word and words. God chose to clothe himself in words (WA 34, II: 489). Add to that the confession of the ancient fathers; now you are talking about more words. And all those words live inside languages. In fact, they make sense only inside those languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. So to know the words, you have to know the languages — at least that is what they thought in Wittenberg.

The Wittenbergers called Hebrew, Greek, and Latin the *tres linguae*, “the three languages.” The reformers were so insistent on their primacy that they wove the three languages into the large cloth of their theological and intellectual bequest. Whether they are warp or woof is hard to say; but without the three languages Lutheran culture, the Lutheran mind, and with them Lutheran theology, become like a frayed, unsightly, limp old rag rug unsuited to benefit the world it was designed to serve. With the three languages, however, the Lutheran mind is akin to an ancient oriental rug: sturdy, beautiful, and broadly useful — especially to Lutheran theology.

That is what this special issue is about. The articles come at the past, present, and future of the three languages in the life of the church from many angles, but they all tell the same story: without a lively and robust study of the languages in our midst, we not only fail to understand the cultural and linguistic context of Scripture and the church fathers, but we also rob ourselves of the opportunity even really to read (and understand and confess) Scripture and the confession of the fathers.

In this issue, Peter Scaer and Robert Sorenson read the New Testament using the cultural and linguistic setting in which the New Testament was authored — that of the classical world. Scaer asserts that to begin to understand Luke’s world, “we must enroll in the *Gymnasium* and make it our own,” and goes on to show how Luke used the classical world around him to proclaim Jesus. Sorenson focuses on the richly evocative scene of Paul’s vision of a Macedonian man to demonstrate how Luke indicated by the incident the epochal significance of Paul’s movement into Europe to a Greco-Roman audience.

Turning to the Reformation, E. Christian Kopff defends Luther against his typical tarring as a scorner of the pagan classics while helping us to see Luther as a knowledgeable humanist with a preference for Plato over Aristotle. Alden Smith examines Luther’s *Table Talks* as a Reformation reprise of the enlightened chatter of the classical *convivium* or *symposion*, even as he critically examines the way Luther engaged the classical authors, especially the bawdy Ovid. Gene Veith links Lutheran vocation to the distinction between liberal and servile education, showing, with an implicit paradox, that for Luther the liberal education of the free man and not the servile education of the slave enables the Christian to serve his neighbor. Carl Springer’s banquet address is a defense and encomium of the wisdom, magnanimity, and steadfastness of the Saxon electors who responded with pious generosity to the appeals of Luther and his colleagues for the support of the study of the three languages. His words come as an invitation to our church to take up the mantle of electors. Jon Bruss’s contribution follows Melanchthon as Philipp shows how and why the languages are integral to the intellectual apparatus of Wittenberg that he worked so hard to erect. Susan Mobley recounts the Lutheranization of the University of Tübingen under the powerful intellectual influence of Melanchthon and demonstrates the critical role played by Lutheran educational reform in Lutheran theological reform. Diane Johnson steps ahead one generation to look at Johannes Posselius, a “true Israelite.” Stirred by the muse of Leucorea, Posselius versified the Greek texts of the lectionary for the sons of the crypto-Lutheran Maximilianus II using the meter and language of Homer.

A final set of essays tells the story of the *Nachlaß* of the Wittenberg humanistic project. Mark Kalthoff joins Melanchthon’s voice with the nineteenth-century voices of John Henry Newman and Jeremiah Day as a *memento* directed at a modernity swooning over practical utility, thereby exposing the very real challenge Lutherans face in realizing the ideals of Wittenberg in twenty-first-century North America. James Tallmon demonstrates how one of the tools so central in Wittenberg humanism, rhetoric, can still be used in a formative way in modern education — in spite of the fact that it often is not. In the spirit of Wittenberg humanism, Dale Meyer counsels us all to dig out our Horace — maybe our Juvenal, too — to sharpen our homiletical skills, showing the value of the pagan classics for the very Christian task of preparing the sinner for the gospel by means of the law. Robert Ulery reflects on how formation in the word leads to the love of classical words — not only for himself, but for entire intellectual traditions — and joins his vocation to love of words and his love of words to vocation. John Nordling, finally, concentrates his attention on the present and future weal of the languages. He concerns himself with how to roll them out in a church that needs them to survive but doesn’t always know it, and argues that while our day offers unique challenges to the health of the study of the languages, it also offers unique prospects.

Hearty thanks must be rendered to Professor John Nordling (*sine quo non*) and Concordia Theological Seminary at Fort Wayne for fostering this initiative and making “Lutheranism & the Classics I” so successful. We also want to express our gratitude to Michael Albrecht and the editorial staff at *LOGIA* for their willingness to devote this special issue to the proceedings of the conference.

The Lutheran reformers understood that the church’s entire being is “from words to words”: it lives on Christ’s *ῥήματα ζωῆς αἰωνίου*. It is our sincere hope that this issue of *LOGIA* will make a modest contribution to the vigorous and sustained continuation of that divine dialogue.

Jon Bruss and Carl Springer

The Greco-Roman Savior

Jesus in the Age of Augustus

PETER SCAER



IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT God speaks Hebrew. Of course, our holy book consists, by and large, of the Hebrew Scriptures. To understand Jesus, you must know him as Yahweh, the Lord of Israel. For good reason, then, Matthew proclaims Jesus to be the promised seed of Abraham, the fulfillment of Israel's history. But the roots of the Old Testament run deeper. The call of Abraham does not appear until after the Tower of Babel. Previously people and things were not set apart by language. There was no Levitical Law or kosher foods. God created all things and saw that they were good. There was no Holy Land; all the land was a fit for God's people. Salvation's story thus requires a new Adam, a truly universal figure for a newly universal outreach. Enter Luke's Gospel, at once more modern and more ancient, which introduces Christ as the new Adam (Luke 3:23–37) and the whole world as a fit dwelling place for the Lord and his followers.

Luke's infancy narrative serves as a type of time machine, transporting us back to Jerusalem, where we meet faithful Zechariah. Along the way, we encounter an entire cast of Old Testament characters. But upon closer examination, Luke begins his Gospel not really in Jerusalem at all, but in the same place his second volume ends, in Rome, the heart of the Greco-Roman world. Indeed, the first four verses of Luke's Gospel are strikingly devoid of Semitisms. Addressing his treatise to the "most excellent Theophilus," Luke writes as a Greco-Roman historian, in the line of Herodotus and Polybius, composing the finest of periodic sentences.¹ As Frederick Danker puts it, the opening sentence is meant to "make a favorable impression on Greco-Romans across a broad cultural front," and "is intended for the Greco-Roman public square."² If we are to enter Luke's world, we must enroll in the *Gymnasium* and make it our own.³ The first four verses of Luke's Gospel proclaim it to be a cosmopolitan gospel for a cosmopolitan people, on the verge of turning the whole world upside down (Acts 17:28).

Strikingly, both Luke's Gospel and Acts are marked by pilgrimages, the first such through the Holy Land. Jesus and his parents attended the Jerusalem feasts according to custom (Luke 2:41).⁴ But what looks like a destination becomes a starting point. Divine necessity mandates that "repentance and forgiveness of sins be preached in his name to all the nations,

beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47), and in ever-widening circles from Jerusalem, to Samaria and the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Accordingly, Acts moves from rural Palestine to the empire's major urban centers, from Thessalonica and Athens to Corinth and Ephesus. Along the way, Paul contends with priests of Artemis (Acts 19:23–40) and Zeus (Acts 14:13),⁵ is hailed as Hermes, a messenger of Zeus (Acts 14:12), and fields questions from Stoics and Epicureans (Acts 17). Culturally, religiously, intellectually, and geographically, Christianity sails towards Rome.

Viewed as a whole and anticipated by Peter's encounter with Cornelius, a centurion in "the Italian regiment" (Acts 10:1), Luke-Acts becomes a Christian *Aeneid*, whose goal is the establishment of God's kingdom in Rome, a Christian epic, complete with Odyssean elements.⁶ Virgil's Aeneas was guided to Italy by fate; Paul is thrust forward by divine destiny, accompanied by omens and prophecy.⁷ "Take courage!" says the Lord to Paul. "As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome" (Acts 23:11). Like Aeneas, Paul is buffeted by the waves and shipwrecked. Then boarding a ship with a mast-

1. For a discussion of the literary form of Luke's preface, see Gregory Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 339–40.
2. Frederick Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 23.
3. Stylistically, Luke's language is more elegant than that of Matthew or Mark, as evidenced by his use of participial phrases, tenses, and moods. He even makes use of the optative. For a helpful discussion of Lukan style, see François Bovon, *Luke 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2002), 4–5.
4. For an excellent discussion of pilgrimage in Luke, see Arthur Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 419–25.
5. For a helpful discussion of Paul's encounters with Greco-Roman religions, see Lynn Allan Kauppi, *Foreign but Familiar Gods: Greco-Romans Read Religion in Acts* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006).
6. Paul's voyage (Acts 27:1–26) has parallels in the epic tradition; see *Odyssey* 5.291–332; 9.62–81, 12.201–303, and *Aeneid* 1:44–53. Discussion: Dennis R. McDonald, "A Strategic Imitation of Homer's *Iliad*," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 189–203.
7. Marianne Palmer Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), provocatively suggests that Luke intended his writing as a "foundational epic" in the tradition of Virgil's *Aeneid* (29).

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head of the twin gods, Castor and Pollux, Paul pauses in Malta, where his encounter with a poisonous viper serves as an omen and sign.⁸ The climax of Luke-Acts is summarized in the simple words, “And so we came to Rome” (Acts 28:14). As Aeneas finally brought his gods to the land of the Tiber (*Aeneid* 1), so also does Paul proclaim his unknown God to Rome.

Paul’s prayer for the Roman leaders is that they might also become Christians.

Luke’s wider geographical perspective and Paul’s odyssey to Rome are anticipated by his narration of Jesus’ birth. Although Matthew notes that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King (2:1),⁹ Luke’s lens has a wider angle: “It came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be taxed” (Luke 2:1).¹⁰ For Luke, Bethlehem is on a Roman map.¹¹ Jesus himself was born, lived, and died in the world of Caesar. Of course, John Dominic Crossan’s Jesus dies as a threat to Roman imperial power, a revolutionary against “hierarchical and paternal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power.”¹² Taking this thesis a step further, Yamazaki-Ransom asserts that Luke himself portrays the emperor as Satan’s minion: “Thus Luke’s worldview is holistic: both Jewish and Roman authorities are under the authority of the Roman emperor, who is in turn under Satan’s authority.”¹³

And yet, a name-dropper by habit, Luke mentions various Caesars — Augustus (2:1), Tiberius (3:1), and Claudius (Acts 11:28; 18:2) — none of whom come off all that negatively, in spite of the cultic devotion sought by Augustus and the expulsion of

Jews from Rome ordered by Claudius. Compare, for instance the infancy narratives of Luke and Matthew. Matthew’s Herod appears sinister, even satanic, in his intent to kill, while Luke’s Caesar Augustus appears not as God’s enemy, but as his puppet. In Luke, Joseph moves at Caesar’s command, in respect for the law and not fearing for the life of his family. As Christopher Bryan puts it, “In Luke’s view, here at least are faithful Jews who find no difficulty giving unto Caesar what is Caesar’s while at the same time giving to God what is God’s.”¹⁴ Ever the diplomat, Luke contends that there should be no conflict between church and empire, because the church is not an earthly kingdom (cf. Acts 1:6). In Acts 28, Paul is still appealing to Caesar, in prison, but preaching the gospel without hindrance. The emperor’s verdict is not yet in, and Christians may remain hopeful that the empire will see Christianity as a kingdom that poses no threat to their earthly rule.

Crossan also vigorously argues that imperial Rome bears primary responsibility for Jesus’ death, Pilate starring as a typically cruel, power-hungry Roman leader. Luke’s Pilate may have indeed sentenced Jesus to death, but he did so reluctantly, three times declaring Jesus’ innocence. Furthermore, Luke’s Jesus, far from being a political revolutionary, was chagrined when his disciples drew swords at his arrest.¹⁵ Here Jesus becomes the role model for Paul, who will also appear before Roman governors, proclaiming both Christ and his political innocence to sympathetic ears. Roman leaders may be influenced by petty graft (like Felix, Acts 24:26), or political expedience (like Festus, Acts 25:9–12), but they were not unsympathetic to Paul’s plea of innocence, nor were they hostile to his teaching (Agrippa, Acts 26). Indeed, Paul’s prayer for the Roman leaders is that they might also become Christians, just like him, only without the chains (Acts 26:29).

The evangelist thus neither idolizes nor despises the Roman leaders. Rather than oppose Caesar, Luke relativizes him and uses him as a type of sermon illustration. For example, in the Greco-Roman world, it was commonplace for rulers to call themselves savior and to boast of their abilities as peacemakers and benefactors. Augustus himself was known as divine (*divus*) and savior and recognized as “the world’s great architect of peace.”¹⁶ Luke thus writes against the backdrop of an Augustus known as savior, peacemaker, and benefactor.¹⁷ Tellingly, Luke alone among the synoptics calls Jesus “Savior.” While Matthew explains Jesus’ name by noting that “he will save his people from their sins” (1:21), Luke goes beyond such functionalism and calls him Savior. The angels proclaim that “there is born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (2:11). Both Peter

8. For more on the poisonous viper and Paul’s innocence, see Kauppi, *Foreign but Familiar Gods*, 114–17. Castor and Pollux became patron deities for sailors. In Luke’s account, true divine providence brings Paul through the rough seas.

9. As Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 98, notes, “One might read for some time in Matthew, Mark, and John without even realizing that there was such a thing as the Roman Empire.”

10. Note the contrast with Luke’s depiction of the birth of John, of whose birth no reference is made to the wider Greco-Roman context: he was born “in the days of Herod, King of Judea” (Luke 1:5).

11. The ministry of John the Baptist is also put in a Greco-Roman context, said to have taken place in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1).

12. John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 198.

13. Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke’s Narrative* (London: T & T Clark, 2010).

14. Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 98.

15. See Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 13, for six arguments why Jesus is not a revolutionary who sought to liberate Israel from Roman rule.

16. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age*, 54; see Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1982), 217.

17. Gary Gilbert, “Roman Propaganda and Christian Identity,” in *Contextualizing Acts*, 233–56.

(Acts 5:31) and Paul (Acts 13:23) ascribe to Jesus this title as well. Augustus was commonly hailed a “savior of the whole human race”; Acts speaks to the greater reality of “salvation in no one else [but Jesus]” (Acts 4:12).

Augustus was hailed for ushering in the great *Pax Romana*; Luke puts this peace into perspective. As Bryan puts it, “Luke relativizes the merely political peace that Caesar brought (Luke 2.11, 14). But to relativize is not necessarily to deny.”¹⁸ In Acts 24:2 the lawyer Tertullus praises Rome saying, “Because of you we have long enjoyed peace.” For Luke, this political peace serves the greater purpose of enabling Christian travel and missionary work, and the *Pax Romana* is the backdrop against which Peter proclaims “the good news of peace through Jesus Christ who is Lord of all” (Acts 10:36).

Luke also plays off the emperor’s claim to be the great benefactor. Augustus’s *Res gestae* lists among his accomplishments also his many and great works of benefaction to the empire — land, money, grain, and public works.¹⁹ In Acts, Peter depicts Jesus as ultimate do-gooder: “He went about doing good (εὐεργετῶν)” (Acts 10:38). Luke’s Gospel depicts Jesus as the “friend” of tax collectors and sinners, doing special favors for the lowly²⁰ and redefining benefaction at the Lord’s Supper, where he contrasts the kingdom of God with the “kings of the gentiles, who, exercising authority are called ‘benefactors’” (Luke 22:25). Jesus’ beneficence culminates in his passion and Supper, where he offers his body and his blood “for you” (Luke 22:19, 20).

Not only does Jesus play the roles ascribed to the Caesars, but his disciples embrace intellectual roles largely defined by the Greco-Roman world. Acts presents the early Christian leaders not only as prophets and apostles but also as “Christian philosophers.” Peter, for instance, drawing upon what Luke T. Johnson terms “the Socratic tradition of integrity,” argues before the Sanhedrin that “it is more important to obey God than men” (Acts 5:29; 4:19), words that echo Socrates’ defense before the Athenian council (*Apol.* 29D).²¹ The early Christians, in their sharing of goods, form an idyllic community, reminiscent of the followers of Pythagoras and Philo’s *Therapeutae*.²² Paul famously quotes the philosopher Aratus at Athens, speaking about God as the one “in whom we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Indeed, Paul engages in dialogue (διελέγετο) with Stoics and Epicureans in

the agora. Socrates was accused of introducing “new gods” (δαίμόνια) (*Apol* 24b); so, too, Paul. Understandably, thought of as offering a new philosophy, Christians were mocked for promoting the “school of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5).

Jesus’ beneficence culminates in his passion and Supper.

Luke’s apostles thus appear as Christian philosophers, engaging the various ideas of the day. But, Luke would have us know, they were following in the footsteps of Jesus himself. Luke moves Jesus from the world of Jewish tassels to Roman togas. Not surprisingly, then, he is the only evangelist not to refer to Jesus as a rabbi. Luke’s Jesus seems to tailor his instruction to his Greco-Roman surroundings: in Luke, Jesus illustrates his teaching with decidedly contemporary illustrations from the urban settings most influenced by Hellenization.²³ For example, Jesus compares discipleship to tower-building (Luke 11:28) and tells of a persistent widow who appealed to the judge in her “city” (Luke 18:2). Notably, Luke’s Jesus also speaks extensively about the Greco-Roman practice of reciprocity²⁴ and tailors his speech to a world obsessed with honor and shame.²⁵ The parable of the rich fool is quite at home in a world where philosophers critiqued wealthy fools who “design their houses as if they are going to live forever” (*Diogenes Laertius* 8.63). The figure of the shrewd steward, familiar to Greco-Roman auditors, is now applied to the Christian life.²⁶ At the Last Supper, Jesus offers a homily on Christian discipleship over and against Gentile rulers who call themselves “benefactors” (Luke 22:25). Luke’s Jesus plays the role of philosopher, offering a new way of thinking, and a new “way” of life (see Acts 9:2), and his death as a “righteous” man (Luke 23:47), echoes the death of the Athenian philosopher, described by Plato as “the most righteous man” he had ever known.²⁷

18. Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 99.

19. On benefaction in the ancient world, whereby gifts are given in expectation of honor and praise, see Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981).

20. On Jesus as “friend” see Halvor Moxnes, “Patron-Client Relations and the New Community,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome Neyrey (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 241–68.

21. See Peter Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 65.

22. Further discussion in P. W. van der Horst, “Hellenistic Parallels to the Acts of the Apostles,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, no. 25 (1985): 59–60.

23. On Hellenization as urban phenomenon, see Dennis Duling, “The Roman World of Jesus: An Overview,” in *The New Testament: An Introduction*, ed. Norman Perrin and Dennis Duling (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanich, 1982), 4–35.

24. For instance, Luke uses the word *friends* in a distinctly Greco-Roman way, implying the exchange of favors (Luke 7:1–10), and depicts Jesus as the sinners’ ultimate “friend” (6:34; 15:1–2; 19:10). See Moxnes, “Patron-Client Relations.”

25. A good example of this can be seen in Luke 9:26, where Luke, as a redactor, adds an admonition about being ashamed of Jesus. For more on the topic, see Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey, “Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts,” *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, 25–65.

26. See Aristotle, *Politics* 1259a7–8.

27. See Scaer, *The Lukan Passion*.

Another clue to Luke's presentation of Jesus within the philosophical tradition can be seen in the setting and topics of his teaching. In the Greco-Roman world, authors employed the sympotic setting to highlight the wisdom of a particular philosopher. Examples include Plato's *Symposium* and Plutarch's *Table Talk* and *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men*. The Hellenized Jewish *Letter of Aristeas*, drawing upon the symposium, tells the story of the translation of the Septuagint and depicts the seventy translators as wise men whose philosophical prowess would match the best that Greek philosophy had to offer. In Luke, Jesus does much of his teaching at mealtime (5:27–39; 7:36–50; 11:37–54; 14:1–24),²⁸ in scenes constructed according to the Greco-Roman literary form of the symposium.²⁹ All four meal scenes match the structure of a little symposium. They are (1) set at a banquet; (2) at which something happens that starts the conversation; (3) to which there is a reaction; (4) followed by a response by Jesus; (5) a further question; (6) and another response by Jesus. All four display Jesus' wisdom.

More remarkable is the type of teaching in which Jesus engages. Symposia typically include discussions about (1) meal etiquette, (2) types of food or wine, (3) ethics and wisdom.³⁰

Plato's *Symposium* contains a discussion about who will have the honor of being seated next to Socrates. In Plutarch's *Dinner*, Alexidemus is chagrined by his poor seat. *Table Talk* likewise speaks of the fact that good order is necessary for good dining. Plato's Socrates argues that one should not take the best place at a dinner table, for it risks the humiliation of demotion. Jesus caps Socrates in Luke 14: not only does he speak about not taking a seat of honor, he advises his followers to take the lowest seat possible. Further, while Greek philosophers engaged in discussion over wine, in Luke Jesus speaks of his gospel in terms of new wine and old wineskins (Luke 5:36–39).

So does God really speak Hebrew? Yes, to be sure. But now he also speaks Greek, and not just *koine*, but literary and rhetorical Greek. If he is going to take up residence in Rome, he is sure to learn Latin as well. Luke-Acts demonstrates the need for continual classical education within our ranks. To enter the world of Caesar really is to enter not only into the world of Paul, but also into that of Jesus. If history matters, no history matters more than that of the incarnation. At the same time, the study of the classics must remain forward-looking. By entering into the world of Caesar, Jesus embraced the world as it was and saw the opportunities before him. Christians cannot be content to be antiquarians. We study Latin and Greek not for the purpose of living in the past but to embrace Christ and the future. In that spirit Christians do well to learn Hebrew, but also Greek and Latin — and even Spanish, which is happily easy to learn once you have taken Latin. **LOGIA**

28. On the eucharistic thrust of these scenes, see Just, *Luke*, 231–41.

29. See Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition*, 370–71.

30. An accessible discussion of this can be found in E. Springs Steele, "Luke 11:37–54: A Modified Hellenistic Symposium?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 379–94.

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Paul's Vision of "A Certain Macedonian" in Troas

How Might Luke's Original Audience Have Heard the Narration of Acts 16:9?

ROBERT SORENSEN



EVERYONE INTERPRETING THE BOOK of Acts, from the unlettered Greco-Roman laborer to modern interpreter, immediately grasps the importance of certain events. This is because Luke, like all good storytellers, highlights certain plot developments by narrating them more vividly and in-depth. Examples of such passages are the Pentecost account (Acts 2:1–42); Stephen's arrest, trial, and execution (Acts 6:8–8:3); and the "Apostolic Council" (Acts 15:1 ff.). By providing such extensive and detailed reports of these events—note how prominently direct discourse features in all three of the aforementioned passages—Luke allows his audience to imagine that it is witnessing them with its own eyes and ears.¹ He thus ensures that these developments will be seen as crucial.

A related though distinct way that Luke emphasizes major events is by narrating them over and over. The most famous example of such "repetitive narration" in Acts is Paul's Damascus road experience. This event is initially described in 9:1–19; there the narrator does the recounting. Subsequently, however, Paul himself retells this story twice more, each time within the context of a defense speech (Acts 22:4–16; 26:9–18).² Not coincidentally, the other great apostolic figure of Acts, Peter, has a comparable life-changing vision likewise recounted three times. Peter's vision and subsequent encounter with Cornelius is also first related by the narrator (10:1–18), then twice more by the apostle himself (Acts 11:1–18; 15:7–11). By recounting this pair of visionary events three times each, Luke clearly signals their importance.

But what about events Luke describes only briefly, then never mentions again? Does it follow that the incidents he passes over quickly are of only minor importance? Just the opposite is the case. The focus of this essay is a good example of an event that is recounted only briefly and yet makes a deep impression: Paul's vision of a Macedonian man in Troas (16:6–10). Although Luke mentions this event only once, and with a minimum of words at that, this passage nonetheless represents a decisive moment in the unfolding plot of Acts. Because it includes several culturally loaded concepts and terms, Luke's narration of the Troas vision communicates much in just a few lines.

At this point, it is good to recall the previously mentioned "unlettered Greco-Roman laborer" and "modern Bible inter-

preter." A comparison between these two characters can clarify why Paul's vision in Troas, despite its compact narration, should still be taken as a ground-breaking plot development. Though on balance the life of an urbane twenty-first-century reader is preferable to that of a first-century peasant, even the unsophisticated members of Luke's society did have some advantages. Because they actually spoke his language and participated firsthand in the prevailing Greco-Roman culture, Luke's contemporaries were better attuned to the connotations of his words and thus better equipped to distinguish subtle shades of meaning. Even the unlettered among Luke's original audience could see why the story about Paul's vision at Troas is so compelling, even despite its brevity.

An analogy from modern American culture can illustrate the point: Modern Americans hear about a scandal to which the suffix "gate" has been attached—say Watergate or "travelgate" or "climategate"—and immediately sense that it involves an abuse of power, a botched cover-up, and so forth. Luke's original hearers likewise encountered words and phrases heavily laden with the cultural baggage of their day and were similarly able to derive a lot of meaning from just a few syllables. By providing some relevant background information about several key terms, therefore, this essay allows modern readers to approximate, at least to some extent, the original audience's experience of this vision report.

To that end, three significant aspects of this passage will be examined: this story's Troas setting, the central role a dream vision plays in its unfolding, and the unnamed Macedonian figure. To be clear, what follows is not a novel interpretation of this passage. Rather, the aim here is to throw light on how these three elements would have been perceived in the first century and so enable modern people to gain a better appreciation of this episode's rhetorical force.

Before considering any background information, however, it will be beneficial to make a few observations about Luke's description of Paul's arrival to Troas (16:6–8). Remarkably, half of this episode's narration—three of this story's five total verses—is devoted to tracing the roundabout route Paul took to

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1. On the distinction between narrative "showing" and "telling," see Robert Funk, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1988), 134–61.
 2. On "repetitive narration," see Mark Allen Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 39–40.

Troas.³ His itinerary begins in far-off Phrygia. From there, Paul passes through Galatian territory (16:6). What Luke describes next is most significant, since the Lord is depicted as taking a hands-on approach to directing Paul's travels. First the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6) and then the "Spirit of Jesus" (16:7) intervene to steer Paul towards what must be understood as a divinely appointed destination. Though more could be said about the way the Lord inexorably drives Paul towards Troas,⁴ it is sufficient to note that these opening verses build dramatic suspense⁵ by intimating that God has a special purpose for bringing Paul to this place.

The Holy Spirit and then the "Spirit of Jesus" intervene to steer Paul.

Luke thus invites his readers to consider why the apostle is being driven to Troas. Paul's vision soon provides the answer, of course. The Lord brings Paul to this seaport so that he might sail over to new mission fields in Macedonia (and beyond). Situated as it was on the northwest corner of Asia Minor, Troas was a well-known travel hub. Countless voyagers passed through when sailing from Asia to Macedonia, and vice versa.⁶ Quite simply, most members of Luke's original audience would have recognized the symbolic significance of Paul's passage from Troas to Macedonia: his mission had now extended from one major land mass to another, from the eastern to the western half of the empire.

Troas was not merely famous as a point of intersection between Asia and Europe, however. This city and its environs also teemed with legendary and historical associations.⁷ Knowing how Troas got its name can help us appreciate why the mention

of this place often called to mind renowned figures and world-changing events. "Troas," as Luke and most people at that time referred to it,⁸ had as its full name ἡ Ἀλεξάνδρεια Τρωάς, literally "Trojan Alexandria."⁹ The root of this title is simple: it was founded by one of Alexander's successors, Antigonus Monophthalmus, at the beginning of the Hellenistic period on the coast just ten miles south of the ruins of Troy, the well-known setting of Homer's *Iliad*.¹⁰ It would be natural, then, for people to associate Troy and its namesake, Troas. In fact, there is evidence that people not only associated first-century Troas and ancient Troy, but actually confused the two. Even the great geographer Strabo conflates them in his discussion.¹¹

Most everybody in Luke's day knew stories about world-changing events that had taken place in "the Troad." Most famously, Homer's *Iliad* deals with the war that resulted in Troy's destruction. Despite its downfall, however, Troy featured prominently in the Roman national epic. Thus the *Aeneid* recounts how Aeneas survived the city's demise and headed west. Under the gods' direction, he eventually landed on the Italian peninsula and founded Lavinium, becoming the protoancestor of the Romans. Centuries later, when the Persian king Darius first attempted to conquer Greece, he launched a huge fleet from the Troad. After a storm wrecked that expedition, Darius undertook the campaign that ended so disastrously at Marathon. Subsequently, Xerxes marched a vast army through this area on his way to the confrontation with the 300 at Thermopylae. Remarkably, he made time to offer sacrifices at Troy's ruins.¹² Alexander the Great also passed through this area, though from the opposite direction, when he began his campaign. He likewise made a point of stopping in Troy to sacrifice and honor the heroes.¹³ Nearer to Luke's day, Julius Caesar was planning to rebuild the ruins of Troy and rule from there.¹⁴

For a variety of reasons, then, Luke's original audience would have recognized Troas as a fitting stage for another pivotal event. By comparing this Lucan event to the many others they knew to have unfolded in Troas, they would have easily perceived the historical and geographical significance of the gospel's extension into the western half of the empire. Christian insiders might even smile knowingly, convinced that this incident represented another major step forward for a kingdom, albeit of a very different kind.

Turning attention now to Paul's dream vision, it will be useful once again to contrast modern cultural patterns with those

3. Acts 16:6–10 includes eighty-eight words in the 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland text. Of these, forty-five appear in vv. 6–8, where Luke recounts Paul's itinerary between Phrygia and Troas.

4. Scholars have long puzzled over the reference here to this unparalleled term *Spirit of Jesus*. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Anchor Bible, 31 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1998), 578, notes this and offers Rom 8:9, Gal 4:6, Phil 1:19 and 1 Pet 1:11 as parallels. None of these verses reproduces the same phrase as appears in Acts 16:7, however. Richard Pervo, *Acts*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 390, n. 45, makes an interesting observation in this regard. He notes that the order in which divine names appear in this passage makes for a Trinitarian crescendo: First the Holy Spirit (v. 6), then the Spirit of Jesus (v. 7), and then God is mentioned, after the climactic vision in Troas (v. 10).

5. Pervo, *Acts*, 390.

6. Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Troas," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:666–67 (heavily dependent upon Colin J. Hemer, "Alexandria Troas," *Tyndale Bulletin* 26 [1975], 79–112, an excellent treatment of this city's history).

7. Pervo, *Acts*, 390.

8. Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989), 113, 179, cites inscriptional evidence to demonstrate that Luke's reference to the city as "Troas" reflects contemporary custom.

9. Yamauchi, "Troas," 6:666. Note, however, that the history of this city's name is more complex. The limited scope of this essay does not allow for an exhaustive treatment of this topic.

10. To be clear, Homer refers to this city as Ἰλιον. This name gave rise to the Latin form Ilium.

11. Hemer, "Alexandria Troas," 80, n. 2.

12. Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.43.

13. Plutarch, *Alex.* 9.6–8.

14. Suetonius, *Jul.* 79. Horace criticizes this plan in *Carm.* 3.3.

of Luke's first-century audience. Granted, there are members of modern Western societies who take dreams seriously. Some people, for example, attempt to analyze their dreams with the help of psychology. Others approach this matter from a religious perspective, believing that God still reveals things through dreams and visions. In general, though, modern cultures are skeptical about claims made on the basis of dreams and revelatory visions. Thus, when members of modern Western societies become too insistent about the Lord's having revealed something in a dream or through a vision, they invite ridicule and dismissive comments.

Attitudes towards revelatory dreams and visions were quite different in Luke's day, however. Perhaps the most influential study on this topic concludes that there was an almost universal belief in the ancient world that dreams were supernatural and that visionary experiences were an authentic source of divine revelation.¹⁵ Ancient claims of receiving revelatory dreams or visions abounded.¹⁶ Noting such differences between modern and ancient attitudes is important for this reason: whereas such stories are met with suspicion or outright rejection by modern folk, Luke's contemporaries widely accepted their validity, at least in principle.

Given that the ultimate aim of the vision granted Paul was the establishment of communities dedicated to the worship of Jesus, it is worth noting that there are numerous Greco-Roman texts in which pagan gods appear in dreams to their adherents, directing them to establish new sites of worship. One such account is preserved by Strabo. It describes Artemis appearing in a dream to a certain Aristarcha, commanding her to accompany some Phocaeans on their way to found the colony of Massalia (modern Marseilles). In this vision the goddess directs Aristarcha to bring her image to this soon-to-be-built colony so that a shrine to Ephesian Artemis might be established there.¹⁷ A similar tradition is recorded by Plutarch. It tells about

a dream vision leading to the image and cult of Serapis being brought to Alexandria.¹⁸ Although additional accounts about pagan gods appearing in dreams and commanding the establishment of shrines could be adduced, the aforementioned ones are sufficient to make the point.¹⁹

Even more pertinent to this discussion are dream-vision reports involving famous characters already mentioned, namely Xerxes, Julius, and Alexander. Remarkably, all three men reportedly saw divine apparitions urging them to embark on history-changing courses of action. An additional factor that makes the dream visions given Xerxes and Alexander all the more noteworthy is that they have connections with the Troad and its environs.

There are numerous Greco-Roman texts in which pagan gods appear in dreams to their adherents.

The following account about Caesar's vision will likely sound familiar. While marching back towards Rome in 49 B.C., Caesar had to make a crucial decision. He could either break the law by coming into Rome with his troops, or he could disband his army and face an aggravated Senate alone. Either way, he was facing fierce opposition and probable criminal charges in Rome. Small wonder, then, that he wavered. While camped near the Rubicon River, the boundary set for returning governors to dismiss their troops, he received a vision that convinced him that he should march his army into Rome, even though this might mean civil war. Having seen this vision, however, Caesar did not hesitate. He said: "Take we the course which the signs of the gods and the false dealing of our foes point out. The die is cast."²⁰

Xerxes' dream visions likewise came when a major military decision was pending. According to Herodotus, the Persian king was contemplating bridging the Hellespont to attack the Greeks. His advisor Mardonius urged him to proceed, but his uncle Artabanus advised against this expedition. The question was settled, however, when both Xerxes and Artabanus saw a series of apparitions urging them to stop vacillating.²¹ Finally persuaded by their repeated visionary experiences—Xerxes saw three dream visions and Artabanus his own—they opted for invading Europe. Xerxes and his army thereupon marched to the Hellespont and built a bridge.

15. John S. Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase, vol. 23, part 2 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1395–1427.

16. In this regard, due weight should be given to the Asclepius cult, since a very common type of vision report in the ancient world involved Asclepius, the god of healing. Though Asclepius's principal temple was in Epidauros (on the Peloponnese, southeast of Corinth), his popularity had moved people to build shrines for him throughout the Greco-Roman world. Those seeking healing flocked to the various Asclepeia (as such shrines were called), where the central cultic feature was "incubation." After offering sacrifices, worshipers of this deity slept within his temple, where they reportedly received dreams of the god. These dreams often included prescriptions for healing. A good number of such vision reports have been preserved as inscriptions, though there were surely many more that were circulated without ever being passed down. On this, see Fritz Graf, "Asclepius," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 187–88. Note also that Troas had an Asclepeion. Interestingly, Hemer, "Alexandria Troas," 93, surmises that it was "the principal city temple."

17. Strabo, *Geogr.* 4.1; noted in Pervo, *Acts*, 391, n. 49.

18. Plutarch, *Mor.* 5.38; noted in Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 36.

19. In this vein, see also Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.34, as cited by Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1401–2.

20. Suetonius, *Jul.* 32.

21. Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.1–18; the visions are reported in 7.12–18.

On more than one occasion, Alexander the Great received similar dream visions when major decisions and daunting enterprises loomed. Plutarch reports that Alexander saw a pair of apparitions encouraging him to persist in his siege of Tyre, even though his assault of the city was arduous and protracted.²² Even more pertinent for this present consideration, however, is a tradition preserved by the Jewish historian Josephus. It tells of a vision seen by Alexander as the great conqueror was traveling through Palestine. When the great conqueror arrived at Jerusalem, Josephus reports, Alexander surprised his companions by prostrating himself before the high priest Jaddus. Alexander's general Parmenio asked the reason for this unusual and unprecedented behavior. Alexander responded:

It is not before him that I prostrated myself but the God of whom he has the honour to be priest, for it was he whom I saw in my sleep dressed as he is now, when I was at Dium in Macedonia, and, as I was considering with myself how I might become master of Asia, he urged me not to hesitate but to cross over confidently, for he himself would lead my army and give over to me the empire of the Persians.²³

Remarkably, this passage reports that Alexander was given assurances of future successes by the God of the Jews. Fortified by this message, he crossed the Aegean from Macedonia and landed on the Troad. From there he proceeded with campaigns that would change the world forever.

By now it should be obvious why the last three dream visions mentioned, especially the one involving Alexander, are so relevant to the topic here under review. All three depict illustrious men being directed by divine apparitions to take bold, world-changing steps. Two of these visions involve overseas passage between Macedonia and the Troad. To those in Luke's original audience familiar with these stories Paul's vision at Troas contained striking similarities that made clear just how monumental a step it was for the apostle to extend his missionary efforts across the Hellespont and into the other half of the

empire.²⁴ In fact, Luke describes Paul's arrival at Rome, capital of the empire, within a dozen chapters. Luke there portrays him as preaching the kingdom of God boldly and "without hindrance" (Acts 28:30–31).²⁵

Plutarch reports that Alexander saw a pair of apparitions encouraging him to persist in his siege of Tyre.

This line of interpretation may be pushed even further. In particular, this question should be considered: What if some in Luke's original audience associated the unnamed "Macedonian man" in Paul's vision with Alexander the Great? To be clear, Luke's narration says no such thing. Still, it is possible that some in the audience attempted to ascertain this figure's identity and wondered whether it might be the most famous Macedonian.²⁶ Were a member of Luke's audience to make such an identification, even tentatively, a very powerful image would come to mind: Alexander, who insisted on divine honors during his lifetime and after his death was worshiped as a hero,²⁷ ironically cast here as a supplicant begging for the gospel of the Lord Jesus to be brought to his homeland. In the eyes of a Greco-Roman audience, a more impressive depiction of the risen Lord Jesus and his worldwide mission could hardly be drawn. **LOGIA**

22. Plutarch, *Alex.* 24.3–5.

23. Josephus, *Ant.* 11 §332–34 (Loeb Classical Library translation). This passage continues with Alexander saying in §335: "Since, therefore, I have beheld no one else in such robes, and on seeing him now I am reminded of the vision and exhortation, I believe that I have made my expedition under divine guidance and that I shall defeat Darius and destroy the power of the Persians and succeed in carrying out the things which I have in mind."

24. Alfred Wikenhauser, "Religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen zu Apg. 16.9," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 23 (1935–1936), 180–86, was one of the first to offer this kind of interpretation.

25. Significantly, ἀκωλύτως ("without hindrance") is the last word in Acts.

26. Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 479–80, writes: "Since Luke refers to a *certain* Macedonian, this could be taken to mean a particular one, and certainly there was no more famous or familiar Macedonian than Alexander the Great" (italics original).

27. Though his compatriots resisted treating Alexander as divine during his life, such veneration was indeed rendered to him before his death. His cult was then firmly established after death, especially in Asia Minor, where it long endured. On this, see Albert B. Bosworth, "Alexander (III) the Great of Macedon," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 57–59, esp. 59; and C. A. Robinson, "Alexander's Deification," *American Journal of Philology* 64 (1943): 286–301.

Luther and the Classical Tradition in the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518

E. CHRISTIAN KOPFF



IT IS NOT RARE TO HEAR Martin Luther credited with hostility to the pagan classics. I shall cite examples from a contemporary classical Christian educator and from a respected scholar writing before World War II. Louis Markos asserts:

In his well-known debate with Erasmus . . . on the freedom of the will, Luther demonstrated a resistance to learning anything of spiritual and theological value from pagan philosophy and mythology. Holding fast to an extreme version of the doctrine of total depravity, Luther denies to unregenerate pagan man any ability to apprehend portions of Christ's truth or even to seek after those portions.¹

Markos supports his view by quoting sentences from Watson's translation of *De servo arbitrio*, for example, "The whole world, human reason itself, indeed free choice itself, is obliged to confess that it never knew Christ nor heard of him before the gospel came into the world" (WA 18: 778; AE 33: 181–82). Luther is not discussing the classics in this passage. He is talking about everybody, "the whole world" (*ipse mundus totus*). Herein lies Markos's problem, for he, too, concedes that "in terms of his education and knowledge, we must remember, Luther was a classical humanist; *The Bondage of the Will* boasts no less than two dozen carefully chosen and subtly used references from such pagan authors as Cicero, Horace, Virgil, Cato, Ovid and Homer."²

In *The Renaissance and English Humanism* (1939), Harvard's Douglas Bush often contrasted Erasmus and Luther.

All the ideals of Christian humanism appear in Erasmus. . . . Luther's revolt meant the destruction of all that Erasmus held most dear. . . . No humanist who had learned from the ancients the dignity of human reason could accept predestination and the depravity of man. . . . [Erasmus's] tragedy was the tragedy of humanists in all ages. For the moment, at least, the intense and narrow-minded zealot usually overpowers the sane and cultivated conservative who has none of the prejudice of passion and none of its force. Luther could cite the classics on occasion, but in

his world of despair and ecstasy there was no middle level for *sapientia* and *humanitas*.³

Bush's polemic is reminiscent of Erasmus's letter to Willibald Pirckheimer (20 March 1528): "Ubiunque regnat Lutheranismus, ibi litterarum est interitus" ("Wherever Lutheranism reigns, there is the death of culture")!⁴ Erasmus goes on to concede, "et tamen hoc genus hominum maxime litteris alitur" ("And yet people like this are especially nourished by humane letters"). Bush grudgingly admits that "Luther could cite the classics on occasion," but it was not only occasionally. Lewis Spitz notes, "In the *Table Talks* there are 59 references to Cicero, 50 citations of Vergil . . . and 61 references to Aristotle."⁵ Luther quotes all three throughout his writings, also referring to Terence, Horace, Plato, Quintilian, Homer, and Ovid, "roughly in that order."

In addition, Luther wrote a brilliant and forcible Latin. "At the Leipzig Debate," Spitz reports, "Dr. Eck expressed admiration for Luther's ability in Latin." At his most successful, in the works contrastingly named *De libertate Christiana* (1520) and *De servo arbitrio* (1525), Luther achieved an energy and brilliance that merits comparison with contemporary masterpieces like Thomas More's witty *Utopia*, John Calvin's terse and masculine *Institutes* and Melancthon's winsome *Confessio Augustana*.

Luther was also an advocate for what we today call classical Christian education from *To the German Nobility* (1520) to his *Sermon to Parents, On Sending their Children to School* (1530). In his letter to humanist poet Eobanus Hessus (1523), Luther insisted that his theology was compatible with humanist ideals.

Without knowledge of literature, pure theology cannot exist, as until now, with letters collapsing in ruins, theology fell most pitifully and lay ruined. I see there has never been

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1. Louis Markos, *From Achilles to Christ: Why Christians Should Read the Pagan Classics* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007), 11.
2. *Ibid.*, 12.
3. Douglas Bush, *The Renaissance and English Humanism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1939), 65, 114, 66–67.
4. *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami*, ed. P. S. and H. M. Allen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906–1958), 7:366.
5. Lewis W. Spitz, "Luther and Humanism," in *Luther and Learning*, ed. Marilyn J. Harran (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1985), 78.

a great revelation of God's Word unless He first prepared the way by the rise and flourishing of languages and letters. (WA Br 3: 50; AE 49: 34)

Writing *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany, That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* (1524), he anticipated the perennial question, "If we should and must have schools, what use is it to us to teach Latin, Greek, Hebrew and the other liberal arts, when we teach the Bible and God's Word in German, which is all we need for salvation?" His answer is that "if the languages were of no practical benefit, they are still fine and noble gifts from God," but "the languages are the scabbard in which the sword of the Spirit is sheathed" (WA 15: 38; AE 45: 360).

In pure scholarship Luther made contributions to Aesop and Tacitus that are still part of the scholarly study of these authors.

Luther also cooperated with Melanchthon on the practical curricular ideas that were formulated as the *Visitation Articles*, the inspiration and model for classical Christian education in every Protestant country in Europe and North America for centuries. The *Visitation Articles* often reflect Melanchthon's style, but there are passages that sound like Luther, for example, on the importance of teaching grammar.

If such labor is irksome to the teacher, as we often find, then we should send him on his way and look for someone who takes pleasure in this work of keeping children attentive to grammar. No greater injury can befall all the arts than for young people not to be well practiced in grammar. (WA 26: 238; AE 40: 318)

In pure scholarship Luther made contributions to Aesop and Tacitus that are still part of the scholarly study of these authors.⁶

In what follows I would like to investigate Luther's commitment to and understanding of the classics by discussing the twelve philosophical theses of Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518. The importance of the 28 theological theses has been widely recognized. The movement from the *lex Dei* of Thesis 1 to the *amor Dei* of Thesis 28 presents Luther's distinctive insights so effectively and clearly that he must have devoted con-

siderable thought to them. The concept of *theologia crucis* has been very influential.⁷ The *probationes* or proofs develop the ideas of the theological theses with clarity and insight.

As to the philosophical theses, however, the *communis opinio* runs something different. In the words of Martin Brecht, "The philosophical theses do not match the significance of the theological ones."⁸ I would like to suggest that Luther formulated the philosophical theses with the same care and thoughtfulness as the theological ones, a view encouraged by the proofs published by Helmar Junghans in 1979.⁹ I believe that they are as relevant to current concerns as the theological theses.

Most of the philosophical theses, eight of twelve, are devoted to Aristotle. In fact, Aristotle is mentioned in every thesis but one. Since Aquinas had assimilated him into Christian thought in the thirteenth century, Aristotle had played a major role in Catholic theology. Just as Luther's Heidelberg theological theses argued that Christian piety had taken a wrong turn by embracing the theology of glory and trusting in doing one's best, literally, *quod in se est* ("what is in one"), to achieve salvation, so his philosophical theses argued that Christian thought had gone astray by "philosophizing in Aristotle" (*in Aristotele philosophari*). Luther first explains the danger and limitations of Aristotle before finding positive examples in earlier Greek thought.

Luther begins with a double-barreled assault on Aristotle and scholasticism. "Anyone who wants to practice Aristotelian philosophy without danger must first be well stupefied in Christ." "Just as no one makes good use of the vice of lust unless married, so no one can philosophize well unless he is a fool, that is, a Christian." These are witty and provocative versions of Theses 43 and 44 of his *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* of 1517: "It is an error to say: Without Aristotle no one becomes a theologian (against a common saying). Rather no one becomes a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle" (WA 1: 226; AE 31: 12).

Theses 31 to 35 criticize important aspects of Aristotle's thought inconsistent with the Christian worldview. So Thesis 31 asserts, "It was easy for Aristotle to think of the world as eternal, since the human soul is mortal in his opinion." Theses 32 to 35 concentrate on the role of matter, which for Aristotle is self-existent (*nudam*) and creates unlimited multiplicity by necessity (*necessario*), since Aristotle did not "comprehend the absolute power of God."

Theses 36 to 39 are a devastating refutation of the picture of Luther as opponent of the classics. Theses 29–35 oppose Aristotle's thought to the biblical worldview: Christ, the survival

6. Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 91 (Aesop); WA 31, I: 205–6, AE 13: 59 (etymology of Arminius = Hermann = Heer Mann).

7. Walther von Loewenich, *Luthers Theologia Crucis* (München: Kaiser, 1929); in English, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976); Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997).

8. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483–1521* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 234.

9. Helmar Junghans. "Die probationes zu den philosophischen Thesen der Heidelberger Disputationen Luthers im Jahre 1518," *Lutherjahrbuch* 46 (1979): 10–59; WA 59: 405–26.

of the soul, God's absolute power, and his creation of matter and the world of matter. In Theses 36–39, however, Luther does not contrast Aristotle with either the Bible or later Christian thought, but with earlier Greek thinkers.

36. Aristotle is wrong to criticize and mock the philosophy of the Platonic Ideas, which is better than his own philosophy.

37. The imitation of numbers in things is brilliantly asserted by Pythagoras, but the participation of the Ideas is more brilliantly asserted by Plato.

38. In his disputation against the famous One of Parmenides Aristotle never lays a glove on his opponent. (Excuse a Christian for speaking bluntly.)

39. If Anaxagoras posited an unlimited number of forms, as it seems he did, he was an excellent philosopher, even if Aristotle was unwilling to admit it.

Thesis 40 asserts that Aristotle's science deals with words, technical terms, not reality.

Few dispute that Luther found Aristotle an unsuitable basis for Christian philosophy.¹⁰ What is less often appreciated is his very positive assessment of Plato's theory of ideas or forms.¹¹ He also values insights derived from Pythagoras, Parmenides, and Anaxagoras. All four philosophers discussed the importance of nonmaterial elements. Indeed, Christians from Justin Martyr to C. S. Lewis have found Plato's philosophical vision the most suitable one to use to develop a Christian philosophy. Plato tells of the shaping of the physical world by a wise and benevolent craftsman or demiurge in *Timaeus*; he reports the judgment of souls asserted by Socrates in *Gorgias*; and he gives arguments for the immortality of the soul in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. In the *Heidelberg Disputation*, however, Luther praises the theory of ideas. Justice, beauty, and truth are not names for social conventions, but objectively real. So far from rejecting pagan thought, Luther saw in earlier Greek thinkers ideas "of spiritual and theological value."

Theodor Dieter entitles the final section of his discussion of the Heidelberg philosophical theses "Luther's Alternative: Plato (!)."¹² The surprise is unjustified, once one accepts Luther's humanism. Plato was the favorite of humanists.¹³ In addition, Luther was an Augustinian friar and Augustine in *De civitate dei* VIII praises Plato and Platonism. The title of VIII.9 describes Platonism as "ea philosophia, quae ad veritatem fidei Christianae propius accessit" ("the philosophy that more closely approaches the truth of the Christian faith"). The tra-

dition of Christian Platonism is the mainstream of Christian philosophy; Christian Aristotelianism is a later and derivative development.

The importance of Plato for Christian thought is found in twentieth-century thinkers. In 1952 philosopher Josef Pieper wrote an essay that asked the question, "Gibt es eine nicht-christliche Philosophie?" ("Is there a non-Christian philosophy?") After some preliminary comments, Pieper answered,

I incline (to speak precisely) slightly to the answer: No, in the West, in our Western world, in the European world, there is no non-Christian philosophy, insofar as (one more reservation!), insofar as we understand by philosophy what it meant to the great founders and fathers of Western philosophy, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle.¹⁴

As Pieper develops this insight, he deals almost entirely with Pythagoras and Plato, with one quotation from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Similarly John M. Rist wrote that if Christians try to take advantage of the contributions of classical thought,

we should find that it is not just any philosophical framework within which Christian thinkers can work, but a version of the system of Plato, adapted and reformed particularly in the areas of what we should now call theory of action by the much more detailed labours of Aristotle, while still, in respect of the importance of a providential and transcendent God, in essence and in core Platonic.¹⁵

It is no surprise that Rist is the author of *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*.¹⁶

Arbogast Schmitt's *Modernity and Plato* explores difficulties modern thinkers have faced because they ignored Plato and Platonism.¹⁷ Schmitt's critique of many areas of modernity that suffer from ignoring Plato is wide-ranging and important. It is significant that Rist from a Christian perspective and Schmitt from a secular one both see Plato as an indispensable resource in confronting the intellectual challenges of today's world in ethics, politics, science, and theology.

The gap between Luther and modern thinkers like Josef Pieper and John Rist is narrower than it first appears. The contemporary interpretation of Aristotle as a critical Platonist concentrates on the continuity of problems confronted by the two philosophers and asserts, correctly, that Aristotle concerned himself in many cases with issues and problems discussed in the late Academy, to which he propounded his own distinctive critical responses and solutions. In a number of areas, such as

10. Alister McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 136–41.

11. Helmar Junghans, *Der junge Luther und die Humanisten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 167–71.

12. Theodor Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles: Eine historisch-systematische Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Philosophie* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 619–27.

13. James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990).

14. Josef Pieper, *Werke* 8.1 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2005), 109–14; quotation on 109.

15. John M. Rist, *On Inoculating Moral Philosophy against God* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999), 27.

16. John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

17. Arbogast Schmitt, *Die Moderne und Platon* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2003).

the development of syllogistic logic or, as Rist points out, the theory of action and virtue ethics, Aristotle made contributions that are still helpful in philosophical research.

Luther understood that Aquinas had not only Christianized Aristotle, but Platonized him.

For Luther, however, the key point is the vision of God. Aristotle's self-absorbed unmoved mover, the fully actualized object of love that does not love in return, is fundamentally different from the benevolent, shaping demiurge of Plato and the loving, providential LORD revealed in the Bible. Luther understood that Aquinas had not only Christianized Aristotle, but Platonized him. This was the conception of God that informed much scholastic thinking, including Cajetan's monumental commentaries on Aquinas. Luther objected to this interpretation as fundamentally false to Aristotle and dangerous as a basis for Christian philosophy, as he explained in a fragmentary statement made some time after the end of the 1518 disputation.

These theses were discussed and debated by me so that I might show, first, that sophists of all schools have deviated far and wide from Aristotle's opinion and have clearly introduced their own dreams into the books of Aristotle whom they have not understood. Next, if we should hold to his meaning as closely as possible (as I submitted here), nevertheless absolutely no help could be obtained from it, not only for theology and sacred letters but even for natural philosophy itself. For what help could there be for the understanding of material things, if you could quibble and trifle with matter, form, motion, limit, and time — words invented and prescribed by Aristotle. (WA 9: 170; AE 31: 70)

More positively Luther explains his praise of Plato's theory of ideas or forms in his proof to Thesis 36 (Philosophical thesis 8):

That Plato's philosophy is better than Aristotle's philosophy is clear from this, because Plato is always striving for the divine and immortal, separate and eternal, insensible and intelligible, from which he thought the single, individual, sensible must be left, because they could not be truly knowable on account of their instability. Aristotle, who opposes Plato in all things, mocks those separate and intelligible objects and draws people to the sensible and singular and deeply human and natural. . . . It is clear that Aristotle's philosophy creeps into the dregs of bodily and

sensible things, where Plato deals with separate and spiritual things. (WA 59: 424–25)

In the twentieth century Richard Weaver echoed Luther's critical response to Aristotle's rejection of the forms by discussing what followed "when the Middle Ages abandoned the ethic of Plato for that of Aristotle."¹⁸

For him, the virtuous life was an avoidance of extremes, a middle course between contraries considered harmful. Such doctrine leaves out of account the possibility that there are some virtues which do not become defective through increase, that virtues like courage and generosity may be pursued to an end at which man effaces himself. . . . Here the conception of Plato — expressed certainly, too, by Christianity — of pursuing virtue until worldly consequence becomes a matter of indifference, stands in contrast. Aristotle remains a kind of natural historian of the virtues, observing and recording them as he observed techniques of the drama, but not thinking of the spiritual ideal. . . . In Thomism, based as it is on Aristotle, even the Catholic church turned away from the asceticism and the rigorous morality of the patristic fathers to accept a degree of pragmatic acquiescence in the world.

Weaver's general point is the same as Luther's. Once scholasticism accepted Aristotle's critique of the Platonic forms, moral and religious truths were no longer seen as transcendental, intelligible, and eternal realities. They were only words, which can be replaced by other words coined and prescribed by Aristotle, as Luther says in Thesis 40, different ways of talking about states of matter but not objective reality. Aristotle's thought is not only a broken reed for the support of theology and ethics, but "even for natural philosophy," that is, science.

The philosophical theses of the *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518 reveal Luther as a Christian humanist committed to returning *ad fontes*, to the sources of Western philosophy, and rejecting modernizing misinterpretations. Restoring Aristotle's original meaning led Luther to repudiate his metaphysical and scientific jargon as a basis for Christian thought. Other early Greek thinkers, however — especially Plato — have important contributions to make to Christian philosophy. This insight remains valid. As Rist wrote, "It is not just any philosophical framework within which Christian thinkers can work, but a version of the system of Plato, adapted and reformed, . . . while still, in respect of the importance of a providential and transcendent God, in essence and in core Platonic." Martin Luther tried to make just this point in the philosophical theses he submitted to the *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518. **LOGIA**

18. Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 119.

Deipnosophistae Reformed

Classical Intertexts in Luther's Tischreden

ALDEN SMITH



THE CONTEXT FOR MARTIN Luther's *Tischreden* is not simply the wake of the Reformation. Rather, the notion that seriously learned folk would gather around dinner to discuss the classics harks back to the finest work of the Second Sophistic, Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae*. Incorporating ancient philosophical ideas, the Second Sophistic was a kind of minor reformation in the history of thought that involved a blurring of the lines between rhetoric and philosophy.

In such a fecund environment, the Second Sophistic's constituents blossomed, showing a wide-ranging indebtedness to the work of Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and Epicurus, to name a few. While some linkage between rhetoric and philosophy was visible already—for example, in Cicero's *De oratore*—and remained for a season,¹ it was in fact the Second Sophistic that employed as source texts what were by the second century A.D. “the classics,” thus bringing rhetoric and philosophy closer together. Athenaeus provides the best example of this conjoining, for in his *Deipnosophistae* he constructs a delightful portrayal of professors at dinner who spend their evening considering the ideas of the classical past, which is precisely what occurs in Martin Luther's *Tischreden*.

In this paper I propose to consider, through select examples, how the *Tischreden* reveals Luther's diverse manner of thought about “the classics.” The importance of such consideration can be seen in the ideas of the contributions of scholars such as Lowell Green, who discusses Luther's proposal that students should recite Terence to enhance their understanding of proper comportment and societal roles.² Others have expanded upon this notion: Lewis Spitz, for example, has pointed out that *Table Talk* is home to some fifty references to Virgil and nine to Cicero.³

Citation of the classics was, of course, not exclusive to Luther. Robert Burton's early seventeenth-century *Anatomy of Melancholy* is rife with such references. Burton delineates various manifestations of that psychological condition by using examples from classical and biblical sources and even proposes cures based on ancient models. To some extent, Green's deduction suggests that Luther viewed such sources as cures for social ills, an idea that parallels Burton's observations on depression a half century later.

Luther's diverse view of the classics was his way of supporting the gospel message in a time when the intellectual climate was in turmoil and the classics were valued, though sometimes for the wrong reasons. Luther's range of citations shows that he sees the classics as foundational for understanding the Christian message, a message that is ultimately strengthened by association with and allusion to classical sources. A few examples will demonstrate this thesis.

Luther purports to have an appreciation of Ovid when he says that Ovid outstrips all other poets for the way his poetry is “stitched together” in a masterly and pleasant style. Though he speaks of “stitching,” Luther cites only a single, apparently excised verse of Ovid (*Amores* 1.6.59) as an example: *Nox et Amor uinumque nihil moderabile suadent* (“Night and Love and wine lead to excess”—or more literally, “persuade [one to engage in] nothing moderate[ly]”).

Luther's admiration of this verse is based on its apparent admonition. The reformer comments on its beauty before he moves on from Ovid to Virgil, whom he says surpasses all others for “heroic gravity.” There is, however, more here than meets the eye, for the next verse in Ovid's *Amores*, which Luther does not cite, offers context unaccounted for: *Illa pudore uacat, Liber Amorque metu* (“the first of these [i.e. night] is devoid of shame, and wine and love are devoid of fear” 1.6.59). One can see quite easily how this changes the “moral message” of the verse.

This example suggests that Luther falls short, at least with Ovid, of catching the allusion's broader scope. Rather, he either does not know the context—that is, he takes this line not directly from the text of Ovid's *Amores* but from a book of already sanitized quotations—or he sanitizes the quotation himself. The former interpretation seems more likely not simply because it exculpates Luther for incorrectly citing the bawdy poet but also because such sanitation of Ovid had been

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1. G. E. Manzoni, “Il retore Quintiliano di fronte ai filosofi,” in *Aspetti della “paideia” di Quintiliano*, ed. P. V. Cova and others (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1990), esp. 148.
2. Lowell C. Green, “The Bible in Sixteenth-Century Humanist Education,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 19 (1972), 126 and n. 32. Luther's quip can be found in WTr 1 no. 867, 430–32. See also WTr 2, no. 2073, 312. See also P. Mesnard, “The Pedagogy of Johann Sturm (1507–1589) and its Evangelical Inspiration,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 13 (1966): 200–219.
3. Lewis W. Spitz, *Luther and German Humanism* (Brookfield, Vermont: Variorum, 1996), 103.

in fashion in Europe since the publication of the mythological compendium *Ovide moralisé* (*Ovidius Moralizatus*) by Pierre Bersuire in the fourteenth century. In Luther's defense, Bersuire had already done far more damage to Ovid's "reputation" as a less-than-moral didactic poet by investing Ovid's poetry with moral force.

Thus, the informed reader recalls that the very Ovid whom Luther commends for his high style and presents in the moralizing tradition of Bersuire, is the same Ovid whom, for his randy verses, Augustus banished to Tomis on the Black Sea. Bersuire's attempt to redeem the text, carried on wittingly or not by Luther, should not be seen as a slight to the author, but rather merely a purposeful reinterpretation of the text.

Association of God with the working of natural law is connected to Cicero.

Luther does much better, however, with Cicero, whom he is not simply drawing from a quotation book but has clearly studied carefully. Two citations aptly characterize Cicero, whom Luther defines, in part, by comparing him to Aristotle:

Aristotle is most certainly an "epicure." He does not believe that God cares for human affairs or, if he does believe that, then he thinks God governs the world as a sleepy maid rocking a child. But Cicero advances the discussion much further. I believe that he brought together all the good he could find in all the Greek writers. And this is the best argument, which often much moves me, that from the generation of species he proves that God exists. A cow always gives birth to a cow, and a horse to a horse, and so forth, and a cow does not give birth to a horse, nor a horse to a cow. . . . Therefore it is necessary that there is something that so governs all things. (WTr 5, no. 5440)

First, one must understand that *epicure* is no mere anachronism here. Rather, the word was used widely by Luther and other writers of the period to refer to a person of a philosophical or theological position that was anything short of thoroughly self-denying. The choice of such a term for disparaging purposes is a bit unsavory in the mouth of a man who is estimated to have been over three hundred pounds at the end of his life, a body mass index suggesting that he must have had his own epicurean dining tendencies. Nevertheless, with the term *epicure*, Luther is clearly referring to the pernicious view of a god who is not Lord, who sits in the background and permits evil things to happen, as if he could not prevent or intervene in the midst of the vicissitudes of life. Aristotle is, in that sense, more or less the "epicure" that Luther envisions.

Leaving Luther's somewhat disparaging remarks about Aristotle aside—remarks that may in part be derived from the persistent and not entirely unfounded notion that the Greeks were thinkers and not doers—one can learn a great deal from the reformer's opinion of Cicero. For Luther, Cicero is first a polymath and, as such, an excellent filter of Greek ideas. Second, Cicero is a theologian and apologist, in a manner of speaking, in his own right. He is able, to Luther's satisfaction, to prove that being comes from the source of being and that life exists, each according to its own species, in God's image—an idea in line with much Renaissance humanist thought. The association of God with the working of natural law, too, is connected to Cicero, and how natural law is simply taken for granted is also explained.

In another section of the text, Luther again compares Aristotle and Cicero to Cicero's advantage. The Roman orator comes off looking diligent, while Aristotle seems a bit spoiled:

Cicero multum praestat Aristoteli in physica et docendo. Officia Ciceronis multum praestant Ethicis Aristotelis, et Cicero, homo plenus curarum et onerum civilium, tamen longe excellit otiosum asinum Aristotelem, qui abundabat pecunia et otio. Cicero enim attigit optimas quaestiones physicae: An sit Deus? Qualis sit Deus? An res humanas curet? Et oportere aliquem aeternum animum esse etc. Aristoteles quidem fuit optimus et astutus dialecticus, methodum servans, sed rem non tradidit sicut Cicero. Si quis veram philosophiam vult, Ciceronem legat.

Cicero [said Luther] far surpasses Aristotle in philosophy and teaching. Cicero's *De officiis* is far better than Aristotle's *Ethics*. And although Cicero lived amidst great cares and bore great civil burdens, he still outstripped the rich and idle Aristotle, who was abounding in money and leisure. Cicero handled the best questions of natural philosophy, such as, whether there is a god, what type of god he is, whether he cares for human affairs, that there must be an eternal mind, and so forth. Indeed Aristotle was a superb and astute logician, who preserves a method but does not pass on [to his reader] the matter [of philosophy] like Cicero. Accordingly, anyone who wants to learn true philosophy should read Cicero. (WTr 2, no. 2412B)

Here Luther purports to have first-hand knowledge of both Aristotle's *Ethics* and Cicero's *De officiis*, which are not merely alluded to but mentioned explicitly. Luther reveals, too, knowledge of a good bit of Cicero's biography, for he mentions that Cicero was involved with civic life during the period when he was writing some of his philosophical treatises (though, admittedly, Cicero's involvement in the workings of the government had diminished when he was most actively writing about philosophy in the late 50s and early 40s B.C.).

There is a touch of irony in the preacher of *sola fides* here saying with Jacobian relish that what makes Cicero a greater philosopher than Aristotle is that he did not simply write philosophy, but he practiced it in his public life. Petrarch, by contrast, writes in his first letter to Cicero, whom he confesses to

admire, that he wishes he had stayed out of politics and devoted himself simply to philosophy. Though Petrarch admits that Cicero is the wellspring of style for all who love Latin prose, he cannot quite find in Cicero's service to the state the same nobility that Luther extols. An example of Luther's assessment can be found in *Tischreden* section 3925:

Deinde fecit mentionem Ciceronis, optimi, sapientissimi et diligentissimi viri, quanta ille passus sit et fecerit: Ich hoff, inquit, unser Hergott wirdt im und seins gleichen auch genedig sein, quamvis non est nostrum illud dicere [6, 16] et definire, sondern sollen bey dem verbo revelato bleiben: Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit etc. Quod autem Deus non possit cum aliis dispensare et discrimen habere inter alias gentes, hic non est nostrum scire tempora et modum. Erit enim novum coelum, nova terra multo amplior et latior. Bene potest singulis secundum sua merita retribuere.

Then he [Luther] made mention of Cicero, the best, wisest and most diligent man, who accomplished as much as he could: "I hope," [Luther] said, "our God will be also merciful to him and his contemporaries, although it is not ours to say and to establish, but rather we ought to remain in the revealed word: 'He who shall have believed and shall have been baptized, and so forth.' But as to the fact that God might not be able to render judgment among other people and to have a way of discerning amongst the other nations, at this point it is not ours to know the times and the method. For there will be a new heaven and a new earth, far more spacious and broader. God can easily repay individuals according to their own merits." (WTr 4, no. 3925)

One might usefully compare this with the end of Petrarch's first letter, where spatial and temporal considerations are given due attention: "Written in the land of the living; on the right bank of the Adige, in Verona, a city of Transpadane Italy; on the 16th of June, and in the year of that God whom you never knew the 1345th." While Petrarch consigns Cicero to the grave and speaks of the "God whom [he] never knew," Luther wants to redeem Cicero to such a point that he entertains the notion that the orator-philosopher could be in heaven, something that accords with the kind of faith—though never quite deemed "saving faith" by Luther—that Cicero showed at the end of his life, in his letter to Octavian, in which, Luther writes, Cicero

demonstrated what his view of eternity was. Without question, Cicero had a well-developed understanding of it, for according to human reason, he concludes, it is safer and more certain to rely on opinion and understanding that asserts that after this life there is eternal life, than to regard everything as transient and disappearing, whether in body or soul.

While it is not entirely clear that Luther read the *Eclogues*—a point that I shall return to in a moment—there can be little doubt that he knew his *Aeneid* well. Luther envisioned the *Ae-*

neid as a source not simply of the notion of a nation's journey comparable to Israel coming out of Egypt—an obvious comparison—but rather as a source text for the virtues of a ruler:

Et feminam Iudith pro occasione . . . assumpsit sicut Homerus Troiam et Virgilius Aeneam, in quo descripsit prudentiam, magnanimitatem, fortunam, casum, etc.

And [the author] fashioned Judith for the occasion . . . just as Homer did Troy, and Virgil did Aeneas, in whom he depicted prudence, magnanimity, luck, disaster, and so forth. (WTr 3, no. 3003)

While such a catalog could be the fond recollection of a text read as a school boy, the tone does not sound that remote. Rather, the catalog of virtues listed suggests, at the very least, that whenever Luther last read the *Aeneid*, he read it carefully and has retained in memory the key points about the epic's hero. Yet Luther's allusion to Virgil does not end there, since that poet is also cited by Luther as a source of "music":

Music is the best solace for a sad and sorrowful mind. By it the heart is refreshed and given repose in peace, as Virgil says, Tu calamos inflare leves, ego dicere versus ("you blow on the light pipe while I will sing the verses"). Music is a half discipline and school teacher, which makes people gentler and meeker, more modest and understanding.

This citation is drawn from the third verse of Virgil's fifth *Eclogue*, where Menalcas urges Mopsus to play while he sings. Given the lack of explanation about the context, this may be another case where it is possible that Luther is simply drawing from a book of gnomic dicta, for this quotation has the same ring as the citation of Ovid's *Amores* that we saw earlier. Yet, just because this citation has that type of resonance, it does not mean that Luther did not know the *Eclogues*. A more famous quotation about the *Eclogues* actually suggests that he had more than nominal familiarity with them:

Virgilium in Bucolicis nemo potest intellegere, nisi fuerit quinque annis pastor. Virgilium in Georgicis nemo potest intelligere, nisi fuerit quinque annis agricola. Ciceronem in Epistolis nemo integre intelligit, nisi viginti annis sit versatus in republica aliqua insigni. Scripturas sanctas sciat se nemo degustasse satis, nisi centum annis cum Prophetis, ut Elia et Elisaeo, Joanne Baptista, Christo et Apostolis Ecclesias gubernarit. Hanc tu ne Aeneida tenta, sed vestigia pronus adora. Wir sind Bettler, Hoc est verum.

No one, unless he has been a shepherd for five years, can understand Virgil in his *Eclogues*. No one, unless he has been a farmer for five years, can understand Virgil in his *Georgics*. No one can understand Cicero in his *Epistles* unless he has been active in important matters of state for twenty years. Let no one think that he has sufficiently digested the Holy Scriptures unless he has governed churches for a hundred years together with the prophets,

such as Elijah and Elisha, John the Baptist, Christ and the Apostles. Do not try [to grasp] this divine *Aeneid* but, bowed down, humbly adore its footprints. We are beggars. That is true.⁴

We have seen that Luther's profound appreciation and love for the classics is apparent in his various literary citations in the *Tischreden*. Melanchthon confirmed as much in his biography: "He was reading the classics not like a boy picking out words but as one looking for teachings about how to live a humane life" (*Legit ipse pleraque veterum Latinorum scriptorum monumenta. . . . Haec legebat non ut pueri verba tantum excerpentes, sed ut humanae vitae doctrinam*).⁵ Regardless of which method Luther used to cite the texts — whether he quotes an author from first-hand knowledge or he seems to rely on a compendium — it is clear that Luther enjoyed and employed classical literature as a guide to life.

Luther's Tischreden preserves numerous allusions to or citations of previous "classic" texts.

Luther's *Tischreden*, an heir of Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae*, preserves numerous allusions to or citations of previous "classic" texts, all redeployed for a new purpose. Whereas Luther clearly takes liberty with the way he cites some authors (for example, Ovid), with others, such as Cicero or Virgil, he draws on first-hand knowledge to show how the past informs future and that the authors of the distant (pagan) past should not be discounted. Rather, like Athenaeus, who combines the best of the rhetoricians with the best of the philosophers and poets, so Luther brings antiquity to bear on the reality of the reformed present. Luther's final written words linger: before the ancients — Cicero, who practiced the philosophy he preached, or Virgil, whose works address the whole of life — we are, to some degree, all beggars. **LOGIA**

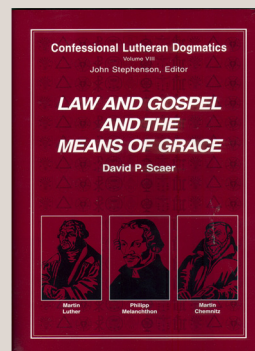
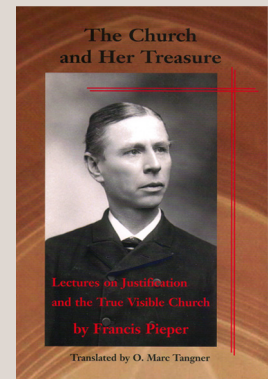
4. Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, trans. Martin H. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 291. See Carl P. E. Springer, "Arms and the Theologian: Martin Luther's *Adversus Armatum Virum Cochlaeum*," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 10 (2003): 41; also R. Alden Smith, *Virgil* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 184.
5. Melanchthon, *Vita*, *CR* 6, 157, no. 3478; cf. Spitz, *Luther and German Humanism*, 102.

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Classical Education as Vocational Education

Luther on the Liberal Arts

GENE EDWARD VEITH



IN LUTHER'S LARGE CATECHISM, the explanation of the Fourth Commandment ends with a discussion of parents' responsibilities. They are charged—"on peril of losing the divine favor"—to bring up their children in the fear and knowledge of God and also, according to the Latin translation, "to have them instructed and trained in a liberal education, that men may be able to have their aid in government and in whatever is necessary."¹

It would seem, then, that Lutherans would be confessionally bound—"on peril of losing the divine favor," no less—to give their children a classical liberal arts education. As it happens, though, confessional subscription must be to the German version, which is not quite so specific. Here is the English translation of that text from the Kolb-Wengert edition:

Therefore let all people know that it is their chief duty—at the risk of losing divine grace—first to bring up their children in the fear and knowledge of God, and, then, if they are so gifted, also to have them engage in formal study and learn so that they may be of service wherever they are needed. (Kolb-Wengert, 410)

This, in the German, is what Luther originally wrote. Despite his virtuosity in the Latin language, Luther did not write the Latin translation, a task taken up by the humanist scholar Vincent Obsopoeus. So a commitment to the classical liberal arts, as such, though highly favored by the Reformers and the Confessors, is not an absolute confessional mandate. However, a commitment to education is. It is the parents' "chief duty" to educate their children for both the spiritual and the earthly kingdoms. If they do not, they risk "losing divine grace." The purpose of both the "formal study" in Luther's version and the "liberal education" in Obsopoeus' is "service." That is, the purpose of education for Luther, as well as his fellow educators and confessors, is vocation.

In today's usage, of course, the terms *liberal education* and *vocational education* are diametrically opposed to each other. *Liberal education* means the pursuit of human learning for its own sake, and *vocational education* means training for a job. That the word *vocation* has become a synonym for *job* is simply

an example of linguistic narrowing, with the rich, multifaceted concept of God's *callings*, or in the Latinate *vocations*, reduced to economic activity and stripped of its theological connotations. The concept of *liberal education* has also undergone a shift in meaning. For some educators today the term simply refers to the field of the humanities. In colleges and universities, liberal education has come to mean requiring a certain number of unspecified courses in several different fields as a prerequisite to specializing in one's major, which is, in effect, a "vocational" program.

The word *liberal*, however, in this context comes from the Latin *liberalis*, which means "befitting free men."² Originally, in ancient Greece and Rome, the distinction was between education in the liberal arts (*artes liberales*)—the skills necessary for a free citizen—and education in the servile arts (*artes serviles*)—the skills necessary for a slave. Slaves needed to learn how to perform their crafts, do as they were told, and be productive functionaries of the economy. But the free citizens of the Greek *poleis* and of the Roman republic had to be educated so that they could be active participants in civic deliberations and decisions. The free citizen had to be able to use his mind at a very sophisticated level; he was responsible for receiving, applying, and transmitting the achievements and heritage of the past; he had to be able to express himself effectively in the agora or the forum so as to persuade others; he needed to conduct himself with honor and wisdom.

Today's version of "vocational education," including its higher-level manifestations in professional specializations, is arguably a remnant of the old servile education. But "liberal education" from the beginning had as its purpose the formation of individuals for civic life. This is exactly the sense articulated in the Latin Large Catechism: "to have them instructed and

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1. *Triglotta*, 631. Here, from 630, is the Latin text: "Ideo vero liberos nobis largitus est et commendavit, ut eosdem iuxta voluntatem eius educemus regamusque, alioqui nihil opus erat parentibus. Quapropter quisque indubitate ita habeat se debere pro officio, eoque astringi, qui modo nolit infensum et inclementem Deum suo malo experiri, ut ante omnia ad Dei timorem et agnitionem suos liberos educet. Atque ubi aliqua relucebit spes egregii ingenii aut non malae indolis, eosdem quoque bonis literis ac disciplinis imbuendos et formandos tradant, ut eorum opera ad politiam, et ad quamcunque rem opus fuerit, uti queant homines."
2. See the entry for "liberal" in *The Online Etymological Dictionary*, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=liberal>

trained in a liberal education, that men may be able to have their aid in government and in whatever is necessary.” It is also the sense Luther returns to again and again, the necessity of equipping young men for effective participation in both of God’s two kingdoms, in the church and also in the civil order, which consists not so much of “jobs” but of the divinely ordained estates of the household — which includes economic activity in subordination to the family — and the temporal government.

Vocation opened up the secular realm as the proper arena for the Christian life.

According to Luther, Christians are to live out their faith in their various callings in the church, the family, the workplace, and society. And the purpose of all vocations is to love and serve the neighbors that the vocation brings into one’s life. Again, in the words of the Large Catechism, parents are to have their children “engage in formal study and learn so that they may be of service.”

In his tract *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany, That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* (1524), Luther discusses vocation and education in the same terms:

Hitherto the sophists have shown no concern whatever for the temporal government, and have confined their schools so exclusively to the spiritual estate that it was well nigh a disgrace for an educated man to marry; he had to hear such remarks as, “Behold, he is turning secular and does not care to become a spiritual!” just as if their estate were alone pleasing to God and the secular estate, as they call it, were altogether of the devil and unchristian.³

Here is Luther’s pivotal insight that led to his doctrine of vocation: he rejects the notion that the spiritual orders are more holy than the temporal orders. The medieval church taught that a person who desires Christian perfection must become a priest, a monk, or a nun. This required taking vows of celibacy (thus foreswearing participation in marriage and parenthood) and poverty (thus foreswearing ordinary economic activity). In the medieval church, the word *vocation* referred solely to a call to the religious orders. Luther extended the concept also to the temporal orders. Thus, the Table of Duties in Luther’s Small Catechism refers to being a husband, wife, parent, child, master,

servant, day laborer, worker, and the like as being “holy orders,” the same term used for those who have taken clerical vows.

Luther’s educational reforms promoted this “priesthood of all believers.” But the new Reformation schools went far beyond teaching lay people how to read the Bible. Rather, since vocation opened up the secular realm as the proper arena for the Christian life, they provided liberal education.

“But,” you say again, “granted that we must have schools, what is the use of teaching Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and the other liberal arts? We can still teach the Bible and God’s Word in German, which is sufficient for our salvation.” I reply: Alas! I know well that we Germans must always remain brutes and stupid beasts, as neighboring nations call us and as we richly deserve to be called. But I wonder why we never ask: What is the use of silks, wine, spices, and strange foreign wares, when we have in Germany not only wine, grain, wool, flax, wood and stone enough for our needs, but also the very best and choicest of them for our honor and ornament? Arts and languages, which are not only not harmful, but a greater ornament, profit, honor and benefit, both for the understanding of Scripture and for the conduct of government, these we despise; but we cannot do without foreign wares, which we do not need, which bring us in no profit, and which reduce us to our last penny. Are we not justly dubbed German fools and beasts?⁴

Here is the common notion of the liberal arts elevating human beings above their natural barbaric state. But Luther goes further, saying that these arts, particularly the ancient languages that were the foundation of a classical liberal arts education, are gifts of God: “Truly, if there were no other use for the languages,” he said, “this alone ought to rejoice and move us, that they are so fine and noble a gift of God, with which He is now richly visiting and endowing us Germans, more richly indeed than any other land.”⁵

Luther then relates the liberal arts, while acknowledging their intrinsic value as gifts of God, to vocation:

If then there were no soul, as I have said, and if there were no need at all of schools and languages for the sake of the Scriptures and of God, this one consideration should suffice to establish everywhere the very best schools for both boys and girls, namely, that in order outwardly to maintain its temporal estate, the world must have good and skilled men and women, so that the former may rule well over land and people and the latter may keep house and train children and servants aright. Now such men must come from our boys and such women from our girls. Therefore the thing to do is to teach and train our boys and girls in the proper manner.⁶

3. Martin Luther, *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany, That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* (1524), http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/NEW1luther_d9.htm

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

The “temporal estate” refers to God’s earthly kingdom. What is remarkable for its time is Luther’s insistence that women as well as men, girls as well as boys, should be educated; indeed, have “the very best schools.” What education can give girls and boys is not specific job training but the ability to “rule well” in the natural, social, family, and economic orders.

Luther does treat the kind of education necessary for a young man to make a living, but this kind of training should go on outside of school:

Now you say, “But who can spare his children for so long a time, and train them all to be young gentlemen? There is work for them to do at home, etc.” I reply: It is not in the least my intention to have such schools established as we had heretofore, in which a boy sat over his Donatus and Alexander for twenty or thirty years and yet learned nothing. We are living in a new world today and things are being done differently. My idea is to let boys go to such a school for one or two hours a day, and spend the remainder of the time working at home, learning a trade or doing whatever their parents desired; so that both study and work might go hand in hand while they were young and able to do both.⁷

Luther is alluding to the apprenticeship system, by which young men in the sixteenth century learned their trades and professions in on-the-job mentorships. Luther did want “study and work,” while being separate realms, to “go hand in hand.” Both are integral for vocation.

A liberal education is designed specifically to equip human beings for freedom.

Though everyone needs to be educated to read and understand the word of God — the poor as well as the rich, the girls as well as the boys, both radical ideas for the time — some may do with one or two hours a day, as Luther says in the quotation above. “But the exceptional pupils,” he adds, “who give promise of becoming skilled teachers, preachers and holders of other spiritual positions, should be kept longer at school or altogether dedicated to a life of study.”⁸ But all of them, even the physical laborers, deserve a liberal education.

It is highly significant that the Reformation schools rejected the model of servile education and instead began providing for all classes of people, even in that hierarchical society

of sixteenth-century Germany, and for girls as well as boys, a liberal education, that is, one designed specifically to equip human beings for freedom. Once peasants received such an education, they did not stay peasants for long. The Reformation was soon accompanied by an unprecedented social mobility. This was due in part to the churches’ efforts to make all Christians not only literate, but also liberally educated. In time, this education for freedom led to the rise of social and political freedom as well. The liberal arts could liberate human beings precisely by cultivating their intellectual and creative powers and drawing out their individual talents. This too Luther related to vocation.

Luther recognized how liberal education cultivates original thought and independent thinking:

If children were instructed and trained in schools or elsewhere where there were learned and well-trained schoolmasters and schoolmistresses to teach the languages, the other arts, and history, they would hear the happenings and the sayings of all the world and learn how it fared with various cities, estates, kingdoms, princes, men, and women; thus they could in a short time set before themselves, as in a mirror, the character, life, counsels and purposes, success and failure of the whole world from the beginning. As a result of this knowledge, they could form their own opinions and adapt themselves to the course of this outward life in the fear of God, draw from history the knowledge and understanding of what should be sought and what avoided in this outward life, and become able also by this standard to assist and direct others.⁹

“They could form their own opinions,” that is, they could become independent thinkers. This education, for Luther, also has a moral dimension, a first-use-of-the-law function in regulating “this outward life.” Here too, Luther relates liberal education to vocation, the equipping of the Christian “to assist and direct others,” that is, to love and serve his neighbors, the purpose of every vocation.

Thus, for Luther, liberal education was vocational education — not in the sense of job training, but in the sense of equipping young people to love and serve their neighbors in their families and their societies. This does set off Luther, to a certain extent, from perhaps the best-known theorist of the liberal arts, Cardinal John Henry Newman (recently beatified by the Roman Catholic Church). A liberal education, in his view, involves knowledge pursued for its own sake. This is opposed to mechanical “instruction,” which employs knowledge for other ends, to be “useful.”¹⁰ Cardinal Newman’s idea of the university as a realm unto itself for the pursuit of the higher good, unsullied with the demands of the world — making the university a sort of secular monastery — may owe something to the ancient catholic tradition. It goes back further, though,

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse 5, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/idea/discourse5.html>

to Luther's philosophical nemesis, Aristotle. In the *Politics*, the great philosopher not only develops the notion that knowledge pursued for its own sake is a higher good, but specifically rejects the concept of service. "The object also which a man sets before him makes a great difference," says Aristotle. "If he does or learns anything for his own sake or for the sake of his friends, or with a view to excellence, the action will not appear illiberal; but if done for the sake of others, the very same action will be thought menial and servile."¹¹

Aristotle believed that doing things for others is not fitting for a free man.

While Aristotle believed that doing things for others is not fitting for a free man — and thus that education that benefits

others is inferior to that pursued for its own sake — Luther had a very different view, not only of education but of freedom. In his treatise *On the Freedom of a Christian*, Luther said that true freedom manifests itself in vocation, that is, in love and service to one's neighbor:

A Christian . . . ought to entertain this view and look only to this object — that he may serve and be useful to others in all that he does; having nothing before his eyes but the necessities and the advantage of his neighbor. . . . And as our heavenly Father has freely helped us in Christ, so ought we freely to help our neighbour by our body and works, and each should become to the other a sort of Christ, so that we may be mutually Christs, and that the same Christ may be in all of us; that is, that we may be truly Christians.¹²

If freedom for the Christian is expressed in service, it follows that the kind of education associated with freedom — that is, the liberal arts — also exists to serve the neighbor. **LOGIA**

11. Aristotle, "Politics," in *Classic and Contemporary Readings in the Philosophy of Education*, ed. Steven M. Cahn (New York: McGraw Hill, 1997), 138.

12. Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian* (1520), trans. R. S. Grignon, <http://www.ctsfw.edu/etext/luther/freedom/>

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Wise, Steadfast, and Magnanimous Patrons of the Classics in Luther's Wittenberg

CARL P. E. SPRINGER



THE EPITHETS IN THE TITLE of this paper will be instantly recognizable to all serious students of the Lutheran Reformation.¹ They are descriptors almost always attached to the names of the electors of Ernestine Saxony, based in Wittenberg, who acted as patrons and defenders of Martin Luther: Frederick, “the Wise”; his brother John, “the Steadfast”; and the latter’s son, John Frederick, “the Magnanimous.” As the centuries passed, these adjectives became so closely connected with the electors’ names that they have now become virtually inseparable. There have been many famous Fredericks and Johns in the annals of history but only one Frederick the Wise or John the Steadfast.²

How much more dignified are these epithets than others that we find in the history books! The great Viking invader of England was called Ragnar “Shaggy pants,” and his son was Ivar “the Boneless.”³ This degree of descriptive detail verges on the embarrassing. Later on in English history we meet Ethelred “the Unredy” (not “unprepared,” as a speaker of modern English might imagine, but “unwise”). In Russian history, we find the example of Czar Ivan, whom friend and foe alike described as “the Terrible.” Philipp II, the great Spanish rival of Queen Elizabeth I, was often called “the Spider.” These appellations are as far removed as one could imagine from the elevated moral ambit of the Wittenberg epithets. Or consider the purely physical epithets attached to the names of Charles, “the Bald”; Louis, “the Fat”; or George, “the Bearded.” (These last three are decidedly underwhelming descriptors when you think about it. Most rulers in the Middle Ages, including the electors of Saxony, were either bald, fat, or bearded; many could have been assigned all three epithets at the same time.)

Epithets were assigned more often to lay leaders of the Reformation than to theologians. Luther is called many “names” by his contemporaries, often abusive, but none is regularly affixed to his given name. He is “Luther,” simply, or “Dr. Martin Luther,” never “Martin Luther, the Magnificent” or “Martin Luther, the Hammer of the Papists.” These prudent, consistent, and generous electors of Saxony were hardly professional theologians, but they used their political influence, monetary resources, and military clout to promote the cause of the Ref-

ormation. One of the most important things they did was to make sure that Lutheran education was established — first of all at the University of Wittenberg. Their example inspired countless other lay leaders to promote and defend education — in particular instruction in the *linguae sacrae* (Greek, Hebrew, and Latin) — all over the rest of Germany and much of northern Europe. And it is to this spirited defense of the gospel on the part of the Saxon electors, not their military prowess, political power, or personal characteristics, that their epithets refer.

Now why is education, specifically education in the languages, of such critical importance for Lutheranism? Luther expressed himself forcefully on this point: “And let us be sure of this: we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages.” And again: “If through our neglect we let the languages go (which God forbid!), we shall not only lose the gospel, but the time will come when we shall be unable either to speak or write a correct Latin or German” (AE 45: 360). Is Luther’s declaration that the very survival of the gospel itself depends upon language instruction mere hyperbole (he certainly was capable of overstating his case), a recommendation that may have made sense in the sixteenth century but not in this one? Or is it an injunction from an authoritative, practically prophetic, source that deserves to be reevaluated seriously today, in particular by those who wish to remain truly “Lutheran”?

If anything, ancient “dead” languages are even harder for modern Americans to learn than modern ones. For busy seminarians who are preparing for an even busier life in the ministry, the prospect of spending all the time and effort it takes to really learn Greek and Hebrew, the languages of the Bible, can be quite daunting. And then there’s Latin and German to boot, the languages of the Lutheran Confessions. As the languages in which a great deal of Lutheran theology has been taught, learned, read, and written over the centuries, these last two are of almost the same importance as the first two for a church

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1. This article is dedicated to the memory of a devoted servant of the word, John E. Springer (1930–2010), a Lutheran school teacher and pastor, who first introduced me to the study of Latin. “Interroga patrem tuum et adnuntiabit tibi, maiores tuos et dicent tibi” (Deut 32:7).
2. On the origins of electoral Saxony and the reign of Frederick the Wise, see Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation*, vol. 1, *The Setting of the Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).
3. John Algeo, *The Origins and Development of the English Language*, 6th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010), 82.

that wishes to remain true to its historical identity. So for prospective Lutheran theologians in America who have grown up speaking only English, there are really four languages that must be mastered: Greek and Hebrew, Latin and German. Taking up such a pedagogical endeavor seriously, then as now, requires an enormous commitment of time and energy from students, teachers, and educational institutions.

Sola scriptura becomes a mere slogan for those who cannot figure out what the scriptura actually says!

And yet, no matter how demanding the study of biblical and confessional languages may be (and how very unpleasant and unpopular this subject may be for most Lutherans today), the speakers at this conference have come together from a variety of different perspectives and backgrounds to try to make this common point: a serious grounding in the study of the sacred languages is no less indispensable for those who wish to be Lutheran now than it was in Luther's time.

One important reason for believing this to be so is the continuing validity of the fundamental Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*. The emphasis on the word of God as the exclusive source of divine revelation is still one of the most essential ways in which Lutheran theology is distinguished from that of many other religions. As long as the Holy Scriptures and the confessional writings (the latter boldly subscribed to *quia* ["because"] and not just *quatenus* ["insofar"] as they accord with Scripture), are of central importance to Lutheran doctrine and praxis, it only makes sense that the languages in which these documents have been written be granted an equally high degree of respect. *Sola scriptura* becomes a mere slogan, empty words only, for those who cannot figure out (or do not care about) what the *scriptura* actually says!

Not all Christians, to be sure, have such a high respect for written words or even the written word. In Luther's own day, "the enthusiasts" believed that God would speak directly to them in dreams or revelations, not solely in Scripture. And, of course, there were Luther's "dear Romanists," who believed that the church's magisterium could be relied upon to come up with the truth based on tradition (including, but not limited to, the Scriptures) and their own authority. We are half a millennium removed from the heady times of the early Reformation; much has changed since Luther's day; but this particular aspect of the religious landscape hasn't changed a bit. Lutheran theology, for the most part, is still disinclined to ground itself on the interpretation of a personal vision or the apprehension of a mysterious inner voice. Lutherans, for the most part, still remember that they are not required to accept mindlessly the pontifica-

tions of an infallible church leader or council. Lutheran clergy and laity today still practice their faith, for the most part, by reading, interpreting, expounding, teaching, preaching, singing, and applying the divine words of the Sacred Scriptures to each other and others around them.

But can't the ancient languages be read in translation? Of course, they can. There have been great translations of the Bible into English. With all of its inaccuracies, the Authorized Version of 1611 is a work of art in its own right, a classic of the English language.⁴ Luther himself prepared one of the most successful of all translations of the Bible.⁵ But even as he worked diligently to complete and promote his distinctive and popular German translation of the Scriptures, Luther continued to insist on the importance of the study of the languages in which they were written: "The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined" (AE 45: 360). Jewel boxes and sheaths are not the same as jewels and swords, to be sure, but they are objects of beauty and value in their own right. Museums are full of them. And they are absolutely necessary. Not to press Luther's analogy too far, but swords need scabbards. The weapons they encase can do a lot of unintentional damage to the swordbearer and others, if they are not sheathed properly. Precious jewels are more easily lost once they are removed from their containers. Translations often fail miserably at capturing the meaning, to say nothing of the music, of the original.⁶ The well-known Italian proverb, *traduttore traditore* ("the translator is a traitor"), makes just this point. At best, it could be said that some translations fail less miserably than others.⁷ As a translator himself, Luther knew just how impossible (and usually thankless) the task that he performed so well really is.

Notice that Luther does not suggest that studying the biblical languages is something to be gotten out of the way before getting around to more serious theological matters. He clearly is not thinking of this as some sort of preliminary school exercise. Real language study involves far more than simply memorizing conjugations and declensions and vocabulary. Long after their training days are over, serious students of the Bible should continue to improve their understanding of the languages in which "the precious jewel is encased" — for the rest of their lives. After all, nobody thinks that you are finished learning the English language just because you passed a required freshman composition class. Native speakers continue to deepen their understanding of their own languages until they die. Language is an essential, perhaps the most essential, component of human culture. And

4. See Lane Cooper, *Certain Rhythms in the English Bible: With Illustrations from the Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and the Lord's Prayer* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952).

5. On the painstaking care that Luther devoted to biblical translation, see Heinz Bluhm, *Martin Luther: Creative Translator* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965).

6. Robert Frost suggested famously that poetry is "what gets lost in translation."

7. One of the most popular recent American translations, the New International Version, popular in some Lutheran circles, will almost certainly go down in history as one of the clunkiest.

the ability to understand and employ language is indispensable for the serious practice of theology, because theology not only involves language, it is itself a veritable language. (The Greek word *theologia* can be translated, somewhat woodenly, to be sure, into English as “God-talk.”) Luther himself has been aptly described as “a language event.”⁸ Of all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, language is one of the greatest, epitomized by the tongues of fire above their heads that turned the disciples into apostles at Pentecost. These formerly tongue-tied fishermen were truly “ablaze with the Spirit” as they eloquently declared the wonderful works of God in a variety of languages to the astonishment and conversion of many of those who listened to them.

To be truly effectual, the “servant of the word” must be able to read and explain words, sacred and otherwise, with deep linguistic, historical, and rhetorical understanding. In the preface to his study of Isaiah, Luther wrote:

Two things are necessary to explain the prophet. The first is a knowledge of grammar, and this may be regarded as having the greatest weight. The second is more necessary, namely, a knowledge of the historical background, not only as an understanding of the events themselves as expressed in letters and syllables but as at the same time embracing rhetoric and dialectic, so that the figures of speech and the circumstances may be carefully heeded. (AE 16: 3)

Christianity is an incarnational faith, which means that its adherents take seriously the fact that God chose to be born in the fullness of time, in a particular place, of a particular woman, under a particular law (Gal 4:4). Pontius Pilate, the procurator responsible for the governance of the Roman province of Judaea, under whose aegis Jesus was crucified, is mentioned in both the Apostles’ and the Nicene Creeds, and of a Sunday morning his alliterative name echoes through the nave of many a liturgical church to this very day. What could be a more riveting object of study for anyone convinced of God’s providential oversight of history than John the Baptist’s and Paul’s political, social, and geographical circumstances, the literature, art, philosophy, and religious views of such an axial time and place? How could any Christian, to say nothing of a Lutheran, not be completely absorbed in trying to find out as much as possible about the languages that the mother of God and her son and Pontius Pilate would have read, spoken, and understood?

Now, let no one suppose that this conference is advocating a purely scholarly or academic approach to the study and use of ancient languages. Except for linguists, the end of language study is not language study; it is communication. And the incarnate Word, the gospel, is certainly not primarily an object of study. It graciously infuses believers with life and salvation and transforms their entire being: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all

wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col. 3:16). Importantly, though, this divine Word is taught and proclaimed and sung to the world in human words. The *Logos* of God, his eternal message of salvation, becomes flesh and dwells among *us*. What it does then is not just speak, but create, build, stimulate, preserve, and perpetuate faith-life. One of the most thoughtful, if not yet fully appreciated, American students of Luther, J. P. Koehler, observes that it was Luther, not the scholarly Melancthon, who

penetrated into the life of the language concerned and mastered its psychology. He was not concerned only with vocabulary and grammatical forms but with the peculiar logic and mental processes of a people as expressed in its language. . . . He was not a pedantic scholar, but the artist and poet whose lines and colors and metaphors are true to life, and to him language was life.⁹

Most of us in this room possess a tremendous advantage in precisely this respect in that we are native speakers of English, the *lingua franca*, if you will, of our day.¹⁰ Unfortunately, our current educational philosophies and practices are not nearly as effective as the ancient *trivium*, that is to say, the systematic study of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, in preparing young Americans to be thoughtful and eloquent readers, writers, and speakers of this, their own, rich language.¹¹ After a number of

8. For this expression (in German, *Sprachereignis*), see Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970).

9. J. P. Koehler, *History of the Wisconsin Synod*, 2nd ed., ed. Leigh Jordahl (Sauk Rapids: The Protéstant Conference, 1981), 138–39. In a similar vein, Peter Matheson, *The Rhetoric of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 114–15, observes that Luther was “quite self-conscious about the need to make use of good rhetoric” and points out that his exegetical writing in particular is “littered with references to simile, metaphor, allegory, hyperbole . . . and similar technical terms.” At the same time, Matheson correctly notes that Luther uses rhetoric with great freedom: “There is a seriousness of intent about his language, a coinherence of form and content, which gives it a rigorous edge. It is never flowery, and is seldom elegant, although it can be tender, racy, coarse, entertaining, absorbing.” For Luther, “language is very much a means to a confessional end, a tool for the preacher and pastor, not an ornament for the poet.”

10. T. David Gordon, *Why Johnny Can’t Preach: The Media Have Shaped the Messengers* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2009), is a “media ecologist” who recommends that pre-seminary students major in English rather than religious studies.

11. The word *grammar* often has a negative connotation today, associated as it so often has been with a stiff and pedantic approach to language study. Grammar is better understood as the way in which readers “delineate, hear, and feel the means of meaning beneath the skin” as we encounter the “nerve and bone structure beneath the verse and the sentence” and “the very opposite to any thick-skinned and naive espousal of lasting rules.” For more on this definition of grammar, see George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Although keenly aware of the dangers inherent in both rhetoric and logic (or dialectic), Luther appreciated them both for what they could offer: “A rhetorician without dialectics is a gas-bag, and a mere dialectician cannot reach the heart. But a rhetorician with dialectical skills can really make things hum” (Matheson, *Rhetoric*, 114).

years and great quantities of money spent on No Child Left Behind, the latest studies show that national scores in reading have actually declined. In the United States of America, 70 percent of eighth-graders cannot read at grade level. That is after eight years of No Child Left Behind.¹² I suspect that the hyperbolic aspirations of the latest government effort, Race to the Top, will lead to equally disappointing results if we do not return to the basic, time-honored pedagogical principles and practices of the *trivium*.

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Luther believed strongly that Christians should be educated (*Christiani docendi sunt* is a phrase that appears already in his *Ninety-Five Theses*). Not just young people in training for the ministry, but everybody, rich and poor, boys and girls, should be taught to read and understand texts, to speak and write correctly and persuasively, and to think clearly, “both for the understanding of Holy Scriptures *and* the conduct of temporal government.” Neither theological nor political convictions should have to depend entirely on so-called experts, who might otherwise be more easily able to mislead, deceive, or manipulate the uneducated. And the seven traditional liberal arts, whose roots go all the way back to antiquity, is what Luther undoubtedly had in mind when he spoke of education.

Of course, the *artes liberales* should not be thought of as “liberal” in the modern, highly politicized, sense of the word; in its most radical sense *liber* means simply “free.” These arts are liberal insofar as they represent an education that is fitting for those who have been liberated from the necessity of having to make a living while they pursue their studies. Such students are not obliged, either, to worry overly much about how they will provide for their livelihoods once they have finished their formal schooling. It is in this relaxed world (the Greek word from which we derive our word for school means “leisure”) that education in the purest sense of the word can best occur, removed from the looming specter of the job market. The more expensive education becomes, the less likely it is, not surprisingly, that it will be and remain truly liberal. Hence, the necessity for wise leaders and rulers who will prioritize and patronize liberal education for all.

The liberal arts traditionally include not only the *trivium*, grammar, rhetoric, and logic;¹³ but also the *quadrivium*, arith-

metic, geometry, music, astronomy. Such a curriculum includes, therefore, not only basic work in the languages (or “letters”), but also an introduction to the “arts and the sciences.” Why did Luther regard the study of the languages *and* the arts as a great “ornament, profit, glory, and benefit”? What do the arts have to do with Christianity? From Plato to Augustine to John Calvin, some of the greatest Western thinkers across the centuries have warned of the seductive power of the arts to draw believers away from the creator to focus on themselves and the created world around them. According to Luther, by contrast, the arts were beautiful gifts of God, not just matters of indifference or dangerous worldly distractions. In fact, he considered God himself to be the greatest of artists: “Surely the contemplation of the whole creation, and especially of the simplest grasses of the fields and the adornment of the earth, proves that our Lord God is an artist like unto none.”¹⁴

Of all the arts, Luther was most deeply appreciative of music and considered it one of the greatest gifts of God, second only to theology. He himself played the lute and personally composed a number of hymns that proved to be both popular and classic. They were widely sung in Luther’s own time and quickly incorporated into the earliest Lutheran hymnals, but they also played a formative role in the subsequent development of Lutheran church music, whose influence culminated in the work of Johann Sebastian Bach and continues to this day. Luther distrusted anyone who distrusted music. He would not have been surprised, one suspects, by the pronouncement issued by the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei of Iran, who came out in August of 2010 with a solemn declaration that music “is not compatible with the highest values of the sacred regime of the Islamic Republic.” Instead of wasting time on music lessons, the Ayatollah declared, “It’s better that our dear youth spend their valuable time in learning science and essential and useful skills.”¹⁵

Such attitudes towards the arts are not limited only to Iran. There also seems to be a real and growing bias in America, even in some of its finest educational institutions, against the traditional liberal arts. College students are gravitating in ever increasing numbers to majors with a professional and practical bent, demanding ever more applied courses, and they have grown increasingly impatient with coursework that does not have an obvious connection with vocational preparation. Such practical considerations are today more widespread than ever in the United States of America, and they are easily understood by any parent with children in college. When the price of a year in college is often greater than that of a new car, cost becomes an issue that few parents, even the most idealistic,

<http://www.siu.edu/CAS/trivium/>. For Luther’s interest in the education of children and his extensive work on the fables of Aesop, see my *Luther’s Aesop* (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2011).

12. Among the top thirty developed countries, the United States of America ranks twenty-fifth in math; see “Students Caught in the School Squeeze,” *New York Times*, September 24, 2010, C4.

13. There is a great deal that has been written in recent years about the *trivium*. For more, see my website on the subject,

14. WTr 4: 197–98, #4201; Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Abingdon and Cokesbury, 1951), 221. For a comprehensive study of Luther’s aesthetic sensibilities, see Hans Preuss, *Martin Luther der Künstler* (Güterloh: Bertelsmann, 1931).

15. Eric Felten, “*De Gustibus*,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 6, 2010, W9.

can blithely ignore. The problem is that when education is reduced to a means rather than an end, it threatens to become little more than narrow job training, and the result is something far less, therefore, than the liberating (and eminently practical) education that Luther and the other Wittenberg reformers had in mind.¹⁶

Such attacks on “liberal” education are not new. In his 1524 address *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany*, urging them to establish and maintain schools, Luther bluntly described as “brutes and stupid beasts” those educational minimalists of his own day who questioned why it was necessary to teach “Latin Greek, and Hebrew and the other liberal arts” instead of just using “German for teaching the Bible and God’s word, which is enough for our salvation” (AE 45: 357).

Even Lutheran higher education is not immune from this reductionist trend. There is a multitude of Lutheran colleges and universities in this country, but it would seem that the liberal arts are in a precarious position in many, if not most, of them. And as for the seminaries, while it is not uncommon for them to recommend strongly an undergraduate major in the classics for those who are preparing to apply for admission when they graduate from college, how much real preparation and demonstrable aptitude in the liberal arts is actually expected? And no wonder, when so many second-career candidates, with an undergraduate degree in engineering or business, let us say, apply to seminaries and are admitted with the sole proviso that they take a crash course in New Testament Greek.

Luther was seriously worried that if such a mindset were to prevail, with its insistence on learning only the bare minimum and focusing only on the practical application of education, there would be frightening consequences for theology: “I am convinced that without literary training, pure theology is not able to stand upright” (WBr 3: 50). In fact, Luther identified *bonarum artium cognitio* (“knowledge of the good arts”) as one of the essential ingredients in a theologian’s education (WTr 3: 312). There are, of course, other ingredients that Luther also considered crucial, including the generous gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as the highly salutary experience of wrestling with Satan’s attacks (*Anfechtung*), but neither of these lend themselves so readily to classroom instruction as the study of the liberal arts.

If some would object that this heavy emphasis on academic training or this highly focused curricular vision is too old-fashioned or traditional to work well in today’s world, we should remember that Luther’s reformation was a conservative one. It

was not a revolution. He did not discard elements of the medieval church unless they were hopelessly out of sync with the gospel. Even though he disagreed with the way in which the mass was celebrated in his day, Luther ended up not only retaining, but embracing, much of the historical liturgy. It is true that his reformation ended up dramatically changing the church and the world, but we should not imagine that Luther accomplished this by marching bravely into a bright, new future with nary a look backwards. Indeed, one could say that as a reformer “he backed into the future,” with his eyes fixed firmly on the past.¹⁷ This is very similar to the way in which the ancient Greeks imagined themselves positioned in time: moving into the future with one’s back to it, facing the past. After all, from a historical perspective, the only period of time that we have even the remotest chance to see clearly is the one that is already past. The future is inscrutable. The present trickles through our fingers the minute we try to grasp it. But the past, mysterious as it can be, is actually able to be studied. Why spend so much time trying to peer into the blank pages of the future instead of contemplating the richly inscribed past and allowing ourselves to be informed by it? The achievements of some of the most groundbreaking figures in intellectual history, Thomas Aquinas, Michelangelo, John Adams, were essentially conservative. Like Luther, they reembraced the past and its legacy rather than rejecting it.

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Ad fontes (“Back to the sources”). This was the cry of the Renaissance humanists as they called for a return to the ancient Greek and Latin roots of Western European culture.¹⁸ Could it be a clue for how best to be vibrantly, confessionally Lutheran today? The adjective “confessional” is often used to describe a formal subscription to the classic documents of the Lutheran Book of Concord that delineate the unique characteristics of Lutheran practices and beliefs. Such subscriptions can be (and often are) quite nominal or perfunctory and do not translate automatically into thoughtful denominational or individual convictions. At a time when other church bodies are reembracing their unique historical and even cultural identities (for example, a number of the Jesuit colleges in America) and even

16. Of such an education, Edward Copleston, provost of Oriel College, Oxford, argued that it might well produce “a skillful agriculturist, an improver of manufactures, a useful inspector of roads, mines, and canals: but all that distinguishing grace, which a liberal education imparts, he foregoes for ever.” It is “a cruel experiment,” he writes, whose result is “not only a moral blank, but an intellectual barrenness — a poverty of fancy and invention, a dearth of historical and poetical illustration, a want of all those ideas which decorate and enliven truth.” See Richard M. Gamble, ed., *The Great Tradition: Classic Readings on What It Means to Be an Educated Human Being* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2007), 513.

17. See Bernard Knox, *Backing into the Future: The Classical Tradition and its Renewal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994).

18. On the central importance of Latin language and literature for the Renaissance and the Reformation, see Ann Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

using them to “brand” themselves, American Lutherans still seem inclined to downplay their distinctive identities (some would say, peculiarities). This practically instinctive reflex (to “fit in” rather than to “stick out”) was developed, one suspects, as immigrants to this country from northern Europe tried to blend into the mainstream of a forward-looking nation whose culture had more than a little suspicion of (and even hostility to) the intellectual claims of the European past, especially after the two world wars.¹⁹ But in a far more diverse America today that is becoming increasingly interconnected with the rest of the world, a greater need and demand for real distinctiveness may be developing.

What if Lutherans would actually try to be different now? What if they did not just say that they subscribe to the Bible and the Confessions, but actually read these ancient foundational documents and immersed themselves in their world of thought? What if Lutherans would learn to worship by returning *ad fontes musicês* and singing the ancient melodies of the church in the words of David, and Ambrose, and Luther, and Catherine Winkworth? And, when it comes to learning how to read and think and speak and write, what if Lutherans would train impressionable young minds by teaching them the fundamental language, thought, and art of Isaiah and Plato, Paul and Cicero, Virgil and Bach? I suggest to you that only in this most paradoxical way, by embracing fully their own rich cultural identity, will it be possible for Lutherans to be freely and fully Lutheran in the future, not living in the past, but rather bringing the past alive for the future.

A classical education, it has been said, “desires to educate for wisdom and virtue, not power and vanity; finds tiresome the present age’s preoccupation with utility, speed, novelty, convenience, efficiency, and specialization; and refuses to justify education as a means to wealth, power, fame, or self-assertion.”²⁰ It is hard for me to imagine an educational background besides the traditional liberal arts curriculum that would be more practically applicable for the intellectual development of selfless and tireless practitioners of the theology of the cross today.²¹

Imagine what might have happened to the Lutheran Reformation if Luther’s support for the classical curriculum had been only lukewarm! Without his personal advocacy, it may well be that the anti-intellectual ideology of contemporaries like Karlstadt and the Anabaptists would have won out in the 1520s. Without Luther’s ringing endorsement it is possible that the remarkable efforts of his scholarly colleague Philipp Melancthon in setting up an entire classical curriculum complete with the requisite textbooks would have been abortive or short-lived. Nor is it likely that one of the Lutheran epigones of the next generation, the often overlooked Johann Sturm (1507–1589), would have poured all of the energy that he did into establishing the influential *Gymnasium* at Strassburg, whose curriculum served as a model for subsequent educational philosophy and praxis and whose impact was felt not only by Protestants but also by the Jesuits.²²

And then imagine, too, what would have happened if Luther’s passionate calls for the study of the classics had been met with only lukewarm support from the lay leaders of his time! All too often when academics deliberate at conferences such as this one, the halls of the universities or seminaries are filled with intense logomachies and passionate cries for action, but such eloquent handwringing rarely ends up being translated into action in the public sphere. The story is so familiar to us now that we may miss this crucial point. One of the most remarkable things about the Reformation, not only in Wittenberg, but all over Germany and northern Europe, is that there was a swift and positive response to Luther’s impassioned appeals. When he asked for a raise for the new professor of Greek at the University of Wittenberg, Frederick the Wise listened and responded (AE 48: 78). John the Steadfast made sure that his own son, John Frederick, had a robust Lutheran education. When Luther wrote sharply to the councilmen all over Germany warning them that the success of the Reformation depended on their responsiveness and leadership, they listened. They were not foolish, or wavering, or lukewarm. When Luther warned them that without education, human beings, made in the image of God, can descend to the level of the beasts, they did not suggest that he was being rude or impractical. Nor did they politely put his requests on a “to do list” for possible consideration sometime in the future. No, the wise, the steadfast, and the magnanimous listened carefully, took the appeal to heart, responded swiftly, and in the process helped to transform an entire church body. **LOGIA**

19. Perhaps the most outspoken early opponent of Greek and Latin, Benjamin Rush, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, once declared: “I often look back upon the four years I spent . . . in learning the Latin and Greek languages. . . . I should wish the memory of those years blotted out of my mind forever.” See Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 131. On America’s “love-hate relationship” with the classics, see John Shields, *The American Aeneas: Classical Origins of the American Self* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

20. Gamble, *Great Tradition*, xviii.

21. Luther’s views on liberal education have much in common with those of John Henry Newman, who drew a clear line between “two methods of Education; the one aspires to be philosophical, the other to be mechanical: the one rises toward ideas, the other is exhausted upon what is particular and external” in his classic treatise of 1873, *The Idea of a University*, but the two should not be confused. Luther’s vision of a liberal arts education is rooted in his own sense of the value and, indeed, sanctity of “ordinary”

vocations and his distrust of the Aristotelian vision of contemplation as an ultimate end in itself. For Luther, to borrow from the phraseology of the Roman poet Horace, education was supposed to integrate the “sweet” and the “useful.” It was to be neither exclusively utilitarian nor undertaken purely “for its own sake.”

22. Lewis Spitz and Barbara Tinsley, *Johann Sturm on Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 20. On Melancthon’s profound pedagogical influence, see Karl Hartfelder, *Phillipp Melancthon als Praeceptor Germaniae*, *Monumenta Germaniae Paedagogica* 7 (Berlin: Hofmann, 1889; reprint, Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1972).

Philipp Melanchthon and the “Poor Roof” of Wittenberg Humanism

JON STEFFEN BRUSS



*Ohne Humanismus keine Reformation.*¹

YET THE PRECISE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN humanism and reform was a local development. Zürich humanism, Erasmus’s Dutch humanism, and Wittenberg humanism not only stood in differing relationships to church reform, they also were accounted for in different ways.² The task of this paper is to understand more clearly Wittenberg’s reformational humanism as articulated by its chief shaper and proponent, Philipp Melanchthon, and his view of the crucial role played by the study of “the languages,” Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

Born in 1497, by 1507 Philipp had encountered and begun to master both Greek and Latin. His amazing grasp of the classical languages propelled him toward a university career. In 1509, he matriculated at Heidelberg, where he took his B.A. In 1512 he enrolled for the M.A. at Tübingen. With his 1516 M.A. in hand, in 1518 he was called to Wittenberg. There, beginning with his inaugural address, *De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis*, he exerted a tremendous and life-long influence on the curriculum offered in the Philosophical Faculty. Over the course of this time, several lines developed in Philipp’s thinking about humanism: (1) its position in respect of Wittenberg theology; (2) its ordering to the goods of state, church, and person; (3) its *ad fontes* orientation; and (4) its view and use of the classical languages.

Viewed the Wittenberg way, humanism and humanistic endeavors stand in the same relation to theology as the law does to the gospel. Central to this theological location is Luther’s distinction between the law and the gospel.³ By 1520, Luther had arrived at a certain clarity on this scriptural teaching, evidenced in his *On the Freedom of a Christian*. Its central paradox is that “a Christian person is a free lord over all things, and subject to no one; a Christian person is a dutiful servant of all things, and subject to everyone” (WA 7: 21.1–4). *Coram deo* the gospel; *coram hominibus* the law. The fruit this fundamental distinction has borne over the years for Lutheran theology cannot be overestimated. It informs the preaching and teaching of the Church of the Augsburg Confession and determines how Augustana Christians live out the full counsel of God. It also lies at the heart of Philipp’s theological rationale for the Wittenberg humanistic project, expressed with increasing clarity

through the 1520s and culminating in his 1527 *Disputation on the Distinction between the Gospel and Philosophy*.⁴

The theses in this document explicate Colossians 2:8, where Paul says, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.” Paul here seems to reject pagan philosophy wholesale, but Melanchthon puts a finer point on his reading of the passage: “[Paul] does not reject philosophy, but its abuse. Just as when someone says: ‘Take care not to be ensnared by wine,’ he does not disparage wine but its abuse” (K&S, 23, alt.).⁵

In theological terms the abuse of philosophy looks like mixing law and gospel. “It is easy,” says Melanchthon, “for cunning men to transform the Gospel, by skillful explanation, into philosophy, that is, the teaching of human reason” (K&S, 23). Here Melanchthon is concerned about a shrinking of the gospel to the precepts of philosophy, “as though,” he says, “[the gospel] taught nothing other than a knowledge of human reason” (K&S, 23). Lurking behind this is the specter of scholasticism that, with its so-called evangelical precepts, had been able largely to accommodate pagan moral teaching to the content of the gospel. The evangelical precepts rendered the gospel into what we might call “law plus”: the moral law enshrined in the Decalogue plus, enabled by *gratia infusa*, a keeping of a yet higher law — not only not committing murder, but even turn-

1. “Without humanism, no Reformation.” Bernd Moeller, “Die deutschen Humanisten und die Anfänge der Reformation,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 70 (1959): 59.
2. Nice sketch, with relevant bibliography, in Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 32–36.
3. Heinz Scheible, “Die Philosophische Fakultät der Universität Wittenberg von der Gründung bis zur Vertreibung der Philippisten,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 98 (2007): 34.
4. *Philip Melanchthon: Orations on Philosophy and Education*, ed. Sachiko Kusukawa, trans. Christine F. Salazar, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23–25. Henceforth cited in text as K&S, followed by page number. Latin readers may consult the relevant volume and columns in CR noted in K&S.
5. So also in his exegesis of the passage. See Timothy J. Wengert, *Human Freedom, Christian Righteousness: Philip Melanchthon’s Exegetical Dispute with Erasmus of Rotterdam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

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ing the other cheek, for example. The Decalogue had been subsumed under the gospel as the Mosaic core of Christ's advanced morality; to the extent that pagan moral philosophy could be accommodated to both the law of Moses and the law of the gospel it could be made out to be the content of the gospel.

Philosophy thus differs from the gospel as the law differs from the gospel.

In other words, when philosophy and the gospel are indistinct, philosophy becomes a tool for reducing the gospel to its opposite: the law. In that case, what counts *coram deo* is no longer the gospel rightly understood, the all-availing sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of the world, the promise of the forgiveness of sins that I receive through faith that teaches me how God is minded toward me *in Christ* (K&S, 24); nor is it flatly the Mosaic law. But the gospel is the “evangelical precepts,” the eradication of sin in me, my achievement of a higher, more enlightened morality in pursuit of which pagan philosophy offers no little help. Melancthon puts it this way: “The most absurd men of all are those who imagine that philosophy and the Gospel differ in such a way that either teaching is a law on morals, but that the Gospel adds a few laws on external works, such as that one must not take revenge, and other similar ones” (K&S, 23).

Philosophy thus differs from the gospel as the law differs from the gospel. Examples abound. “Joseph, David, and Daniel,” Melancthon asserts, “are statesmen just like Fabius, Scipio, and Themistocles. They do not differ in the civic form of their life, but they differ in their faith in God” (K&S, 24). This line of thought finds its echo in the Augsburg Confession's delineation of the realms where the gospel and the law are the defining characteristics. In the church, it is the gospel: “The church is the congregation of the saints in which the gospel is rightly taught” (AC VII). The gospel has a different job from the law. It reveals Christ (K&S, 25) and bestows the forgiveness of sins and eternal life (K&S, 23–24). In all other realms or spheres of human life, it is the law that is determinative. Again: “[The gospel] does not destroy the state or the family, but very much requires that they be preserved as ordinances of God, and that charity” [note: the sum of the law is love] “be practiced in such ordinances” (AC XVI). Here, under the law, humans have agency: “Man's will has some liberty to choose civil righteousness, and to work things subject to reason” (AC XVIII). Melancthon goes on to cite Augustine:

“Good” I call those works which spring from the good in nature, such as, willing to labor in the field, to eat and drink, to have a friend, to clothe oneself, to build a house, to marry a wife, to raise cattle, to learn the art of various, good things, or whatsoever good pertains to this life. For

all of these things are not without dependence on the providence of God; yes, of Him and through Him they are and have their being. (AC XVIII, 5–6)

The law has not been abrogated *coram hominibus* [Matt 5:17], rather through it as a good thing God brings into being other good things; and this is where philosophy fits in, defined by Melancthon as the content matter taken up in the Philosophical Faculty (K&S, 23). “[The divine law and philosophy] agree with each other just as the Decalogue and the law of nature agree, because philosophy—to the extent that it has demonstrations—is the law of nature itself. But the Decalogue gives clearer precepts regarding the motions of the heart towards God” (K&S, 25). Again, “That philosophy is the law of God can also be understood from the fact that it is the knowledge of natural causes and effects, and since these are things arranged by God, it follows that philosophy is the law of God, which is the teaching of that divine order” (K&S, 24).⁶

And yet, at some level, gospel, law, and philosophy work the same way. In the realism of Wittenberg theology, God is always a God of the little things, of the details, of flesh and blood and sweat. He works on earth *de potentia ordinata* and in a concrete way through concrete things. In the gospel, he reifies redemption in the flesh-and-blood life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; he delivers salvation to sinners by coming to his fallen creatures with the forgiveness of sins in, with, and under the human voice, water, and bread and wine. His law and ordinance are put into effect concretely through state and family. Likewise through natural processes does he work in the natural world—in human physiology and society, in the workings of nature, and in learning. In God's world, if I want to read the Greek New Testament, I have to learn Greek, and speaking persuasively requires me to know the precepts of rhetoric. Through all of these things, God brings blessings. Through the gospel, God grants eternal blessing, the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life. Through the law, his ordinances, and philosophy, he brings about the realization of human intellectual potential, good for one's neighbor, and good for one through one's neighbor; and he grants a certain depth of understanding of his workings in this realm, of goods, and of means and ends.

God himself is thus the backer, the *causa efficiens*, of Wittenberg humanism. In *Preface to Homer*, Melancthon points to Homer as the conduit through which the entire arts curriculum flowed. Pointing to a certain example, he says that

it was first uttered by the holy patriarchs and transmitted to posterity. Then they [that is, all such things found in Homer] were passed on from one to the other, one could say from hand to hand, and finally extended to the men by whom they were included in these written monuments [the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*], so that, put in an illustrious and perspicuous place, they could be kept in the memory of all posterity and beheld with admiration. (K&S, 43)

6. See also CR 13.7, from *Liber de anima*.

As *causa efficiens* of humanist education, God’s interest in it is, naturally, great. At the close of *On the Order of Learning* (1531) come these words: “Think of me as giving this speech by public authority, and if anyone scorns it, may he know that God Himself will be the avenger of the insult” (K&S, 8). Learning, teaching, the curriculum—all of it is serious business, because, in the Wittenberg way, God brings good things to men through such concrete means. Put positively, “Just as the Christian makes pious use of the law of God, so he can make pious use of philosophy, too” (K&S, 24). This “theological” location of the stuff and processes, of the teaching and learning that goes on in the Philosophical Faculty, and the goods that arise from it, is critical to understanding every other facet of Wittenberg humanism.

Here, however, it is worth pausing to note a fundamental difference between the Melanchthonian conception and another, competing, conception of the ends of liberal education, that of John Henry Cardinal Newman, who was assigned in 1854 to found a new Roman Catholic university in Dublin. There he gave a series of lectures, published serially as *The Idea of a University*, that lays out a vision of liberal education in opposition to forces that advocated shaping the university to utilitarian ends. To undercut his opponents’ utilitarian approach, he devised an argument that made the end of learning internal to learning. Newman reasoned that tying higher education to external ends necessarily distorts it. For Newman, the activity of learning was to be carried out upon knowledge; and knowledge itself, unfettered from any external demand or good, constituted the end of learning. Explicating Cicero on this point he explains,

Nor does he [Cicero] contemplate in the least degree the reflex or subsequent action of Knowledge, when acquired, upon those material goods which we set out by securing before we seek it; on the contrary, he expressly denies its bearing upon social life altogether, strange as such a procedure is to those who live after the rise of the Baconian philosophy. . . . The idea of benefiting society by means of “the pursuit of science and knowledge” did not enter at all into the motives which he would assign for their cultivation.⁷

Melanchthon might recognize much in *Idea* with approbation, but Newman’s divorce of liberal education from ends comprised of the goods of state, church, and person would not be one of them.⁸

Those who have grown up with the Newmanian orthodoxy may thus rightly ask what is to keep the Wittenberg model from devolving into a sheer pragmatic utilitarianism. Those who worry about such a degeneration of the Wittenberg model are actually asking a question about *what is being learnt* and not about *the end to which what is being learnt is put*. They are

concerned, and rightly, about the formation of mind and character, the student’s conversance with higher culture and ability to think about things in a profound and creative way.

Usefulness for Melanchthon is not rank utilitarianism—a major in exercise studies, say, versus a major in human anatomy. Rather, his ordering of higher education to external goods means that the arts are and remain squarely where he locates them theologically: under and beside the law. In his *Preface to Cicero’s On Duties* (1534), which along with Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* provided the Wittenberg moral philosophy curriculum, Melanchthon states: “The Greeks have laid down, with uniquely good judgment, in the definition of art that it must have some usefulness for life. For all arts are tools for either preserving private life or for ruling the state” (K&S, 79). The very definition of “art,” or τέχνη in Greek, is its serviceability for human life. More theologically, the arts aim at goods under the orders God has established. Indeed, in a 1542 oration on natural philosophy (science), Melanchthon draws explicit attention to the knowledge-as-its-own-end line of reasoning when he says that natural philosophy is “taught not only for the purpose of knowledge or pleasure, but in order that they may be of use for many aspects of life” (K&S, 134; see also 139–40). His dedicatory letter to *Erotemata Dialecticè*s points out the utility of logic in the life of the church: “The true way of teaching and reasoning is God’s gift and is necessary in expounding the heavenly doctrine and in the examination of the truth in other things” (K&S, 87).

For Newman, knowledge itself constituted the end of learning.

How does this give shape to the arts? One example will suffice. Humanist rhetorical practice often bore the strong stamp of so-called Christian skepticism, by which judgment on matters of dispute was suspended.⁹ Most Lutherans will be familiar with Erasmus’s practice of this in *De libero arbitrio diatribe vel collatio* of 1524, his monograph that first publicly exposed the fault lines between Erasmian Christian humanism and reformational Wittenberg humanism. In *Diatribe*, Erasmus takes up the matter of the putative freedom of the will. His argument is this: since, as far as he can tell, Scripture, the church fathers, and church teaching on the free will represent widely variant positions, no determination can be safely made on the matter. Rhetoric thus serves to bring competing claims into converse with one another, an exercise in the *ars dubitandi*, the “art of

7. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (London: Longmans, Green, 1907), Discourse 5, §3, 105–6.

8. Even Newman, however, must order knowledge as its own end to another end, human excellence; see *Idea*, Discourse 6, 124–50.

9. See Erika Rummel, *The Confessionalization of Humanism in Reformation Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 50–74.

falling out on both sides,” that resulted in a suspended judgment. As Erasmus put it, “Committing to one point of view is dangerous. Once it occupies the mind, it takes away true judgment.”¹⁰ The *ars dubitandi* in *Diatribes* thus finds no resolution but the maintenance of a certain skepticism regarding doctrinal articulations. If anything is to be decided in the matter, according to Erasmus, the contemporary church’s semi-Pelagian position rests on sufficient authority—that of the contemporary church. In response, in his 1526 *De servo arbitrio*, Luther thundered, “The Holy Spirit is no skeptic!”¹¹ An uncertain teaching on the free will is no teaching at all, and certainly not useful for the church. Rather, the word of God and the church’s rhetoric with it propound certainties and verities and must proceed from certainty to certainty. In his 1527 *Dissertatio* and *Scholia* on Colossians, Melanchthon agreed.¹²

The radical traditionalism of Wittenberg humanism oriented itself to the roots of the tradition.

Luther’s response was aligned with Melanchthon’s articulation of the purposes of rhetoric. The *ars dubitandi* could and should be practiced, but in such a way as to arrive at certainty. Melanchthon explains how he does so in his 1542 oration *On Natural Philosophy*: “Not infrequently I weigh in my mind all the reasonings of the natural philosophers concerning God, so that I can more clearly refute the tricks of false opinions, which the Epicureans or Academics spread over the eyes of men” (K&S, 136). The *ars dubitandi* is thus put into the service of certifying and buttressing what is true. Refuting falsehood well and not in a dismissive and shallow way requires a vigorous statement of the opponents’ position so that it may in fact be refuted and not merely shouted over. The art should thus be studied “cautiously” and used “modestly and seriously for the examination and elucidation of the truth” (K&S, 86). Echoes of this position are found throughout the oeuvre of the Wittenberg reformers.¹³

Even as Wittenberg humanism is directed toward the present-day goods of church, state, and person, it is also radically oriented toward first things. Melanchthon found warrant for this in Thucydides’ “The strongest thing is to be educated in the most indispensable” (κράτιστον εἶναι ἐν ἀναγκαϊστάτοις παιδεύεσθαι [K&S, 156; Thuc. 1.84.4]). This was typical of the Northern European Renaissance. To Melanchthon, following the summons of Konrad Celtis, the grandfather of Northern European humanism, the entire movement was *renascentes Musae* or *litterae renascentes*. The nomenclature is both backwards and forwards looking. It looks back *ad fontes*—to the sources (K&S, 86), the ancient Muses, classical literature and culture; and in studying them, imitating them, and applying them in contemporary life, it gives them new birth.

Wittenberg humanism, in distinction to late medieval intellectual currents, is thus radically traditional. The intellectual life of the late Middle Ages consisted of the scholastic project of commenting on comments on comments on comments (*De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis*, CR 11.15–25). It was devoted to the work of other scholars, not a project in which scholars—and students—devoted their own efforts to the important texts. To take but one among many examples: when Melanchthon arrived in Wittenberg in 1518, he found a traditional medieval arts curriculum. Aristotle was at its core; that is, the faculty were teaching the philosophy of Aristotle—but with a proviso. They taught Aristotle according to one of three different *viae*: the Thomist, after Thomas Aquinas; the Scotist, after Duns Scotus; and the Gregorian, after Gregory of Rimini.¹⁴ On top of it all, these scholars were working from a corrupt Latin text of the Greek Aristotle. In a nutshell, before Philipp arrived, students at Wittenberg learned to read a corrupt and incorrect translation of Aristotle idiosyncratically propounded by their teachers operating within one of three different schools or *viae*.

The radical traditionalism of Wittenberg humanism, however, oriented itself to the roots of the tradition. In accounts of Wittenberg humanism, this was coordinated with the concern for the ends of humanistic education. Radical traditionalism offered the wisdom of the ages.

Nothing can happen in private life or in the state of which there is not a likeness in the most wisely written histories. . . . It is most profitable . . . to look at these likenesses as in a mirror, and to see decisions and the outcome of good and bad decisions. Further, there is even much in secular as well as ecclesiastical affairs that can neither be understood nor judged without a knowledge of antiquity. (K&S, 33, alt.)

It was a desideratum, first announced by Melanchthon in his 1518 inaugural oration at Wittenberg, *De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis*—albeit one not always realized—that students confront primary texts. In pursuit of this, when printed texts were unavailable, Melanchthon followed one of two routes. He either had his students copy the texts by hand (a trick learnt

10. Desiderius Erasmus, *Opera omnia Des. Erasmi Roterodami* (Leiden: Brill, 1969–), IX-1, 419, 330.

11. WA 18: 605.32–34: “Spiritus sanctus non est Scepticus, nec dubia aut opiniones in cordibus nostris scripsit, sed assertiones ipsa vita et omni experientia certiores et firmiores.” For a translation of the passage, see E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson, *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 109.

12. See Wengert, *Human Freedom*, 82–106.

13. See, for example, Luther’s discussion of Jesus’ tone in the 1536/38 *Annotationes in aliquot capita Matthäi*, WA 38: 583.

14. Scheible, “Philosophische Fakultät,” 12–13.

from his great-uncle Johannes Reuchlin but soon abandoned because the students were too lazy),¹⁵ or he himself had them produced in print. In fact, Melanchthon edited, translated, wrote prefaces for, and/or commented on entire or partial works of the following: Homer, Plutarch, Pindar, Thucydides, Lucian, Aristophanes, the Apostolic Canons, Aratus of Soli, Hesiod, Demosthenes, Aeschines, Galen, Theocritus, Aristotle, Sophocles, Ptolemy, Isocrates, Nicander, Euripides, Lycurgus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Theognis, Justin Martyr, Cicero, Marcus Porcius Latro, Sallust, Caesar, Tacitus, Pliny, Quintilian, Stobaeus, Aelian, Xenophon, Solon, Phocylis, Callimachus, Empedocles, Oppian, *Epigrammata Latina*, Vergil, Ovid, Terence, Seneca, and the Greek New Testament.¹⁶ This list of classical authors Melanchthon introduced his students to is symptomatic of the Wittenberg humanistic impulse to understand the present and reach the future through the past.

Concentration on the core is also intended to introduce students to the best that had been thought and written.

And yet its vast range belies Wittenberg humanism’s concentrated approach to the past. So radical was Wittenberg’s orientation *ad fontes* that it was the consensus of the past and even the self-reflexivity and self-consciousness of antiquity that determined the core canon that was to be put to use in educating the university students. In his arguments for what students should read, Melanchthon appealed not to himself and his peers as judges, but to the ancients themselves: Quintilian certifies Cicero; Horace and Solon certify Homer; Boethius certifies Aristotle; and the list goes on (for example, K&S, 44, 66).

Melanchthon also advocated limiting this humanistic core of authors; Wittenberg humanism was characterized by a *multum non multa* approach. Here he had a twofold rationale. First, the curriculum should not overwhelm and bewilder students; second, it should lay before them the best that had been thought and written. Drawing on educational practice in the classical period, he argued for reasonable limits on the core as follows:

15. *Ibid.*, 32–33.

16. CR 17–20; see also Stefan Rhein in Timothy J. Wengert and M. Patrick Graham, eds., *Philip Melanchthon (1497–1650) and the Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 149–170, along with the instructive list by A. Pelzer Wagener, “Melanchthon: A German Humanist,” *The Classical Weekly* 22.20 (25 March 1929), 155–60, here 160.

There is a rule for agriculture that the land should not be larger than one can cultivate properly, for Virgil says, “large fields are to be praised, but small ones cultivated.” [*Georgics* 2.412–3] In the same way the ancients, when they saw that many authors could not be taught thoroughly or imitated, and that the young minds were confounded rather than educated by the throng of writers, admitted fewer authors, with whom the students should familiarise themselves as much as possible. (K&S, 72; alt.)

In another passage Melanchthon uses Homer as a model for concentration by adducing the famous ecphrasis on the Shield of Achilles at *Iliad* 18.428–608 (K&S, 68).

Concentration on the core is also intended to introduce students to the best that had been thought and written. We all follow examples, Melanchthon reasons, so why not the best? (K&S, 45). Great thoughts inspire greatness (K&S, 66). The rule of thumb in ancient educational practice was, “Few authors, but only the best . . . whom the young were to imitate” (K&S, 72). In the Wittenberg curriculum under the guidance of Melanchthon, the best included Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristotle, the Bible, and Plutarch among the Greeks; among the Romans, Terence, Cicero, Vergil, Horace, and Boethius. So strongly did Melanchthon feel about placing the best in front of students that in his 1540 “Preface to the *Commentary on the Soul*,” he made it ultimately the responsibility of rulers to put in place men capable of choosing “the most useful writings, so that the young be accustomed to the best writings from the start” (K&S, 145). These best writings provided the entire intellectual apparatus Melanchthon hoped to erect through educating a student in the arts. They were the source and criterion of prose style and poetics, achieved through imitation; a repository of human wisdom; the sourcebook on logic, rhetoric, and ethics; a catalog of examples of the good, the bad, and the ugly, which students should by turn emulate and avoid (so of Homer, Vergil, Cicero, Demosthenes, and Xenophon in *Praise of Eloquence* [K&S, 65–71]). Indeed, Melanchthon envisioned an education in which “not only the mouth and the tongue, but also the heart, are shaped by the knowledge of good writers” (K&S, 68). Through this selection, Melanchthon realized in Wittenberg the call of Konrad Celtis to transport the Muses, reborn, to Germania, and made Hellas and Roma its classroom.

Wittenberg humanism, then, regards itself as belonging to the realm of the law and among the many useful gifts of God to men for their happiness and prosperity. It aims at ecclesiastical, social, and personal goods. These goods are best realized not in an attenuated, scholastic form, but through immediate encounter with the best that has been thought and written, enshrined in the monuments of the past — the classical authors and the Bible.

Now for this kind of education, the classical languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, are utterly necessary — not top dressing, not the finishing touches on a theological education, not gatekeepers for seminary admission, but fundamental, basic, *sine quibus non*, and not for theology alone. Without them one cannot properly read Thucydides, Cicero, Paul, or Isaiah.

This accords fully with general humanist trends. Indeed, the University of Wittenberg was among a handful of universities, reformed along humanist lines, that in the early sixteenth century were outfitted with the *trium linguarum studium*.¹⁷ As Melanchthon put it, without the languages, there can follow nothing but an intellectual darkness plaguing both church and society, a veritable *Ilias malorum* (*De philosophia*, CR 11.278–84; here K&S, 127). To deprive the church of them is nothing short of plundering the temple (K&S, 36).

Without the languages, there can follow nothing but an intellectual darkness plaguing both church and society.

Fundamental to Melanchthon's understanding of the arts curriculum is that everything in it is accessible by language alone. Language is the glue that holds it all together, and the exercise of language is, finally, what brings the goods of the arts curriculum to bear on church and society.¹⁸ In other words, without rhetoric, without the use of words, without words in an intelligible language, and without a real understanding of that language, the content of the arts curriculum cannot be accessed or made useful. If the wisdom of the ages is laid down and contained in Scripture and the classical authors they must be read in their own languages.

In theology, this high regard for the languages grew out of what we might call a fundamentally sacramental view of Scripture. The word of God is authoritative because in and through it God reveals himself and his will. In his 1533 oration *On the Study of the Languages*—Latin, Greek, and Hebrew (K&S, 30)—Philipp lays down the indispensability of the languages in theological study. A casual acquaintance with the languages will not suffice. Avers Melanchthon, “Each must aspire to a perfect knowledge of sacred discourse, both for his own salvation and for the common good of the church,” (K&S, 30, alt.) because, he says, “the languages cannot be translated in such a way that there is no need for the sources if we want to pass judgement on obscure passages, as one has to do in many very serious controversies” (K&S, 30). Indeed, “many heresies are the result of ignorance of languages and of the forms of speech” (K&S, 30). Here Melanchthon joins two strands of Wittenberg humanist thinking: the utility of education, here represented by

the solving of theological controversies, the salvation of souls, and the weal of the church; and the radically traditional *ad fontes* orientation of Wittenberg thinking. Controversies cannot be solved by appeal to Lombard's *Sentences*, Aquinas, or Scotus, but only on the basis of the very sources; and to put them to that use, they have to be understood properly. Indeed, Melanchthon continues:

So many times the Scriptures themselves recommend to us the ministry of the word, and they admonish us never to see the will of God unless in these writings. It is therefore easy to understand how necessary it is to grasp perfectly the nature of discourse, which nobody can achieve without a knowledge of the languages or without the practice of eloquence. (K&S, 30)

Of course, in the 1523 *Praise of Eloquence* Melanchthon concedes that “there are things in sacred Scripture which no one would ever behold, were it not that God shows them to us, nor does Christ become known to us unless the Holy Spirit teach us.” However, “certainly, because of prophecy, the power of words must be known, in which divine mysteries are hidden as if in a shrine” (K&S, 75–76). Since Scripture itself is a verbally communicative text it requires thorough knowledge of the means by which all verbal communication is made—language and rhetoric—because this is how God has chosen to make himself and his will known.

Was this kind of educational vision nothing more than a Golden Age ideal, suitable for sixteenth-century Wittenberg, but unachievable today? The existence of orations like *On the Study of the Languages* makes clear, in the first place, that students in Philipp's time did not have a uniformly high view of language study. Indeed, in the early 1520s, there was something of a student revolt against the arts faculty, and it is difficult to dissociate that revolt from the antiword theology of and social unrest provoked by the radical reformers, Karlstadt, Müntzer, and those of their ilk. Much like today, students wanted to dive right into theology with none of the necessary background gained through the hard work of language study. Second, Melanchthon made these claims about study of the languages, indeed, about the entire arts curriculum, in the face of powerful obscurantist forces. Steeling his audience for what they would surely face as they pursued the study of language, he tells them in his 1533 oration, “Do not let uneducated men deter you from that skill [the language skill derived from aspiration “to a perfect knowledge of sacred discourse”].” What Melanchthon sees in this is not mere barbarism, a lack of requisite refinement, but a bitter hatred of the good arts “so that they alone will appear to have knowledge” (K&S, 31).

This analysis might seem surprisingly modern; it is, however, rooted deeply in Wittenberg theological anthropology in which all human motivation is tinged with sin, all humans seek their own good, even at the expense of their neighbor, and all humans, finally, in their inborn fanaticism and enthusiasm, become their own idols, turning aside from the express will of God in Scripture and making themselves the final arbiters,

17. Scheible, “Philosophische Fakultät,” 17–18; McGrath, *Dangerous Idea*, 32; and P. S. Allen, “The Trilingual Colleges of the Early Sixteenth Century,” in *Erasmus: Lectures and Wayfaring Sketches* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 138–63.

18. Scheible, “Philosophische Fakultät,” 24; see also *De corrigendis aulescentiae studiis*, CR 11.15–25, with K&S, 29, 33.

even in the church, of all that is good and holy. God delivers useful knowledge through means—through the study of the languages and the good arts. Those who claim a special knowledge apart from these means have obviously deluded themselves and want to delude their followers and to cow all others with their special knowledge, which is, ironically, nothing but an ignorance born of their self-directed will.

In Wittenberg theological anthropology, all human motivation is tinged with sin, all humans seek their own good.

And so we may detect a certain wistfulness, compounded by a stridence of conviction, in Melanchthon’s many appeals to his church, to the Church of the Augsburg Confession—to the whole church, not just its scholars and pastors¹⁹—to embrace and maintain and foster the form and substance of Wittenberg humanism. It is as if he saw it already slipping away, as if he foresaw a day when men, no longer curbed by the law, no longer drawn to the benefits the good arts bring to church and society, would shun the tools by which the gospel had been brought to light and the manners of men recovered, preferring instead a darkness and night of soul and mind. Melanchthon thus finds a powerful analogue between the gospel as theology of the cross—the theology of suffering—and the fate of *studia humaniora*, humanistic studies. Like the gospel, the *studia humaniora*, and especially the languages, are good gifts

19. In fact, it pertains to all men because all men stand under God’s address and promise: “The teaching of religion concerns everyone. Just as it is said that men are not born for themselves but for their country, I could say even more truthfully that all good men have to consider themselves born chiefly for the Church” (K&S, 32). “Your studies relate to the entire Church and all posterity, and what greater cause can there be than what concerns the preservation of the Church?” (K&S, 35).

from a good and gracious God. Considering the coincidence of the arrival of the study of the languages and the gospel’s return to the light, Melanchthon asserted that the languages had “flown” from Byzantium to Italy, and, by none other than divine providence, “across the Alps” from Italy to Germany, and “good men began to love the Holy Scriptures more and to consider them complete” (K&S, 36). This fact brings with it an ethical obligation:

If we . . . strive to be pleasing to God and loyal towards the Church, let us recognise the favour of God and protect and conserve it for the use of the Church. If someone is deterred from these studies by the fact that the prizes do not appear to be adequate to the toil, then he does not have sufficient religious feeling for God. For if God promises prodigious recompense for piety in every case, His trustworthiness is not to be doubted. . . . Recompense will not, therefore, be lacking for us. (K&S, 37)

And yet, like all divine gifts, study of the languages is despised, so that at some level disdain for the languages is disdain for the gospel, and vice versa. Indeed, students prefer—no, *embrace*—“the arts that are universally more saleable and gainful” (K&S, 32). All the same, this is no reason to lose heart. In *Preface to Homer* Melanchthon argues:

It should not deter us that Homer was destitute and despised in his lifetime, and that those who cherish studies of this kind are destitute. It is a condition universal to all the best things that they are despised in this miserable life full of errors and blindness. In what way have those who proclaim the word of God, the preachers of eternal salvation, who announce liberation from death, from sin and from eternal torment in the underworld, always been received and treated by the ungrateful world, and how are they treated today? . . . [Yet], upon all this one can inscribe the epigram that someone set up on his dwellings: “This is not a large house, but what of it? Often virtue gifted with genius is hidden under a poor roof.” (K&S, 53)²⁰ **LOGIA**

20. Luther, too, was prepared to find analogues between the welfare of the gospel and that of pagan authors, such as Aesop. See Carl P. E. Springer, *Luther’s Aesop* (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2011).

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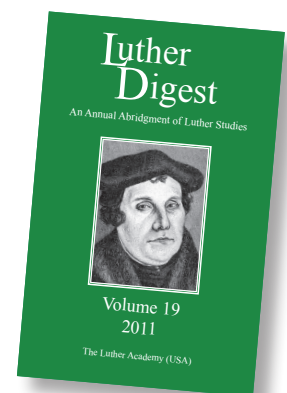
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Making a University Lutheran

Philipp Melanchthon and the Reform of the University of Tübingen in the 1530s

SUSAN MOBLEY



WHEN MARTIN LUTHER CHALLENGED the Roman Catholic Church and started the Reformation, he was challenging not only its theology, but also its education. Indeed, the Reformation and education were intrinsically linked: Luther was a university professor; the Reformation began at a university. The connection between reformation and education was not lost on Luther. Very early on he had a clear vision of what the purpose and content of education should be. He implemented educational reforms at his University of Wittenberg in 1518, recognizing that the changes in theology and theological training that he envisioned could not happen unless the arts curriculum were completely overhauled.¹ In *To the Councilmen of All the Cities in Germany, That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* of 1524, Luther asserted the importance of schools: “A city’s best and greatest welfare, safety, and strength consist rather in its having many able, learned, wise, honorable, and well-educated citizens” (AE 45: 356).² But as Luther was caught up in the ensuing theological controversy after 1518, his younger colleague, Philipp Melanchthon, assumed the task of reforming the schools. Melanchthon not only created a curriculum implemented by countless schools across Germany, but he also wrote numerous textbooks that were used in these schools.³ His influence in the area of education and reform was so great that his contemporaries dubbed him *praeceptor Germaniae*, or “teacher of Germany.”⁴ The University of Tübingen was one of the many universities in Germany that sought Melanchthon’s advice in reforming its curriculum. Melanchthon had a particular interest in the University of Tübingen, not only because it was his alma mater, but also because of its importance for the spread of the Reformation.

Reforming education in the sixteenth century was a daunting task. For religious reformers like Melanchthon it was doubly difficult. The reform of the theology program at the university could be accomplished only by reforming the arts curriculum, which provided the foundational education necessary for studying theology. In reforming the arts curriculum, Melanchthon had to walk a fine line between his Christian humanism and his Lutheran theology, and in the end, he developed a new approach to teaching philosophy that

succeeded in combining an appreciation for the classics with reverence for the Scriptures.⁵ This is evident at the University of Tübingen.

The reform of the University of Tübingen, though, presented unique challenges, especially in the 1530s: the university was firmly Catholic, featured a thoroughly scholastic curriculum, and was staffed by professors resistant to change, religious or otherwise. By 1544, however, Tübingen was well on its way to becoming the staunchly Lutheran institution for which it was famous by the late sixteenth century. Melanchthon played an important part in that transformation.

As religious controversy and conflict intensified during the sixteenth century, universities became increasingly important institutions, both to religious and secular leaders. Professors of theology played prominent roles as arbiters and disputants in religious controversies. Secular rulers depended upon the universities within their realms to produce learned men who not only could serve the state, but could also eloquently and effectively defend and inculcate others in the “true” faith. The medieval university had played a different role. The main purpose of the medieval university in northern Europe was to train members of the clergy, but it was not well suited for preparing bureaucrats, doctors, lawyers, diplomats, and members of the

1. See Charles G. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 134; Lewis W. Spitz, “Luther and German Humanism,” in *Luther and Learning: The Wittenberg University Symposium*, ed. Marilyn J. Harran (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1985; reprint in Lewis W. Spitz, *Luther and German Humanism* [Aldershot: Variorum, 1996]), 72.
2. Also see Susan Mobley, “Historical Foundations in the Lutheran Reformation,” in *Learning at the Foot of the Cross: A Lutheran Vision for Education*, ed. Joel D. Heck and Angus J. L. Menuge (Austin: Concordia University Press, 2010).
3. Sachiko Kusakawa, “Introduction,” in *Philip Melanchthon: Orations on Philosophy and Education*, ed. Sachiko Kusakawa, trans. Christine Salazar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), xi. Hereafter abbreviated K&S.
4. Ralph Keen, “Introduction,” in *A Melanchthon Reader* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), 18. In the 1520s, probably as many as 56 cities in Germany asked Melanchthon to help establish or reform a *Gymnasium* or *paedagogium*, which were grammar schools, the equivalent of the modern preparatory schools; Keen, “Introduction,” 9.
5. See Sachiko Kusakawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melanchthon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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upper classes, who in the sixteenth century increasingly came to desire a smattering of learning that fitted them to move in certain social circles.

The medieval scholastic curriculum comprised the seven liberal arts: the *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music), though logic was the subject that received the most emphasis. It was focused on an analysis of language, and grammar was taught by a dialectical method.⁶ As students learned grammar, they also learned methods that prepared them for studies in logic and philosophy. The purpose of medieval scholastic education was largely to prepare students to “excel in the formal academic disputations which were the principal public exercises of the faculty of arts and the key to success in the three higher faculties,” especially in theology.⁷ Theology was considered the highest of the academic disciplines, the so-called queen of sciences. The focus of the medieval arts curriculum, then, was logic; of the medieval university, theology.

In the fifteenth century, scholasticism fell under heavy assault by humanists.

In the fifteenth century, however, scholasticism fell under heavy assault by humanists, who objected to the whole point of the medieval curriculum. For humanists, education should serve as the foundation for “the life of practical action in society.”⁸ Humanists wanted to reform the curriculum to train students not to win academic disputations but rather to acquire “skills useful in the discourses of everyday living.”⁹ These practical skills became increasingly valuable in sixteenth-century society, and the humanist ideal of the active life was very much in step with the mood of the era.

Humanists criticized scholasticism on almost every front, but their primary complaints centered on the scholastic method of teaching grammar, the overemphasis on logic in the curriculum, and the overuse of commentaries: students read too many commentaries on ancient texts (such as Aristotle), but never the

original texts themselves, especially in the original language (Greek).¹⁰ In particular, they criticized the preeminent place given to logic in the curriculum and even the way in which logic was taught.¹¹ The principal subjects in the humanist educational program included classical languages (Greek and Latin), literature (especially poetry), history, rhetoric, and dialectic.¹²

While Melanchthon was strongly influenced by the humanist educational program, his priorities differed from those of most humanists. He was concerned not only to prepare students to be active members of society, but also to develop an active and educated faith. Melanchthon believed that “the schools are necessary for the preservation of piety, of religion, of the civil state, even of management of the home.”¹³ More pointedly, Melanchthon argued that the church cannot flourish without schools. For Melanchthon, then, the work of the schools and of the church was inseparable.

Melanchthon and Luther held similar, though not entirely identical, views about the purpose and content of education. For both, the foundation of education consisted of the study of the ancient languages (Latin, Greek and Hebrew) because knowledge of these languages enabled a person to read the Scriptures, which was of vital importance for growing in faith. However, while Luther wanted to dispense with Aristotle entirely, Melanchthon argued that philosophy was too important a subject to leave out of the arts program.¹⁴ Instead, Melanchthon substantially reformed philosophy instruction so that its limits became clear: “That philosophy is the law of God can also be understood from the fact that it is the knowledge of natural causes and effects, and since these are things arranged by God,

6. Terence Heath, “Logical Grammar, Grammatical Logic, and Humanism in Three German Universities,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 18 (1971): 45.

7. Nauert, “Humanist Infiltration into the Academic World: Some Studies of Northern Universities,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 43 (1990): 807–8.

8. Walter Rüegg, “Themes,” in *Universities in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, A History of the University in Europe, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8.

9. Nauert, “Humanist Infiltration,” 807–8.

10. Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance & Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

11. Lisa Jardine, “Humanist Logic,” in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 173–98.

12. The word *humanism* is derived from the Latin term *studia humanitatis*, which indicated a program of “studies of humanity” or “studies befitting humanity” (Charles Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983], 3). See also Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic and Humanistic Strains* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 10.

13. Melanchthon, as quoted in Hermann-Adolf Stempel, *Melanchthons pädagogisches Wirken* (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1979), 169, 163. “Thus I first urge you, excellent listeners, to consider that your studies in truth concern the state and the Church, for the purity and harmony of teaching safeguard the welfare and harmony of men, and especially of the Church” (K&S, 131; see also 20).

14. Luther believed that Aristotelian philosophy, particularly as it was used in scholastic theology, placed too much emphasis upon human reason; see Kusukawa, “Introduction,” in K&S, xvii. “The merit and power of the arts themselves cannot be observed better in any other way than when we see how much need there is for them in the Church, with how much darkness ignorance overwhelms religion, and how much devastation, what fearful destruction of churches, and how much savageness and confusion of the entire human race it brings about. If anyone considers these things, then he can indeed esteem the great power and dignity of the arts and of doctrine” (K&S, 127).

it follows that philosophy is the law of God, which is the teaching of that divine order” (K&S, 24). In other words, theology taught about the gospel; philosophy taught about God’s law.¹⁵

In his curriculum, then, Melanchthon stressed the importance of humanistic subjects, like language, rhetoric, history, dialectic, and poetry, but he also emphasized the value of moral and natural philosophy and mathematics (especially arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy). All of these subjects, Melanchthon believed, led students to a greater understanding of God’s creation, and thus to a greater understanding of God’s law. Through their studies of the arts students would recognize the true condition of man and his need for God’s grace, a recognition that would lead them to the gospel. Studies in humanistic subjects would help students to develop skills that would enable them to read God’s word with deeper understanding. This humanistic training, combined with study of the Scriptures, would help prepare active, Christian citizens.

In order to preserve the Lutheran religious reform program, education had to be reformed, not just at Wittenberg, but in Germany as a whole. The University of Tübingen was key to the spread of the Reformation in Germany, as it was located in the Duchy of Württemberg, the first territorial state in southwestern Germany to turn Protestant. The reformers, though, faced difficulties in turning both the duchy and its university Lutheran. Ulrich, duke since 1498, had been exiled from his duchy in 1519 for an array of offenses that included murder and violating the imperial peace. During his absence, Württemberg fell under Habsburg imperial control in the person of Ferdinand, brother of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles v.¹⁶ With the help of several Protestant imperial cities and his cousin, the Lutheran Philipp of Hesse, Ulrich at last reclaimed his duchy in 1534, returning to find Württemberg violently anti-Habsburg but the university stubbornly Catholic.

The reform of the University of Tübingen was a complicated process, not only because Ferdinand had transformed it into a staunchly Catholic institution in the 1520s, but also because Ulrich himself was torn between the theology of Luther and the theology of Zwingli. In 1534, then, it was not clear which Protestant direction that reform would take. Ulrich appointed Ambrosius Blarer and Simon Grynaeus, both Zwinglians, to undertake the reform of the university. Their first task, after the duke released some of the more obdurate Catholic instructors, was to reform the curriculum. Ferdinand had issued an ordinance of the university in 1525 that established logic and natural and moral philosophy as the main subjects of the arts curriculum. Instruction was based upon the works of various commentators, many of whom had appeared in university pro-

grams since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, including Arabs like Averroes, Greeks like Alexander Theophrastus, Latin authors like Thomas Aquinas, and contemporaries like Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples.

There was no mention of students studying the texts of Aristotle either in Greek or in a recent Latin translation. Students, then, were to learn Aristotle based largely upon commentaries and summaries by recognized authorities. The ordinance also gave no directions about studying the Scriptures, either in Latin or in the original languages; made no provision for instruction in Hebrew for interested students; and made no mention of reading any catechism. Moreover, no clear progression of studies was evident, except for some vague distinction between “younger” and “older” students. This program, then, represented a scholastic curriculum based upon the medieval model.

In order to preserve the Lutheran religious reform program, education had to be reformed.

This was the starting point for the reformers. On 30 January 1535 Ulrich issued a reform ordinance that set the following requirements for students in the arts program at Tübingen: baccalaureate candidates were to study dialectic using the works of either Johann Caesarius or Philipp Melanchthon; rhetoric; Greek grammar; and the New and Old Testaments in Latin, with reference to the Greek and Hebrew texts.¹⁷ Master’s candidates were to study dialectic and physics based on Aristotle (using some kind of collection); and the Old Testament in Latin with reference to the Hebrew (which could be alternated with the New Testament). In addition, baccalaureate and master’s candidates could attend lectures on Cicero’s *De officiis*, mathematics, Hebrew, and poetry or oratory, and were encouraged to attend lectures on the catechism.¹⁸

15. Kusakawa, *Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 70–71, 187; Peter Barker and Bernard R. Goldstein, “Theological Foundations of Kepler’s Astronomy,” *Osiris* 16 (2001): 95.

16. See Franz Brendle, *Dynastie, Reich und Reformation: Die württembergischen Herzöge Ulrich und Christoph, die Habsburger und Frankreich* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1998); and Karl Weller and Arnold Weller, *Württembergische Geschichte im südwestdeutschen Raum*, 7th ed. (Stuttgart: Konrad Theiss, 1972).

17. See Nr. 38 in Rudolf Roth, ed., *Urkunden zur Geschichte der Universität Tübingen aus den Jahren 1476 bis 1550* (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1877), 180–81. Johann Caesarius (1468–1550) was a German scholar, teacher, and physician, a student of Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples, and a correspondent of Erasmus. He was in contact with the Wittenberg reformers, especially Melanchthon, by 1520, though he remained within the Catholic Church.

18. Roth, *Urkunden*, Nr. 38, 180–82. The reformers suggested that the more advanced baccalaureate candidates should study the New Testament while the less advanced students should study the catechism; both groups should study Greek together. Lectures on the catechism, though required for younger baccalaureate candidates, were open to all students. Master’s candidates were required to study the Old Testament and Hebrew. See Norbert Hofmann, *Die Artistenfakultät an der Universität Tübingen, 1534–1601* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1982), 122–23.

These reforms were clearly humanistic in the sense that the old textbooks and commentaries of the scholastic curriculum were replaced by either more accurate Latin translations or versions of the texts in the original languages, even if study in the original languages was not the emphasis. Logic was replaced by dialectic and rhetoric, the former based on Aristotle, the latter based on a recent author, like Melanchthon. Authors like Terence and Cicero appeared as subjects of study, unlike the ordinance of 1525, in which classical authors were little mentioned. These reforms were Protestant in that the ordinance provided for the study of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, with at least some attempt to read these books in their original languages.¹⁹ The catechism received new emphasis in the curriculum of 1535, though the ordinance does not identify which catechism was to be studied.²⁰

It should be noted that Melanchthon was not directly involved in this initial round of reforms. However, not long thereafter Melanchthon recommended his good friend Joachim Camerarius for the professorship of Greek.²¹ Camerarius arrived in Tübingen in June of 1535, only to find that the process of university reform had ground largely to a halt.²² Moreover, at that time the university had a poor reputation, was unable to attract quality professors, and was losing students to the University of Freiburg. The failure of the Zwinglians Blarer and Grynaeus to repair the condition of the university opened the door for Melanchthon to turn the university's reformation in a more overtly Lutheran direction.²³

In September of 1536, Melanchthon arrived in Tübingen under the pretext of visiting his friend Camerarius.²⁴ He stayed

in Camerarius's house, advised the members of the university regarding various issues, and met with Ulrich to offer his impressions and advice, all in an unofficial capacity. His public recommendations to the university were of a general nature, and chiefly advised securing more instructors, particularly professors for mathematics, Hebrew, and Latin poetry.²⁵ His comments in private correspondence, though, were much more pointed and displayed his real concern about the condition of the university.²⁶ In particular, he urged Johann Brenz to accept an appointment at Tübingen to help Camerarius carry through the necessary reforms there.²⁷

Because Melanchthon's involvement in the reformation at Tübingen occurred in an unofficial capacity, it is difficult to know exactly how influential his part was. We do know, however, that at the end of October in 1536, shortly after Melanchthon's return to Wittenberg, the university called Johann Brenz as a professor of theology, and in November, Ulrich issued a new university ordinance.²⁸ This 1536 ordinance presents at least four intriguing differences that indicate the implementation of reforms in a more Lutheran direction.

First, now the required lectures for baccalaureate candidates included dialectic and rhetoric, while the required lectures for master's candidates included physics and ethics, both based upon Aristotle. Both master's and baccalaureate candidates were to hear lectures on geometry and arithmetic based on Euclid, the philosophy of Aristotle, and selected books from Latin and Greek authors. The 1536 ordinance, then, emphasizes the importance of Aristotle much more so than the 1535 ordinance. In fact, according to the 1536 ordinance, no other lecture was allowed to take place at the same time as the lecture

19. Hebrew was an optional rather than required lecture, because it was most useful for those who intended to study the Scriptures, not those who intended to study law or medicine (Roth, *Urkunden*, Nr. 38, 181).

20. This ordinance was not fully implemented. For example, the university reformers recommended that most lectures (that is, dialectic, physics, mathematics, Latin and Greek grammar, Cicero's *De officiis*, and Terence) be offered *in commune* (meaning that both baccalaureate and master's candidates would hear the lecture together), mainly because of the shortage of instructors (Hofmann, *Artistenfakultät*, 122). In addition to lack of teaching personnel, there was also considerable opposition to these reforms from within the university, as it necessitated rather significant changes and elevated the importance of the arts faculty. Many members of the higher faculties objected, largely because they did not feel that the instructors in the arts faculty were their academic equals.

21. Friedrich Held, "Die Tätigkeit des Ambrosius Blarer im Herzogtum Württemberg in den Jahren 1534–1548," *Blätter für württembergische Kirchengeschichte* 65 (1965): 187.

22. Hofmann, *Artistenfakultät*, 10; Bernd Moeller, "Neue Nachträge zum Blarer-Briefwechsel: Zur Reformation der Universität Tübingen, 1534–1535," *Blätter für württembergische Kirchengeschichte* 68 (1968/1969): 65, and Nr. 3, 70–71; Held, "Tätigkeit," 190; Hermann Bender, *Gymnasialreden nebst Beiträgen zur Geschichte des Humanismus und der Pädagogik* (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1887), 197. Grynaeus left Tübingen in July of 1535 and Blarer was unable to make much progress alone.

23. Held, "Tätigkeit," 189; Moeller, "Neue Nachträge," 67.

24. Roth, *Urkunden*, 172. See CR 3, Nr. 1470 (Melanchthon to Erhard Schnepf, 26 September 1536). Melanchthon had been called to

take up a position at Tübingen in August or September of 1534, but was not permitted by Elector Johann Frederick to accept the call (Held, "Tätigkeit," 182). Other factors prevented Melanchthon's involvement at Tübingen. In May of 1536 the Lutherans and Zwinglians worked out a compromise formula to settle their dispute over the correct interpretation of the Lord's Supper. By resolving the differences between the Lutherans (Schnepf's "party") and the Zwinglians (Blarer's "party"), this Wittenberg Concord probably eased the way for Ulrich to send for Melanchthon. Indeed, it was only after the compromise had been worked out formally that Melanchthon found the time (or was free) to visit Tübingen (Moeller, "Neue Nachträge," 66).

25. CR 3, Nr. 1470 (Melanchthon to Erhard Schnepf, 26 September 1536). He even offered recommendations of particular men to fill these posts (CR 3, Nr. 1473 [15 October 1536]). See also Hofmann, *Artistenfakultät*, 12; and Roth, *Urkunden*, 172.

26. To Schnepf he expressed concerns about the condition of the university and importance of preserving the school. See CR 3, Nr. 1470.

27. In his letter to Brenz, Melanchthon expressed concerns about the condition of the university and pleaded with Brenz to consider accepting a short-term post at Tübingen, impressing upon him the gravity of the situation and the importance of reforming and preserving the University of Tübingen. Although Melanchthon could certainly be accused of exaggeration, his letter conveys clearly his dissatisfaction: whatever reforms had occurred to that point at the University of Tübingen had not been sufficient, neither in the arts nor in theology (CR 3, Nr. 1474 [Melanchthon to Brenz, 17 October 1536]).

28. Roth, *Urkunden*, 172–73; Hofmann, *Artistenfakultät*, 12–13.

on Aristotle, thus guaranteeing it a large audience.²⁹ Second, the 1536 ordinance mandates the study of Aristotle's ethics; the 1535 ordinance had not included ethics at all, mainly because the reformers of the university had concluded that students did not need to study the ethics of Aristotle; it would be much more beneficial for them to use the Scriptures as the basis of their ethical studies.³⁰ Third, the 1536 ordinance emphasizes the study of mathematics. The 1535 program had provided for a mathematics lecture, to be offered jointly to both baccalaureate and master's candidates, but in 1536 another mathematics lecture was added, focusing specifically on Euclid's arithmetic and geometry. Thus, after 1536, students were able to attend two different classes in mathematics. Fourth, the 1536 ordinance stressed religion more strongly than the 1535 ordinance. Religion was clearly important in 1535, as that ordinance directs students to study the Scriptures and the catechism, but it was not a point of emphasis. The 1536 ordinance lays a greater emphasis upon the importance of religion, specifically the Evangelical one.³¹

All of these changes reflect Melanchthon's influence. The emphasis on Aristotle, particularly the inclusion of Aristotle's ethics, strongly accords with the views of Melanchthon, who felt there was utility in studying ancient authors like Aristotle, and both the moral and natural philosophy of Aristotle are emphasized in his educational program.³² Mathematics, too, was a subject highly regarded by Melanchthon, and he emphasized study of arithmetic and geometry as well as astronomy.³³ The program also emphasizes study of the Scriptures for all students, not just theology students.

Even though the process of reform was far from over, Melanchthon's influence was clearly at work. We can see this in several ways. First, Brenz took up a post in Tübingen in April of 1537, and, together with Camerarius, was appointed as ducal commissioner to the university, superseding the earlier ap-

pointments of Blarer and Grynaeus as university reformers.³⁴ These appointments marked a decisive shift in policy—both men were Lutheran. Second, the arts program at Tübingen reflected Melanchthon's educational ideals. These ideals were even more evident in Ulrich's 1544 ordinance of the arts faculty. For the first time, there was a clearly ordered progression of studies and classes based upon student achievement.³⁵ The program focused on the study of Latin and Greek grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, and history, and required students to learn how to write letters and orations. Master's candidates were to study dialectic, physics (based upon a compendium, as well as Aristotle's *Physics*), ethics, Greek, rhetoric and oratory, mathematics, Hebrew, Latin, Euclid (arithmetic and geometry), and music. In addition, both faculty and students were expected to attend and to prepare disputations and declamations regularly.³⁶ The ordinance clearly stated that the arts program at the University of Tübingen served as the basis of study in the higher faculties of theology, law, and medicine, and should enhance the university's reputation,³⁷ echoing Elector Johann Friedrich's words in 1532 of the University of Wittenberg.³⁸

The reformation of the University of Tübingen was a slow and uneven process. The divisions between Zwinglian and Lutheran reformers and the divided loyalties of Ulrich complicated matters. By 1536, however, the Lutheran influence at Tübingen seemed to outweigh the Zwinglian, and the arts curriculum as outlined in the ordinances of 1536 and 1544 demonstrated Melanchthon's influence. By 1544, it was clear that the purpose of Tübingen's arts program was not only to prepare students for advanced studies at the university, but also for a variety of vocations, both in the church and in the secular world. The arts program was designed to teach students how to live an active, Christian life, goals very much in tune with Lutheran educational ideals from the sixteenth century all the way to the twenty-first.³⁹ **LOGIA**

29. Roth, *Urkunden*, Nr. 39, 190; Hofmann, *Artistenfakultät*, 124–25.

30. Hofmann, *Artistenfakultät*, 124.

31. See Roth, *Urkunden*, Nr. 39, 186.

32. "I do not believe that anyone is so foolish as not to notice that those who are versed in moral philosophy can practice more easily many parts of Christian doctrine. For if many things are similar, concerning laws, political morals, contracts and many of life's affairs, we are helped, not only by the order and method in philosophy, but also by understanding the things themselves carefully. Moreover, one who lacks a knowledge of natural philosophy practices moral philosophy like a lame man holding a ball" (K&S, 129).

33. "For arithmetic is among the first arts, which teaches us to distinguish and divide between one and many; it shows the order of things, and teaches us that confused things need to be unraveled and distinguished. These are the beginnings of reasoning in men. Therefore the understanding of numbers is foremost . . . for this means that the mind is capable of reasoning, it discerns things and perceives order" (K&S, 95–96).

34. Roth, *Urkunden*, 172 and Nr. 40 (April 1537), 199; Hofmann, *Artistenfakultät*, 13, 108. While Brenz assumed responsibility for ordering the theology program, Camerarius was given the responsibility for establishing and organizing the *paedagogium* and transforming it into an integral part of arts instruction at the university.

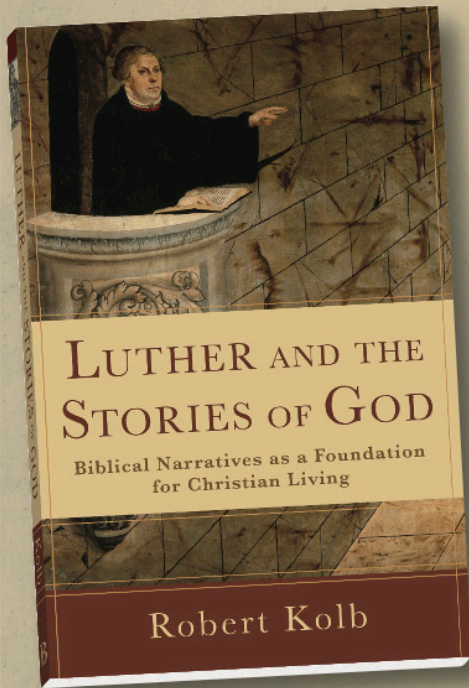
35. Roth, *Urkunden*, Nr. 42 (1544), 233. The *paedagogium* was modeled on the academy at Strasbourg, but was not effectively and completely organized until the 1550s, under Duke Christoph, Ulrich's son and successor.

36. The textbook identified for rhetoric was likely Camerarius's *Elementa rhetoricae proposita in Schola Tubingensi*. Rhetoric and oratory were to be offered daily. Greek authors included Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, Sophocles, Demosthenes, Isocrates, Plutarch, and Xenophon. Hebrew was to be taught by a professor of theology (Roth, *Urkunden*, Nr. 42, 235–36, 238, 239 and 234n).

37. See Roth, *Urkunden*, Nr. 42 (1544), 233.

38. "Und nachdeme die facultet der artisten der ursprung und stam ist und den anfang gibt zu allen andern obgemelten faculteten und kunsten . . ." (Friedensburg 1, Nr. 193 [5 May 1536], 177).

39. ". . . solche Knaben in leben vnd leer cristenlich" (Roth, *Urkunden*, Nr. 42 [1544], 233).



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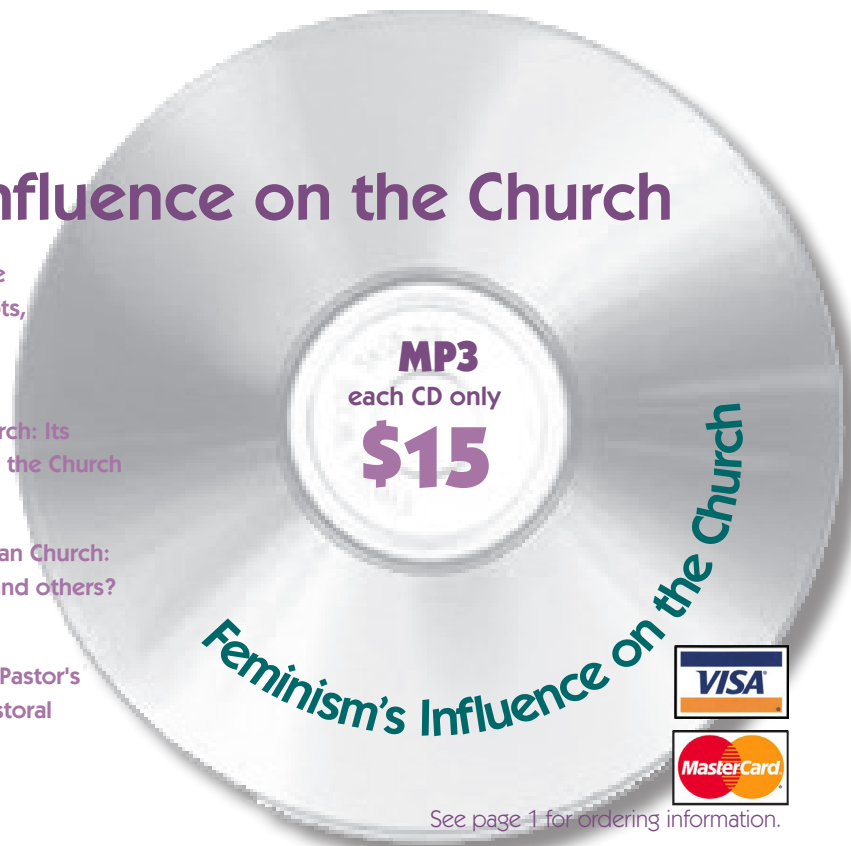
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Greek Epic Verse and the Lutheran Liturgy

DIANE LOUISE JOHNSON



IN EARLY SIXTEENTH-CENTURY Western Europe, Greek language studies were only beginning to be organized on the university level. The language had been more or less available in the West for a century, but it was difficult to access classes or even tutors. A few private schools in Italy offered the language to privileged youth and determined adults. Pioneers like Rudolf Agricola at the end of the fifteenth century first “brought the Muses over the Alps” and established the study of classical Greek language at larger German universities. Once available, Greek language instruction spread rather quickly throughout the major cities of Germany.¹ And, of course, Greek became a plank in the Reformation platform: Philipp Melancthon’s insistence upon the centrality of the ancient languages to understand the Bible correctly, and his commitment to their place in liberal education, carved for Greek—and to a lesser degree Hebrew—a niche in German universities.²

Greek’s privileged position in the Melancthonian *Gymnasia* and universities elicited the compilation of sound primers, reference grammars, and lexica for classroom use.³ New teaching methodologies for introducing Greek to youth were established by the middle of the sixteenth century,⁴ and the active employment of Greek within the classroom increased: we find notices of Greek dramatic presentations, readings, orations, and lectures. It becomes less and less an oddity to find scholars exchanging letters in Greek.⁵ By the late sixteenth century, Greek was accessible and students motivated. And then? An amazing flowering of Greek studies: a curriculum far more extensive than our contemporary classics programs (including many more authors from late antiquity). Greek and classical Latin authors were viewed as the major purveyors of the arts and sciences.⁶ A new inventive drive appeared, the open-ended use of the Greek language for creative purposes. Scholars who had painstakingly mastered the fundamentals of Greek grammar now asked themselves what they should do with their language skills. More accurately, they saw no reason why they should not use their Greek like their scholarly contemporaries working under the Ottoman Turks in the Greek world. Educated Lutheran poets readily used Latin for creative purposes—and some even began producing original works of literature in classical Greek verse.

Johannes Posselius the Elder⁷ was born in 1528 and died in 1591. He spent his entire life in the northern state of Mecklenburg, a student, later a professor and rector, at the University of Rostock, a venerable institution on an estuary of the Baltic Sea. Posselius was born *into* the Reformation: there was no time when he was not devoted to the Lutheran confession. Founded in 1419, Rostock University has always been one of those solid, pragmatic institutions designed to serve the practical needs of

1. For the position of Greek in the humanistic tradition of Western Europe see Manfred Fuhrmann, *Der europäische Bildungskanon* (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2004); and Eugenio Garin, *L’Educazione in Europa, 1400–1600: Problemi e Programmi* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1957).
2. For the printing and study of Hebrew in early modern Europe see Jean-Christophe Saladin, *La bataille du grec à la Renaissance* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 2000), 231–56; and my upcoming study on the *Catechismus trilinguis* of Johannes Drusius.
3. For a study of Melancthon’s Greek, see Stefan Rhein, “Philipp Melancthon als Gräzist,” in *Werk und Rezeption Philipp Melancthons in Universität und Schule bis ins 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Günther Wartenberg (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999). The young Melancthon had himself produced a Greek grammar in 1518; Posselius’s *Syntaxis Graeca*, first published in 1565, went through many editions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as did his *Familiarium colloquiorum libellus*.
4. Spearheading these new pedagogies were Johannes Sturm at Strasbourg and Martinus Crusius at Tübingen; for the general incorporation of Greek into the curriculum see the now classic study of Paul Pendzig, “Die Anfänge der griechischen Studien in den gelehrten Schulen Westdeutschland,” *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 23 (1920): 164–89; Hans Eideneier, “Martinus Crusius Neograecus und die Folgen” (123–36), and Dorothea Wendebourg, “Alles Griechische macht mir Freude wie Spielzeug den Kindern: Martin Crusius und der Übergang des Humanismus zur griechischen Landeskunde” (113–21) in *Graeca recentiora in Germania: Deutsch-griechische Kulturbeziehungen vom 15. bis 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans Eideneier (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994).
5. On the Greek correspondence between Rabelais and Bude, see Saladin, *La bataille*, 384–86. Martinus Crusius kept a diary in Greek and Latin during the last decade of the sixteenth and first decade of the seventeenth centuries; see now the edition of Wilhelm Goetz and Ernst Conrad.
6. For an excellent recent study of humanists’ use of textbooks see Emidio Campi et al., ed., *Scholarly Knowledge: Textbooks in Early Modern Europe* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2008).
7. Epithet added to distinguish him from his son, Johannes Posselius the Younger (1565–1623), professor of Greek at Rostock after his father’s death and productive scholar; the authorship of his work is frequently confused with that of the Elder.

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its community. Established for the purpose of training jurists and civil servants to meet the needs of the court of the Holy Roman Emperor, nowadays Rostock's major features include Faculties of Agriculture and Shipbuilding Technology. Today small faculties of theology and the arts contend with Rostock's face-card faculties in engineering and technology.⁸ A similar practicality can be seen in the university of the sixteenth century when Johannes Posselius fell in love with the Greek language and its literature and devoted his life to its promotion there.

Rostock University had since the 1520s been a locus of Lutheran reform.

Johannes did not need to proselytize for the study and teaching of classical Greek; as a Lutheran institution it guaranteed instruction in the language. Rostock University had been officially Lutheran since the 1540s, but in fact had since the 1520s been a locus of Lutheran reform. Melancthon's pupil Arnold Burenus began working there in the 1530s, among other colleagues deeply committed to Wittenberg-style principles of education; when the official changeover was made to Lutheranism, nobody at Rostock University was surprised. Henceforth Rostock was a pillar in the theological establishment. Faculty at Rostock had to be examined on Luther's writings and on the Augsburg Confession, especially if they had degrees from other institutions. Rostock was particularly concerned about contamination from Anabaptists and Calvinists. Melancthonian in its approach to the liberal arts, it insisted upon the primacy of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.

Posselius began working at Rostock in the early 1550s, two years after his friend and contemporary David Chytraeus arrived. In addition to directing language training at the *Porta Caeli* (the university's Latin-immersion dormitory for freshmen), he taught Greek grammar, lectured in the Arts Faculty on Greek poetry, and sent his students on to the Theology Faculty, the Faculty of Medicine, or the Faculty of Law, secure that he had given them the best foundation in Greek philology that he could. And then he sat down in his study and wrote an extraordinary corpus of Greek materials. These Johannes pro-

duced *after* the lectures and the committee meetings and the public addresses, the quotidian labor that any Rostock professor had to perform: the *Greek Syntax*, the *Colloquia Familiaria* (a conversation manual in Greek and Latin for beginners), his poeticized *Small Catechism* and his *Calligraphia* (a Greek prose composition manual for students), a collection of Greek epitaphs, and his poeticized liturgical readings: the *Ἐδαγγέλια καὶ Ἐπιστολαὶ τῶν Κυριακῶν καὶ Ἑορταστικῶν Ἡμερῶν: The Gospels and Epistles for Sundays and Feast Days*.⁹ He must have begun working on this last sometime in the late 1560s, rendering into Greek verse each passage of the Gospels and the Epistles assigned to the Sundays and feasts. In his dedicatory letter Posselius refers to the encouragement Emperor Maximilianus II had given him when, on a diplomatic mission to Austria with Chytraeus in 1570, he showed the emperor *partem libelli eo tempore absolutam*. The complete work, published at Rostock in 1572, was dedicated to the emperor's six young sons. Johannes Bocerus (professor at Rostock University and poet laureate) provided a fine liminal epigram of nine Latin elegiac couplets. I know of ten further printings, through 1616, some with the Latin version of Theophilus Cangiſserus appended to them.

Now one may well wonder: Why did Posselius make a Greek translation of the liturgical readings at all, given that Greek is already the language of the New Testament? It seems that Johannes Posselius the Elder — who loved Greek because it was Greek, because it was the most beautiful language he had ever heard — wanted to make the passages from the Epistles and the Gospels even *more splendid* Greek: verse, specifically dactylic hexameter, in the Homeric, or epic, dialect of Greek. That is, he turned the pericopes of the Lutheran lectionary into epic poems.

The earliest ancient Greek literature we possess are the epic poems of Homer and Hesiod, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, enshrined for millennia in the ancient Greek educational system as documents of primary, almost sacral, importance. They furnished the first texts children encountered in school when learning to read; we hear of young men memorizing the texts, able to recite them by heart. In antiquity, Homer and Hesiod were considered a necessary part of any person's education; without a close familiarity with them, an educated person could not hope to be taken seriously.

These epic poems were composed in the special poetic dialect known as epic or Homeric; no one spoke it as a native language, but it had evolved over the centuries precisely as a device of heroic poetry. Its high artifice met the demands of the meter known as dactylic hexameter, and it was marked by an especially ornate poetic vocabulary. If an ancient Greek wanted to

8. For a comprehensive history of Rostock University, see Karl-Friedrich Olechnowitz, *Geschichte der Universität Rostock 1419–1969*, Band I, *Die Universität von 1419–1945*, Teil I, 1419–1789 (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, n.d.); for a study of the Lutheranization of the university, Thomas Kaufmann, *Universität und lutherische Konfessionalisierung: Die Rostocker Theologieprofessoren und ihr Beitrag zur theologischen Bildung und kirchlichen Gestaltung im Herzogtum Mecklenburg zwischen 1550 und 1675* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1997).

9. None of these works has, to my knowledge, been made available to modern scholars. There is a transcription of the Latin text of Posselius's *Colloquia Familiaria* in Andreas Fritsch, "Johannis Posselii. Familiarium Colloquiorum Libellus. Pars Latina," *Vox Latina* 13 (1977): 46–70; the complete Greek and Latin text, along with my transcription of the *Syntaxis Graeca* and the *Libellus Epitaphiorum*, may be found here: <http://www.wwu.edu/mcl/classical/humanisticagraeca.shtml>

compose an epic poem, he needed to use the epic dialect along with dactylic hexameter: this was a given, a necessary requirement that no one, as far as we know, ever challenged.¹⁰ When the Romans discovered Greek literary culture and wanted to write their own epics in Latin, they felt the weight of the epic Greek dialect upon them, adapted Latin to dactylic hexameter, and created an epic Latin dialect to match. This made their Latin verse sound more serious, more cosmopolitan, more Homeric (although they were of course linguistically constrained in what they could do to match the Greek).¹¹ The Greeks, too, used their epic dialect and meter throughout antiquity to tell stories of the mythic past and to record ancient wisdom and ethics, and the earliest known authors, Homer and Hesiod, continued to provide the models and the subjects for epic poetry for so long as classical Greek was a language of literature.

How did Posselius manage to turn the liturgical readings into epic Greek texts? It is not difficult to do—provided that one has memorized a substantial quantity of Greek verses! And Posselius certainly had. Below are a couple of examples to examine his technique more closely.

The Gospel for the first Sunday of Advent is Matthew 21:1–9. Posselius’s task was to turn the following (verses 1–3 of the pericope) into epic verse:

Καὶ ὅτε ἤγγισαν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ ἦλθον εἰς Βηθφαγὴ εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν, τότε Ἰησοῦς ἀπέστειλεν δύο μαθητὰς λέγων αὐτοῖς, Πορεύεσθε εἰς τὴν κώμην τὴν κατέναντι ὑμῶν, καὶ εὐθὺς εὐρήσετε ὄνον δεδεμένην καὶ πῶλον μετ’ αὐτῆς. λύσαντες ἀγάγετέ μοι. Καὶ ἐάν τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ τι, ἐρεῖτε ὅτι Ὁ Κύριος αὐτῶν χρειαν ἔχει. Εὐθὺς δὲ ἀποστελεῖ αὐτούς.

This is how Posselius rendered the scriptural passage:

Ὡς ἱερὸν Σολύμων Χριστὸς ποτὶ ἄστῳ ὀδεύων,
πρὸς τοῦ ἐλαίου ὄρος, τῷ Βεθφαγῆ οὔνομα, ἦλθε,
δὴ τότε ὦδε δύο θεράποντε προσεῖπε μαθητά:
ἔρχεσθον τάχα εἰς τὸ πόλισμα, ὃ τι πρόπαρ ὑμῶν
κεῖται, καὶ βραδύπουν εὐρήσετ’ ὄνον ταλάεργον,
μητέρα σὺν πῶλῳ, δεσμοῖς ἦν δῆσαν οἱ ἄνδρες
αὐτόθι, λύσαντες δ’ ἐμοὶ ἄξετε δεῦρο ἐκείνους.
Εἰ δέ τις ἀνθρώπων ὑμᾶς τί ποτ’ ἐξερεεῖνη,
τόνδ’ ἐπαμειβομένῳ ἔπεσιν φωνήσατον αὐτίς:
κύριον ὑμέτερον τὸν Ἰησοῦν τοῖνδε χατίζειν.
Καὶ θᾶσσον τότε ὕμῖν ὄνον καὶ πῶλον ἀφήσει.

Note that the content is identical: all adjustments Posselius made to this passage are poetic, not substantive. One immediately notes that he has used the graceful dual number, a distinct

feature of epic Greek, accomplished by an inflection of the personal endings. Since Matthew’s κοινή specifically stated that Jesus sent two disciples to perform this task, these have become “attendant pupils twain” in Posselius’s verses. The donkey and its foal are likewise two, and so can be expressed in verse using the dual number: τοῖνδε χατίζειν. As for the donkey, Posselius has provided her with a couple of poetic compound adjectives; they honestly don’t add anything but ornamentation, since the epithets “slow-footed” and “enduring of labor” (καὶ βραδύπουν εὐρήσετ’ ὄνον ταλάεργον) are going to apply to any donkey. But they sound wonderful in the line, and lift our donkey into the more poetic realm of Homer’s and Hesiod’s pack animals.

Next we will take a look at Posselius at work on a Pauline letter. Oculi, the third Sunday in Lent, has as its text Ephesians 5:1–9 (below are verses 1–3 and part of 4):

Γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητά, καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν τῷ Θεῷ εἰς ὁσμὴν εὐωδίας. Πορνεία δὲ καὶ ἀκαθαρσία πᾶσα ἢ πλεονεξία μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν, καθὼς πρέπει ἀγίοις, καὶ ἀισχύροτης καὶ μωρολογίας ἢ εὐτραπελίας, ἣ οὐκ ἀνήκεν.

Posselius, observing that St. Paul was ringing changes on ἀγάπη, kept this important thematic word in his opening lines. He has again added some ornamental epithets, adjectives that in the entire work have become formulaic; that is, he uses them over and over again in the same metrical context.

ὕμεις γοῦν μιμεῖσθε θεὸν τὸν παμμεδέοντα,
ὡσπερ χρὴ φίλα τέκν’ ἀγάπῃν τ’ ἀσκεῖ τ’ ἀσκεῖ τε τῷ ἔργῳ
ὡς καὶ ὁ λυτρωτῆς ὑμᾶς ἀγάπησεν Ἰησοῦς,
πρὸς λύσιν ἡμετέρην παραδοῦς μάλ’ ἐκοντὶ ἑαυτὸν
πατρὶ ἐφ’ θυσίαν τε καὶ εὐδομον χαρίεντα
αἰσχρῇ μαχλοσύνῃ καὶ λαγνεῖα κενεόφρων,
ἠδ’ ἀδολεσχία οὐλομένη λαλιά τε ἀναιδίης,
ἣ καὶ βωμολόχευμα, τὸ μὴ ἐσθλοῖς ἐπιεικές.

God is παμμεδέων (“all-ruler”), Christ is λυτρωτῆς (“Redeemer”)—the epithets are lacking in the κοινή passage—and every noun in the epic catalog of bad behavior is equipped with an ornamental adjective: “shameful obscenity,” “mindless lechery,” “baneful chattering,” “impudent mouthiness,” “coarseness improper for good people.” Paul’s abstract nouns have all been replaced by metrically suitable synonyms. Only πορνεία could have been fit into an epic hexameter, but it lacks poetic color; Posselius replaced it with μαχλοσύνη.

He thus worked his way through the lectionary and created an amazing, finished collection of seventy-eight Gospel-Epistle sets: 156 individual poeticized readings. But why? What was he trying to accomplish in rewriting Gospels and Epistles as epic poems? Posselius’s lengthy introduction, a dedicatory letter to the six young sons of Emperor Maximilian II, expatiates upon the history of the lectionary to justify the benefits to illiterate Christians of hearing the most important scriptural passages

10. For an excellent summary of Homeric dialect and its meter, see now Geoffrey C. Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and its Speakers*, 2nd ed. (Oxford UK: Blackwell, 2010), 44–48.

11. For the development of the Latin poetic language, see L. R. Palmer, *The Latin Language* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 95–147.

read out each year. He also spends considerable time explaining to the young princes why it is so important for them to study hard and become erudite: their role is to protect doctrine.

Etsi enim omnibus hominibus aliqua cognitio doctrinae caelestis ac legum vitae honeste et sancte regendae necessaria est, tamen Gubernatores, quibus defensio et custodia Ecclesiae, religionis, literarum, artium et omnium rerum bonarum praecipue incumbit, instructiores esse doctrina religionis necesse est, quam sunt alii.

Secular leaders, Posselius insists, need to know religious doctrine. They need to study it, read it daily, incorporate it into their lives. This obligation on the part of leaders to study and to protect Scripture serves (along with the Emperor's encouragement of this project) to justify his dedicating the work to the princes.

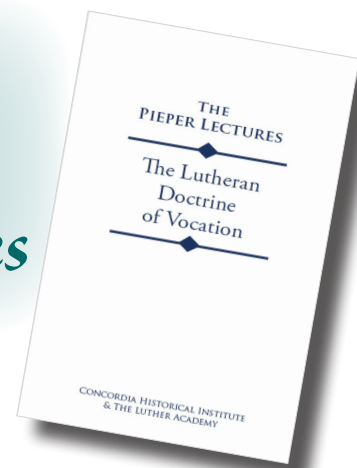
Necesse est igitur Reges et Principes ipsos doctrinae caelestis fontes prae caeteris in populo, studiose inquirere et recte discere, et studia doctrinae Christi et bonarum literarum et artium, quae Ecclesiae necessariae sunt, clementer fovere. . . . Cum igitur doctrinae Christi et Apostolicae nucleum in usitatas Evangeliorum et Epistolarum lectiones inclusum, hoc libello . . . complexus sim, spero Serenissimas Celsitudines Vestras quotidie cum Christo pia precatione et lectione Evangelii ipsius colloquentes, clementer et benigne hanc subiectissimi studii et reverentiae meae significationem qualemcumque accepturas esse.

Posselius nowhere connects princes, their education, and epic verse. He will not tell us what motivated him to do the pericopes in epic format, and perhaps it is impertinent to demand a justification. In the end, it may be sufficient simply to say that he wanted to make the texts more beautiful by epicizing them. Greek was what Posselius had to offer, and an epic lectionary was his gift . . . to whom?

Perhaps to the young princes—for epic poetry deals with kings and heroes. Perhaps these young men can identify with Posselius's epic poems and meanwhile gain the insight provided by their scriptural basis. Young princes, like Achilles and Hector, are suited to epic treatment, and hopefully will one day prove themselves true Homeric-style heroes.

What Johannes Posselius has done is truly intriguing: the corpus of Greek poetry he left surprises and stuns. But he wasn't the only scholar using Greek in this creative yet traditionally Christian way: Laurentius Rhodomannus, for example, turned the Augsburg Confession into Greek verse, and Posselius himself was not the only Greek poet to recast the Small Catechism in hexameter. In the end, what these Lutheran Hellenists created was a set of religious texts endowed with elevation, solemnity, and sweetness. Like the gorgeous setting of a beautiful gem, their poetic adaptations of doctrinal texts give the reader great pleasure. They form the honey on the lip of the cup, the spoonful of sugar that makes the study of each week's assigned texts a gratifying pleasure. **LOGIA**

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Published by *The Luther Academy*

The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge

Defending Classical Liberal Education from Melancthon to Newman

MARK A. KALTHOFF



CAN SEEMINGLY USELESS KNOWLEDGE be otherwise? Some contend that activities pursued without regard to their practical benefit issue, nonetheless, in great practical benefits.¹ This essay explores this notion with respect to liberal education, especially as articulated by worthy historical voices.

We live in a culture of “relevantism.” Nearly every student, it seems, arrives on campus primed to ask, “How is this course, this assignment, this lecture relevant? What can I do with it? Tell me its immediate practical use.” Such questions arise because too many Americans know nothing of the old distinction between true education and mere training. This is the distinction articulated by Albert Jay Nock generations ago and well-described by Christian Kopff more recently:

The goal of education is to produce thoughtful people who have at their disposal a wealth of general knowledge, and who, in the light of this knowledge and with the courage to face facts, can judge matters of significance in a disinterested manner. Obviously this kind of formation is limited to the few who possess the character, the talents, and the stamina to be educated this way. A society without trained workers will not get its work done. A society without educated citizens will collapse in times of crisis and will wither away in times of ease and prosperity. Simply put, a civilization without educated citizens will cease to be civilized.²

In view of this distinction between mere training and true education, I propose that submitting everything to a crass “relevantism test,” the test that first asks, “What can I do with it?” is to ask the wrong question. It is like asking about the uses for a newborn baby. When immediate usefulness becomes the measure of value, we risk discarding things whose worth may be inestimable. Further, it happens to be the case that things pursued for their own sake without regard to their practical utility quite often have the happy consequence of being useful in ways not originally perceived. It is like that with the liberal arts. This was known in classical Greece and has been articulated effectively in the centuries since.

This essay considers three cases from the Western intellectual heritage — one from Reformation Germany, one from antebellum America, and one from Victorian Britain — that

together illustrate crucial facets of liberal learning and reveal how useless knowledge may “prove unexpectedly [to be] the source from which undreamed of utility is derived.”³ There is a catch, however. The potential for “undreamed of utility” must be neither the express goal nor the animating purpose of liberal learning. To be genuine, liberal learning must be free of utilitarian motive, open to wonder, and pursued for its own sake. Hence liberal learning becomes most useful vocationally when pursued without regard to its potential vocational use. This may be called the paradox of liberal learning.

If rightly known as Luther’s “chief lieutenant,” author of the Augsburg Confession, and theological force behind the Lutheran Reformation, Philipp Melancthon (1497–1560) should be remembered no less as the *Praeceptor Germaniae*, “the teacher of Germany,” an academic prodigy responsible for reforming and reviving the classical liberal arts curriculum in schools and universities across western Europe. He composed texts on most subjects in the arts curriculum including Latin and Greek grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. His texts, editions, and commentaries on such figures as Cicero, Demosthenes, Virgil, Ovid, Hesiod, and Ptolemy were still in use in the seventeenth century. When he lectured at Wittenberg virtually the entire student body turned out to hear him. And when not occupied with theology or scholarship he maintained a vast correspondence promoting his vision of liberal learning — 9,500 of his letters survive.⁴

1. Abraham Flexner, “The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge,” *Harpur’s Magazine* 179 (1939): 544–50; Philip D. Jordan, “The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge,” *The Historian* 22 (1960): 237–49; and Catharine Savage Brosman, “The Uses of a Liberal Education,” *Chronicles* (September 2010): 16–19.
2. E. Christian Kopff, *The Devil Knows Latin: Why America Needs the Classical Tradition* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 1999), 99–100. See also Albert Jay Nock, *The Theory of Education in the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1969).
3. Flexner, “Useless Knowledge,” 544.
4. See *Philip Melancthon: Orations on Philosophy and Education*, ed. Sachiko Kusukawa, trans. Christine F. Salazar, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), xi–xiii (henceforth cited in text as K&S, followed by page number); Dennis Danielson, *The First Copernican: Georg Joachim Rheticus and the Rise of the Copernican Revolution* (New York: Walker & Company, 2006), 23–24; and Jon Steffen Bruss, “Melancthon and the Wittenberg Reception of Hellenism, 1518–1526: *Bonae Literae et Renascentes Musae*,” *LOGIA* 17 (Reformation 2008): 7–12.

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Although Melanchthon's orations on educational history and philosophy cover vast ground, his oration from January 1531, "On the Order of Learning," provides a sufficient case for present purposes. Insisting upon the "close relationship between the arts," Melanchthon asserted, "Nothing is as useful and nothing as beautiful for men as order." He employed example and analogy as he illustrated the proper orderly relationship between the arts (K&S, 3). In doing so Melanchthon gave voice to a pair of ideas essential to the traditional liberal arts.

Careless and premature specialization fragments learning.

First, no liberal art, no fundamental academic subject — even those of seemingly little utility or dignity — can be omitted from the curriculum without damage to the entire enterprise. Everything shines light on everything. The disciplines, even if distinct from one another, are ultimately connected and require support from one another. Melanchthon illustrated with a simple analogy from the letters of the alphabet. "Even if the vowels excel by their dignity, there can be no speech without consonants." He wondered, "What would happen if someone, having left out all the consonants, wanted to use only vowels in speaking. Undoubtedly he would be fighting against the entire nature of things." Thus concluded Melanchthon,

In the same way, just as there is a natural relationship of the various letters with each other, the various arts are associated and yet separated. And those who feel that the lower disciplines [that is, the liberal arts] are useless for life, because their benefit is not so visible, disturb this chorus of the arts.

He pressed the same point with a different analogy. "If some admirer of the sky and the stars . . . wanted to remove water from the nature of things, because it is no match for the brightness of the stars, would we not say he is mad?" Thus regarding the indispensability of each and every liberal art, he concluded, "Just as when you think of the elements of writing you believe that the entire alphabet is necessary for discourse, so you will consider all the disciplines that are taught in the schools necessary for life" (K&S, 6).

Melanchthon's second theme followed directly from the first. Because the liberal arts are foundational to all the higher specialties and professions, it is crucial that young students avoid "rushing unrestrainedly towards the higher disciplines." In Melanchthon, we find a most vigorous opponent of the fragmentation of knowledge that follows directly from premature academic specialization. He would surely rank prominently among critics of the modern college-student obsession with

declaring a major and embarking upon a vocational specialty before acquiring a liberal foundation upon which to build. There is an "order of learning," proclaimed Melanchthon, just as in all natural matters. "If the farmer wants to sow first and to plough later," he noted,

his labour and expenditure will go to waste. In the same way, if the correct order is not preserved in grasping the disciplines in one's mind, one will have to despair of any success. A good thing brings forth a bad one, they say, if it is not given at the right time. Accordingly even study of the best and greatest things [is] harmful if they are not undertaken at the appropriate time.

Melanchthon worried about the premature pursuit of higher disciplines noted for their ability to confer fame, wealth, or power. If curricular constraints were loosened, "suddenly," he feared, "like mushrooms, theologians, lawyers, and doctors [would be] brought forth, without dialectics, without knowledge of speaking, without the cradle-bands of natural and moral philosophy" (K&S, 5–6).

Thus in Melanchthon's voice we find articulated two themes crucial to the traditional liberal arts. All of the arts are necessary, for each is connected to and sheds lights upon all the others. A liberally educated person knows this and can trace those connections. Further, the liberal arts are foundational and prior to academic specialization. Careless and premature specialization fragments learning and undermines the Christian academy's commitment to the unity of knowledge, to the affirmation that all truth is God's truth.

Centuries later and an ocean away from Melanchthon's Germany, collegiate life in antebellum North America still echoed his commitments to ordered liberal learning. As one scholar has aptly described the American college at this time:

All knowledge whether secular or religious was seen to be united in a coherent and integrated whole, and it was the purpose of [American] higher education to cultivate an understanding of the various elements of knowledge in their relationship to one another. . . . There was no sharp distinction to be made between moral and empirical knowledge, and both were to be employed in the service of individual character formation.⁵

This vision of the unity of knowledge that came to dominate antebellum American colleges bore the impress of the Scottish enlightenment, particularly the philosophy of "common sense" that emphasized the old conviction that all truth was God's truth, that science and religion, reason and revelation — indeed, all knowledge that deserved the name — was woven into a single integrated fabric. Such truth, when taught properly, formed

5. Russell K. Nieli, *From Christian Gentleman to Bewildered Seeker: The Transformation of American Higher Education* (Raleigh: John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, 2007), 6.

the character as it furnished the mind. Educators hoped, too, that it would cultivate Christian virtue, practical moral judgment, and social wisdom, fitting the student for the worthy life of a citizen leader, and launch him upon a lifetime of learning.⁶

Perhaps the best American articulation of this educational ideal surfaced in the context of a curriculum brouhaha at Yale College begun in 1827 with the appointment of a committee “to inquire into the expediency” of altering the curriculum “as to leave out . . . the study of the *dead languages*,” that is, Greek and Latin. The result appeared in the form of a lengthy document, published in 1828, that came to be known as the Yale Report. It was “the first major effort to spell out both a philosophy and the particulars of an American system of higher education.”⁷ Of unparalleled significance for understanding the nineteenth-century American college, it bears quoting at length for the voice it gives to the old educational recognition of the usefulness of supposedly useless knowledge.

Published in the *American Journal of Science and Arts* in 1829, the Yale Report received wide circulation and broad attention. The principal opening section of the report was written by President Jeremiah Day (1773–1867), Yale’s teacher administrator whose towering influence spanned his sixty-nine-year formal connection to the college. Day opened by posing the fundamental question lurking behind any serious curricular deliberation: “What then,” he asked, “is the appropriate object of a college?” His answer resonated with a deep understanding that classical liberal education, first and foremost, is necessarily an exercise in intellectual and character formation, not a business of professional training or equipping of students with a set of vocational skills. Permit Day to speak for himself:

What then is the appropriate object of a college? . . . Its object is to *lay the foundation* of a *superior education*. . . . The two great points to be gained in intellectual culture are the *discipline* and the *furniture* of the mind; expanding its powers, and storing it with knowledge. . . .

Such branches are to be taught as will produce a proper symmetry and balance of character. We doubt whether the powers of the mind can be developed, in their fairest proportions, by studying languages alone, or mathematics alone, or natural or political science alone. As the bodily frame is brought to its highest perfection, not by one simple and uniform motion, but by a variety of exercises; so the mental faculties are expanded, and invigorated, and adapted to each other, by familiarity with different departments of science. . . . The course of instruction which is given to the undergraduates in the college, is not designed

to include *professional* studies. Our object is not to teach that which is peculiar to any one of the professions; but to lay the foundation which is common to them all. . . .

But why, it may be asked, should a student waste his time upon studies which have no immediate connection with his future profession? . . . In answer to this it may be observed, that there is no science which does not contribute its aid to professional skill. “Every thing throws light upon every thing.” The great object of a collegiate education, preparatory to the study of a profession, is to give that expansion and balance of the mental powers, those liberal and comprehensive views, and those fine proportions of character, which are not to be found in him whose ideas are always confined to one particular channel. . . .

The two great points to be gained in intellectual culture are the discipline and the furniture of the mind.

Is a man to have no other object, than to obtain a *living* by professional pursuits? Has he not duties to perform to his family, to his fellow citizens, to his country; duties which require various and extensive intellectual furniture? . . .

But why, it is asked, should *all* the students in a college be required to tread in the *same steps*? Why should not each one be allowed to select those branches of study which are most to his taste, which are best adapted to his peculiar talents, and which are most nearly connected with his intended profession? To this we answer, that our prescribed course of study contains those subjects only which ought to be understood, as we think, by every one who aims at a thorough education. . . . So in a college, all should be instructed in those branches of knowledge, of which no one destined to the higher walks of life ought to be ignorant. . . .

The object . . . is not to give a *partial* education, consisting of a few branches only; nor, on the other hand, to give a *superficial* education, containing a smattering of almost every thing; nor to *finish* the details of either a professional or practical education; but to *commence* a *thorough* course, and to carry it as far as the time of residence here will allow.⁸

As curriculum historian Frederick Rudolph wryly commented,

The Yale Report of 1828 may have been the last chance for the American *college*. . . . [But] the college that Jeremiah

6. On Scottish philosophy and common sense epistemology see Sydney E. Ahlstrom, “The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology,” *Church History* 24 (1955): 257–72; S. A. Grave, *The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960); and Mark A. Noll, “Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought,” *American Quarterly* 37 (1985): 216–38.

7. Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977), 66–67.

8. Jeremiah Day, “Report of the Faculty, Part I,” from “The Yale Report of 1828,” in *American Higher Education: A Documentary History*, ed. Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 1:278–84, *passim*.

Day and his supporters were trying to define and refine found itself in a most trying and embarrassing way in competition with the country itself.⁹

Since Ben Franklin's *Poor Richard*, Americans had placed a premium upon "useful" knowledge. This trend accelerated with the advent of the research university, the introduction of the elective system to the undergraduate curriculum, and the explosion of changes associated with industrialization and urbanization, processes that encouraged Americans to place greater value upon vocational training and less upon formative education. Further, the evangelical individualistic pietism that swept the country in the wake of the Second Great Awakening all but erased the heretofore accepted proposition that sound theology required pastors to have prior classical liberal education. America's egalitarian culture, as Tocqueville seemed to predict, came to view every man as fit (with or without formal book learning) to be his own expert in theological ethics, hermeneutics, and ecclesiastical theology. Why, many would soon ask, should one waste time with liberal learning and classical languages?¹⁰

The book, The Idea of a University, has proven itself a timeless classic.

The Yale Report was neither the final nor best word in defense of classical liberal education. In the year of the Yale Report's publication, John Henry Newman (1801–1890), a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, became vicar of the university church, St. Mary the Virgin. Over the next two decades, as he migrated theologically toward Roman Catholicism, Newman thought hard about the principles and purposes of university education, and especially about the nature of liberal education in relation to the Christian tradition. Following his reception into the Roman Catholic Church in 1845, Newman was called in 1851 to preside over the new Roman Catholic university in Dublin, Ireland. The following year as rector-elect in Dublin, he delivered a series of lectures on the nature of a university. After expansion and revision, these lectures became the book that Jaroslav Pelikan would call "the most important treatise on the idea of the university ever written in any language."¹¹ The book, *The*

Idea of a University, has proven itself a timeless classic and, according to Jacques Barzun, made Newman "the greatest theorist of university life."¹²

Among the many achievements of *The Idea of a University* stands Newman's explication of the liberal arts, what they can (and cannot) accomplish, and the place of theology among the "sciences"—a term Newman used generically for any organized body of knowledge. His definition of liberal education as a "process of training, by which the intellect . . . is disciplined for its own sake" is widely regarded to be normative.¹³ This process of intellectual discipline requires one to acknowledge, to use Newman's phrase, that "all knowledge forms one whole" and that all branches of knowledge "belong to one and the same circle of objects." The process of liberal education, then, is the proportioned study of each branch of knowledge and the consequent bringing of each into right relation with the other branches of knowledge. Success in this endeavor results in what Newman called a "philosophical habit of mind."¹⁴ Permit Newman to speak for himself:

Though [students] cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. This I conceive to be the advantage of a seat of universal learning, considered as a place of education. An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes. . . . He profits by an intellectual tradition, which is independent of particular teachers, which guides him in his choice of subjects, and duly interprets for him those which he chooses. He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called "Liberal." A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what . . . I have ventured to call a philosophical habit.¹⁵

9. Rudolph, *Curriculum*, 73–74.

10. See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. and ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 275–88, 403–24.

11. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 9.

12. Quoted in Pelikan, *Idea*, 6. See also A. Dwight Culler, *The Imperial Intellect: A Study of Cardinal Newman's Educational Ideal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955); and James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 29–70.

13. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University: Defined and Illustrated in Nine Discourses Delivered to the Catholics of Dublin in Occasional Lectures and Essays Addressed to the Members of the Catholic University*, ed. Martin J. Svaglic (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 115.

14. *Ibid.*, 38.

15. *Ibid.*, 76.

Newman insisted that the philosophical habit of mind is its own reward, that “knowledge is capable of being its own end.”¹⁶ Accordingly, he drew out the distinction between liberal and servile arts in a manner that would have undoubtedly resonated with the great tradition of classical learning. Newman explained that the liberal arts are free, that they are liberal, because they are not for the sake of some exterior practical utility. He steadfastly maintained,

Things, which can bear to be cut off from every thing else and yet persist in living, must have life in themselves; pursuits, which issue in nothing, and still maintain their ground for ages, which are regarded as admirable, though they have not as yet proved themselves to be useful, must have their sufficient end in themselves, whatever it turn out to be.¹⁷

He insisted, nevertheless, “If a liberal education be good, it must necessarily be useful too.”¹⁸

If the goal of liberal education is the discipline of the mind for its own sake and the consequent acquisition of a philosophical habit, Newman demanded that such an end could only be achieved by the proper inclusion of all branches of knowledge. “The systematic omission of any one science from the catalogue prejudices the accuracy and completeness of our knowledge altogether, and that, in proportion to its importance,” he explained.¹⁹ This vision of liberal learning had direct implication for the teaching of Christian theology. His argument was strictly syllogistic. If a university professes to teach universal knowledge and if theology is a branch of knowledge, then, he concluded, it is logically inconsistent to exclude theology from the number of its studies.²⁰ Newman attacked head-on those who denied his minor premise, those who asserted “that Religion is not the subject-matter of a science.”²¹ Such a view that relegated religious doctrine to the category of mere opinion, taste, or preference Newman denounced as “a form of infidelity of the day”; and this was long before the tired scientisms of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris arrived to hiss and whine at the world with their theological naiveté. Newman’s point, although made with great care, was simple enough. Liberal education, to be worthy of the name, could not exclude Christian theology from the curriculum; for it is part of the circle of knowledge. To pretend otherwise invites the imperialistic invasion by other disciplines, despite their own incapacity to adjudicate theological matters. Thus the branches of

knowledge are rightly proportioned only when all — including theology and, of course, classical languages — are admitted to the curriculum and properly adjusted to one another. The business of liberal education, explained Newman, is the business of seeking this end in the curriculum and in the cultivation of a philosophic habit of mind.

The educational ideals advanced by Melancthon, Newman, and the Yale Report sparkled with clarity of purpose and purity of vision; but increasingly they came to be viewed as anachronistic and impractical for a modernizing industrial society. Predictably, new and fashionable progressive voices agitating for educational reform cried out, were heard, and heeded.

The story of these educational reforms constitutes an important and ominous chapter in the intellectual life of the modern industrial world, but its significance for our tale of the liberal arts is limited to the ways these events unmoored American higher education from its venerable heritage and shaped collegiate learning into a utilitarian endeavor. The centrifugal forces of this curricular reform undermined the past coherence of liberal education in the name of the American *summum bonum*, practical utility. As Princeton’s Russell Nieli and others have observed, “By the early twentieth century, colleges and universities were rapidly abandoning their older mission of passing on a valued spiritual and intellectual heritage to succeeding generations.” Not surprisingly this issued in a “loss of coherence [to higher education’s] civilizing mission.” And it produced “bewilderment and [a] sense of drift” in many students.²²

But the classical liberal arts need not seek justification merely as the practical remedy for the plight of the aimless and drifting student. To be sure, liberal education properly conceived and rightly pursued tethers the unmoored and bewildered student to a tradition devoted to ordering souls and cultivating minds — minds distinguished by their discipline and furnishing. Yet liberal education need not stake its justification upon appeals to such utility — however high-minded it may be. Yes, the liberal arts offer a cure for cultural incoherence. Yes, the liberal arts possess demonstrated practical utility for business, for politics, for the seminary training of pastors, and for other worthy callings. Yet the liberal arts find sufficient justification in themselves. They are proper pursuits for any human made in the image of God. No Christian should neglect the call to cultivate the uniquely human capacities of mind and soul to which liberal learning tends. Not surprisingly, however, when pursued for their own sake — the best and only honest way to pursue them — the liberal arts issue in the greatest practical benefits. Therein lies the paradox of liberal learning, or what can be called the usefulness of useless knowledge. **LOGIA**

16. *Ibid.*, 77.

17. *Ibid.*, 80.

18. *Ibid.*, 124.

19. *Ibid.*, 39.

20. *Ibid.*, 14–15.

21. *Ibid.*, 290.

22. Nieli, *Christian Gentleman*, 9.

Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in Thought, Word, and Deed

Unleashing the Power of Rhetoric

JAMES M. TALLMON



Now if (as we have assumed) there were no souls, and there were no need at all of schools and languages for the sake of the Scriptures and of God, this one consideration alone would be sufficient to justify the establishment everywhere of the very best schools for both boys and girls, namely, that in order to maintain its temporal estate outwardly the world must have good and capable men and women, men able to rule well over land and people, women able to manage the household and train children and servants aright.
Martin Luther (AE 45: 367–68)

STATEMENTS LIKE THESE, EASY TO come by, indicate the importance Doctor Luther placed on education. The hypothetical notwithstanding (a universe where there were no souls), Luther clearly considers “the very best schools” those based on a classical liberal arts curriculum to educate boys and girls for two ends: growth in the faith (“for the sake of the Scriptures and God”) and cultivation of good leaders for both the “temporal estate” and families. Those parts of the curriculum that equip especially for handling God’s truth well and for leadership are dialectic and rhetoric, which should not just be mastered theoretically, but applied so as to cultivate wise judgment. Through these arts of wisdom and eloquence the student develops mental dexterity and aesthetic sensibilities and is ultimately equipped to be a good Christian exercising practical wisdom. “In the restored man dialectic and rhetoric will go along hand in hand as the regime of the human faculties intended that they should do.”¹

This is the restorative effort of classical Lutheran education, built around dialectic and rhetoric and aimed at equipping students to pursue excellence. Indeed,

Liberal arts schooling always seeks to educate the conscience and . . . liberal arts thinking blended with Christian theology promises the greatest opportunity for genuine character education. Of the three elements of the trivium, rhetoric is most helpful in the construction of a total curriculum with character formation and cultural leadership as its chief goals.²

Rhetoric—along with dialectic—forms not only the mental habits capable of treating of truth, beauty, and goodness, but also character. To understand this dynamic entails understanding the relationship of dialectic to rhetoric, then of poetics to rhetoric, and ultimately, of rhetoric to ethics. This paper therefore details my own approach—and its pedagogical underpinnings—to teaching rhetoric and dialectic. The analysis culminates in some observations on the well-known sentence that captures the educational bearing of Lutheran reformers such as Luther, Melancthon, Bugenhagen, and Sturm, “The aim of education is a wise and eloquent piety.”

Teaching toward the achievement of excellence in the practical arts is different from teaching for the mastery of subject matter. The former features praxis and minimizes theory; the latter emphasizes contemplation and theory. Theory informs practice, to be sure, but the seminar-style discussion of readings (the “Great Books” approach) will not help students hone their rhetorical or dialectical skills as much as getting in front of an audience and making arguments or engaging in debate about contemporary controversies. To master the piano one does not merely immerse oneself in music theory or read the lives of great musicians. One learns to read notes and practices every day until the skill becomes “second nature.” Theory is then tackled as one matures in one’s art. Theory follows practice. Again, theory is vital, but it is not age-appropriate to “lead” with volumes of theory.

In my Public Speaking course I attempt to lay a foundation in rhetoric that guides students in the fundamentals of speech composition. What one considers fundamental is, of course, open to interpretation, but I demonstrate why a rhetorical approach to the art of speech making, in the classical liberal arts vein, teaches the true fundamentals and elevates the enterprise without overburdening students with 2,500 years of theory.

I begin by pointing out to my students that they already know a great deal about eye contact, gestures, volume, rate, pitch, and so forth, and that I could cover those topics in about a half-hour. So, what are we going to discuss for the rest of the semester?

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1. Richard M. Weaver, “The Cultural Role of Rhetoric,” in *Language is Sermonic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 184.
2. Robert Littlejohn and Charles T. Evans, *Wisdom and Eloquence: A Christian Paradigm for Classical Learning* (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway Books, 2006), 133.

(This pedagogical move generates enthusiasm on the part of my college students and assures them that they will not again be force-fed the minutiae of rhetorical mechanics that they mastered long ago!) I propose studying the art of rhetoric from a traditional liberal arts perspective. I then pose a question: “Why are you at a university? If you just want a good job that pays well, you could spend a lot less time and money going to a tech school and learning a trade. What do you get at a university that you don’t get elsewhere?” Eventually they take the bait: “A liberal arts education!” This realization, of course, raises the question: what is a liberal arts education? And so we’re off and running.

I then discuss with them the nature of liberal arts education, borrowing heavily from Dorothy Sayers.³ This is followed by a definition of rhetoric and an explanation of how rhetoric was, in its golden age, considered the “most humane of the humanities.” Breaking it down into its constituent parts, I explain how this theory will provide a framework for the entire course and will inform their practices. There is also a good bit of instruction in fundamentals of logic (syllogisms, dialectic, and common material fallacies, to be precise) on the assumption that, if they are intellectually engaged, when they speak they’ll have something of substance to say. In other words, thought is foundational to speech. Teaching rhetoric begins by placing it within the context of liberal arts learning.

Classically educated young people should begin with a series of “stair-stepped” exercises to master foundational, then more advanced, rhetorical dynamics. They learn by doing. They are informed by theory, but only enough theory to enlighten, not to overburden. The line of demarcation between “overburdening” and sufficient rigor, will, of course, vary among children. Make learning fun! Luther repeatedly characterizes learning as “child’s play” (and suggests that teachers overburden their students, in part, to build their own reputation).

My Argumentation & Debate course closely examines the relationship between dialectic and rhetoric. It enables students to engage in practical argumentation by examining and discussing patterns of reasoning, fields of argument, and standards of evidence, and to apply classical rhetorical concepts to contemporary controversies. Because thought is fundamental to argument, the course begins with the fundamentals of logic. The logic instruction dispensed in Public Speaking at strategic intervals is condensed into a three-week “bootcamp of the mind.”

“Bootcamp of the mind” concludes with a philosophical speech (which draws upon the *Great Books of the Western World*) and a graduation ceremony. Each of the three remaining units of the course, following Aristotle’s *Rhetorica*,⁴ features a different context for arguing cases: the court of law, the moral dilemma, and policy controversy.

My approach to Advanced Public Speaking is also classical. The core of the course consists of *imitatio*, a pedagogical scheme originating in the classical world and widely practiced in me-

dieval times, that exposes students to great oratory. After they study it, they imitate it. Once they develop a feel for stylistic excellence, they compose original works. This “stair-stepped” approach is very effective. The course is the right-brain equivalent to Argumentation & Debate. Building on the foundation in rhetoric from Public Speaking, it emphasizes style and the cultivation of imagination and memory over logic.

Students learn to instruct, persuade, and delight audiences.

Advanced Public Speaking begins with a refresher on rhetoric in the classical liberal arts, followed by focused study in elements of style. Real application of classical concepts begins with a memorized speech. An “essentializing exercise” follows, in which students first identify the essential message of that speech and then create an *imitatio* that applies that theme to a contemporary situation and emulates the style of the speech they memorized. The course culminates in a “student’s choice” speech that demonstrates mastery of course content. They learn a great deal about how to move an audience (*pathos*) and, more specifically, how to deploy figures of speech masterfully.

Taken together these three courses constitute an integrated approach to the study and practice of rhetoric, which cultivates practical wisdom and eloquence. By understanding the concepts of rhetoric and practicing it as an art, students learn to reason with precision, spot faulty logic, exercise insight and forethought in deliberations, use language masterfully, and think both logically and analogically—in short, to instruct, persuade, and delight audiences.

While this cycle of learning imparts both practical wisdom and eloquence, it also has ethical, moral, and theological dimensions. Rhetoric and dialectic, united “as the regime of the human faculties intended,” are involved in a complex and nuanced interplay. As Aristotle notes in the beginning of his treatise on rhetoric, dialectic and rhetoric are “antistrophes” (counterparts) of one another.⁵ They appear as two plants growing up side by side but share a common root below the surface. Phenomenologically, rhetoric is the art of argumentation; dialectic, the art that tests the truth of debatable propositions. But that aspect of rhetoric that precedes argumentation, namely, rhetorical reasoning (the faculty of discovering the crux of the matter in difficult cases), exposes their common root. Dialectical inference operates in rhetorical reasoning in a manner that accentuates just how deeply intertwined the two are.

3. Dorothy L. Sayers, *Education in a Free Society* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1973). Visit my Rhetoric Ring for a brief description of the shape of this conversation: http://www.phc.edu/rr_ring_d.php

4. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Modern Library), 1954.

5. *Ibid.*, 1

Think, for instance, about the manner in which an elder makes an argument to raise his pastor's salary by \$2,000 for the coming fiscal year. The considerations that must be brought to bear, the counterarguments that must be anticipated, the distinctions established prior to making a single argument, all bespeak the subtle interplay between dialectical inference (drawing fine distinctions, defining terms, and establishing parameters) and rhetorical reasoning (determining, out of the potentially limitless parade of considerations, which hold the most weight and are most relevant given the question at hand). Over time and in the natural course of things, learning to operate in this arena cultivates insight, discernment, prudence, foresight, mental discipline and dexterity; it equips one to handle truth.

We are not bodiless machines moved only by logic, but incarnated minds and souls moved by vivid images and inspired by beauty. One of the beautiful things about rhetoric is that it appeals to humans in their whole being. Crafting fine speeches and papers designed to move an audience to dream big dreams or think big thoughts requires aesthetic sensibility. Learning to use language artfully, to appeal not only to the mind but also to the imagination and the heart, is a humanizing activity (for both speaker and audience). Albert Einstein's quip "Imagination is more important than knowledge" bespeaks the importance of style in rhetoric. You can muster all the logic at your disposal, but if you fail to move your audience, you will never persuade them. The end of persuasion is action, and to move an audience to action you must move the soul. This view elevates the enterprise of speech composition. I reinforce this notion through a lecture on human excellence, asserting that excellence is, in keeping with Einstein's sentiment, more a matter of creativity than of logic alone. The cultivation of imagination and reason is best accomplished concurrently.

In *De augmentis*, Sir Francis Bacon defines rhetoric as "the application of reason to imagination for the better moving of the will," an apt introduction to the canon of style because it gets one thinking about the relation of style to pathos. Style is about crafting strong mental imagery and building a verbal crescendo, with the assistance of figures of speech. The canon of style deals with the appropriate use of poetry and aesthetics in argumentation, resulting in communication with a beauty and grace that adds impulse to the truth. Rhetoric, in the final analysis, moves the soul toward the good. So we teach our students to "preside over their art with secure mastery"⁶—not a dry, sterile communication of ideas, but good reasoning combined with passion and vivid imagery to pique the imagination, to stir the emotions, to move the will.

Vivacity is a key concept in classical rhetoric. The audience finds the vivid (lively) idea "striking." The opposite is moribund. Vivid imagery is thus key to rhetorical potency: a good metaphor laid before an audience imaginatively has the power to move. Indeed, the very appeal to the audience's imagination

pays compliment to their humanity; it cultivates their moral imagination and aesthetic sensibilities. This is why beauty matters and must be found in, with, and under rhetoric. But this power must be wielded with grace, decorum, propriety, proportion, and measure. Even in the fanciful dimensions of rhetoric, the speaker must cultivate good judgment.

Rhetoric teaches one both to be good (to establish trust) and to aim at the good (to make the aim of persuasion true). The former entails the goodness cultivated within the rhetor (virtue); the latter, that to which and from which our rhetoric points. Trust is a precondition of persuasion. Similarly, a nagging feeling in the audience that one's aim is not true, that the proposed course of action may lead to ruination, naturally militates against rhetorical success!

In Book 12 of his *Institutes of Oratory*, Quintilian argues that an orator must be a good man because he is to lead. A leader cannot create civic virtue through good laws and the praise of virtue if he has not himself cultivated virtue or if his judgment is warped. Credible speech requires a credible speaker, who must also love both the state and its citizens.

*Rhetoric teaches one both to be good
and to aim at the good.*

Plato's prescription for "redeeming" rhetoric in his *Phaedrus* entails a methodology grounded in the study of the soul. Taking Plato's suggestion seriously, Aristotle makes *ethos* (personal character) one of the three "modes of artistic proof." He asserts that a trustworthy character is required because "we believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided."⁷ In fact, "Character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion [the rhetor] possesses."⁸ Later, in Book II, Aristotle identifies *phronesis* (practical wisdom or prudence) with *ethos*. This is a key extension because *phronesis* is exercised with respect to the other. Plato's negative view of the sophists was motivated by his conviction that their distortions would warp the soul of Athenians. While we are far removed from fifth-century B.C. Athens, our interest in the souls of our charges abides.

Our students have souls, and this is the ultimate justification for teaching them "old school," as it were. In the context of postmodernity, they need to be educated in this fashion simply to hold on to the faith we confess, a faith that confesses an absolute truth. "Unless one believe this, one shall surely perish." This is unequivocal.

6. Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground: 'Phronesis' and 'Techne' in Modern Philosophy and in Aristotle* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 9.

7. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a 3.

8. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1356a 5.

In the Small Catechism, Luther, true to his classical training, employs rhetorical devices to facilitate learning and memorization. Take, for example, the section on the Creed. The ubiquitous “What does this mean?” begins each explanation, and the repetition of “This is most certainly true” is a hammer of God driving the lesson deeper and deeper, fortifying the student’s soul. Observe the deliberate use of couplets in the First Article: “He also gives me *clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children*, land, animals, and all I have. . . . For all this it is my duty to *thank and praise, serve and obey* Him.” This rhetorical scheme aids memorization; the rhythm established helps the lessons penetrate; the dialectical treatment of each chief part aids memorization.

Why is this important? While cultivating our pupils’ appreciation of these forms aids in memorization, it also develops habits of mind that make them more receptive to truth, better equipped for learning, and inclined to think in a principled, methodical, and sacramental fashion. In short, our children will feel at home within our faith tradition because liberal arts education gives them “ears to hear” better the rhythms

of Scripture and “eyes to see” better the truths it expresses through images.

In the Small Catechism, Luther, true to his classical training, employs rhetorical devices to facilitate learning and memorization.

Beyond the Small Catechism, Luther and Melancthon spearheaded a revival of classical liberal arts learning in Europe, the Lutheran gift to the civilized world. How tragic if our own children did not learn to think like Lutherans because we neglected that heritage! **LOGIA**

Inklings



This? Oh, I press it when I fall and can't reach my beer.

Ridentem Dicere Verum

Horatian Satire and God's Law

DALE A. MEYER



THIS YEAR MARKS THE FIFTIETH anniversary of my introduction to the classics. Bloom Township High School in suburban Chicago gave freshmen two alternatives. Either take Latin or, if you're a boy, take shop, and if you're a girl, homemaking. For a fourteen-year-old with his eyes set on being a pastor, that was a no-brainer. Miss Annette Gioninni was the first of a long line of excellent teachers who taught me to love the classics, and all have had a profound impact on my life and ministry. Now I am at a time of life when I want to work a little less and spend more time sharing what I have learned; to that the classics are integral, and the invitation to speak at Lutheranism and the Classics gives me a chance to take at least one of my favorites, Horace, off the shelf.

My thesis is this: When we use satire in our preaching and teaching, our use of the law will become more effective. To put that another way, when you have the genre of satire in your pastoral resources, you can lead people in a nonthreatening way to see both their foibles and ultimately the reality of our creaturely sinfulness and mortality. Horace is a fine example of how we can appropriate satire in the service of the law, but he is only an example. Various branches of satire have a long history in Western civilization and it continues. Today we can see satire from Jon Stewart or Stephen Colbert or many other sources; but classical satire, like that of Horace, has an antiquity that often offers more insight than ephemeral humor.

Horace lived from 65 to 8 B.C. Maecenas, confidant of Caesar Augustus and patron of great Roman writers such as Vergil, became Horace's patron in 38 B.C. Having a patron meant that Horace was set for life and could devote himself to writing — devote himself in a leisurely way. In his *Ars poetica* he says that you should put the draft of your writing in the drawer for nine years and only then pull it out for revision. That's leisurely! The first of Horace's two books of satires came out in 35 B.C.; the second, around 30. The first contains ten satires, and the second eight. The satires are short, not requiring much time to read — something helpful for a pastor's busy, un-leisurely life. They cover many subjects, and a look at their subjects suggests, I trust, their possible usefulness to the pastoral task.

Book One

- I. The Race for Wealth and Position
- II. The Folly of Running to Extremes
- III. On Mutual Forbearance
- IV. A Defense of Satire
- V. A Journey to Brundisium
- VI. On Social and Political Ambition
- VII. Ho for a Regicide!
- VIII. How Priapus Put Witches to Route
- IX. An Unwelcome Companion
- X. On Satire

Book Two

- I. Horace's Parting Shot at His Critics
- II. A Discourse on Plain Living
- III. The Follies of Mankind
- IV. The Art of Good Living
- V. The Art of Legacy Hunting
- VI. Town and Country Life
- VII. Only the Wise Are Free
- VIII. A Fiasco of a Wedding Party

The satires were not printed in chronological order but scholars have been able to put them into a time sequence. Thus we have different snapshots of Horace and his changing views of people. He was a keen observer of people, just as we pastors should be, and he matured with time, just as we should mature with time.

The text for this paper comes from the very first satire in Book I. That satire is an attack on discontent and greed, but early on (lines 24–27) Horace gives us his philosophy of satire.

Praeterea — ne sic, ut qui jocularia, ridens percuram: (quamquam ridentem divere verum quid vetat? ut pueris olim dant crustula blandi doctores elementa velint ut discere prima: sed tamen amoto quaeramus seria ludo).

Furthermore, not to skim over the subject with a laugh like a writer of witticisms — and yet what is to prevent one from telling truth as he laughs (*ridentem dicere verum*), even as teachers sometimes give cookies to children to coax them into learning their ABCs? — still, putting jesting aside, let us turn to serious thoughts.*

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* All translations of Horace are from *Horace: Satires, Epistles and Ars poetica*, ed. and trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1926)

Ridentem dicere verum, is “to speak the truth with a smile”; *rideo* can even mean “laugh.”

What Horace is dealing with, in our Lutheran frame of reference, is the law, although Horace lived before Christ’s coming and his only knowledge of Judaism was befuddlement at their curious customs. The Bible tells us that the law is good. “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good” (Rom 7:12). What’s bad is sin. We should be careful not to leave our hearers with the impression that the law is bad, for the truth is that the law is a marvelous instrument of God not only for conversion but also for our continuing sanctification. Our Confessions say,

We believe, teach, and confess that the preaching of the Law is to be diligently applied not only to unbelievers and the impenitent but also to people who are genuinely believing, truly converted, regenerated, and justified through faith. (FC Ep VI, 2)

The law is innate. It is present in every human life, though because of sin often not recognized for what it is, the inborn law of God. “When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them” (Rom 2:14–15). That means that our listeners, just like the people who read Horace’s satires, have some inborn capacity to appreciate the insights and judgments of the law. Whether someone knows Christ or not, God has already given us this relational bridge. So we can meet them at a very human level. The important question is: how can we say something that is more than simply human, God’s law in our hearts, and introduce the revelation of the gospel? Satire helps us focus.

As a first example, look at the gospel for Thanksgiving Day, Luke 17:11–19:

On the way to Jerusalem [Jesus] was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

If you think about it, it’s common sense that we should be thankful. Horace knew that people should be thankful, and he was. In his second book, Horace gives thanks for his father, a freedman who sent him to Rome to study.

Never while in my senses could I be ashamed of such a father, and so I will not defend myself, as would a goodly number, who saw it is not fault of theirs that they have not free-born and famous parents. Far different from this is what I saw and what I think: for if after a given age Nature should call upon us to traverse our past lives again, and to choose in keeping with our pride any other parents each might crave — content with my own, I should decline to take those adorned with the rods and chairs of state. (I.6.89–97)

The first satire of the first book pokes fun at people who are not happy with their lot in life, people not thankful.

How comes it, Maecenas, that no man living is content with the lot which either his choice has given him, or chance has thrown in his way, but each has praise for those who follow other paths? “O happy traders!” cries the soldier, as he feels the weight of years, his frame now shattered with hard service. On the other hand, when southern gales toss the ship, the trader cries: “A soldier’s life is better. Do you ask why? There is the battle clash, and in a moment of time comes speedy death or joyous victory.” (I.1.1–8)

Then Horace makes his point.

Hear the conclusion to which I am coming. If some god were to say: “Here I am! I will grant your prayers forthwith. You, who were but now a soldier, shall be a trader; you, but now a lawyer, shall be a farmer. Change parts; away with you — and with you! Well! Why standing still?” They would refuse. (I.1.15–19)

No gospel there, but there is a touch point in what Horace says with the Gospel lesson about the ten lepers. In fact, God did appear and change their lot in life but only the Samaritan was thankful. Horace’s satire alerts us in our sermon preparation that mere thankfulness is not a special Christian virtue. When Thanksgiving Day rolls around, notice how many non-Christian Americans are truly thankful; it’s a good civic virtue but not inherently Christian. Thankfulness is a positive expression of the innate law acknowledging our creaturely status. So if we use satire as we begin to formulate our thoughts for the sermon (*heúresis*, *inventio*; the first of the five canons of classical rhetoric), we will set aside thankfulness as the main point of the sermon (not that we ignore it; just don’t make it the main point) and look to the Gospel text for something else. Here, I think, is the special dimension Jesus gives his followers. “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” God had appeared and changed the physical lot of the ten lepers, but it was only the Samaritan who was made well, physically and spiritually. All the lepers had called out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us,” but only the Samaritan demonstrated faith as *fides quae* that is centered on God’s goodness coming to us in his Son. By his return to Jesus, the Samaritan demonstrated the truth of 2 Corinthians 1:20: “No matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.” Satire, we see, teaches us

to distinguish virtues that can come from the inborn law from the virtuous living that comes from God-given and Christ-centered faith in the promises of God.

As a second example of satire illuminating our use of the law, let's look at Luke 18:1–8, the Gospel lesson where Jesus teaches us to be persistent in prayer. This is a parable that could lead us to wonder about God, but that's not the point of the parable. The point is, again, faith as *fides quae*, trusting the promises that God answers prayer.

[Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give them justice speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

We all know that the squeaky wheel gets the grease. No special Christian revelation in talking about persistence, even in prayer. Horace has a satire about a bore that glommed onto him, satire nine in book one. This is a pleasant example of *ridentem dicere verum*.

I was strolling by chance along the Sacred Way, musing after my fashion on some trifle or other, and wholly intent thereon, when up there runs a man I knew only by name and seizes my hand: 'How d'ye do, my dearest fellow?' I answer, "I hope you get all you want." As he kept dogging me, I break in with, "Nothing you want is there?" But he: "You must know me; I'm a scholar." To this I say, "Then I'll esteem you the more." Dreadfully eager to get away I now walk fast, at times stop short. . . . As I was making him no answer, "You're dreadfully anxious to be off," said he, "I have long seen that; but it's no use, I'll stick to you; I'll stay with you to your journey's end." (I.9.1–19)

Preparing to preach on the Luke 18 text, satire again points us to a Christ-centered focus, but satire also provides a possible sermon outline. Because our hearers know the experience of being pestered, you could use that common experience to introduce the persistence God wants from us in prayer. You could actually quote Horace. The sermon might begin like this: "I came across something the other day that made me smile. It is oh, so true. Here's what I read; it comes from the Roman poet Horace who lived two thousand years ago." Then you quote part of the satire about the bore. After the quotation you could talk about how we all know the feeling. Of course, you smile and say, "We're always the victim of the bore. I myself would never

pester anyone!" *Ridentem dicere verum*, saying the truth with a smile. After that paragraph (and it should be a paragraph; oral style is more wordy than literary style), you move into the text. This is the kind of persistence that God wants from us in our prayer lives. Note: this last sentence is law. Pious words like prayer, evangelism, and Jesus don't automatically have us in gospel. Now you could make the key move of the sermon, the motivation for persistence in prayer, the gospel exposition that God is coming to bring justice and we trust the promise of His coming, *fides quae*. The promises are so important! Remember that our Confessions often speak of the law and the promises. "And the Lord said, 'Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give them justice speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'"

The ultimate goal of our use of the law is that we all crush our self-righteousness. "Isn't my word like fire or like a hammer that shatters a rock?" asks the Lord (Jer 23:29). The ultimate goal is for us all to say, "O almighty God, I a poor, miserable sinner confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended Thee and justly deserved Thy temporal and eternal punishment." To get there, we use the law to expose sin. "I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, 'Do not covet'" (Rom 7:7–9). My third example of satire helping us toward more effective law is Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and tax collector, Luke 18:9–14. As you hear this familiar passage, don't let familiarity stop you from seeing what's going on. Jesus is exposing as sin a conduct that many religious people thought was God-pleasing.

[Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up in the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

When we're preaching or teaching law, a goal is to surprise the regenerate that some unexamined behaviors in their lives are actually wrong. Much preaching I have heard, sometimes also from my own mouth, rehash known truths of the law ("You are a sinner"), but the sermon doesn't produce the "Aha," self-reflective mood that the law should produce when conduct is suddenly examined and exposed as sinful. Jesus did this in various ways. In the Sermon on the Mount he took his listeners to the surprising insight that internal thoughts and desires can be as sinful as external breaking of the commandments. In Matthew

23 he thundered, “Woe to you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!” But in the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector Jesus is gentler, using a satirical story to make clear the most basic truth of his coming.

Horace learned that directly castigating the sins of people can defeat your purpose. The second satire in the first book was an earlier work, maybe from 39 B.C., when he would have been twenty-six-years old. His criticisms of people in that satire are caustic. “In avoiding a vice, fools run into its opposite. Maltinus walks with his garments trailing low; another, a man of fashion, wears them tucked up indecently as far as his waist. Rufillus smells like a scent-box, Gargonius like a goat. There is no middle course” (I.2.24–27). That got him criticism. In I.4.91–93, probably written shortly thereafter in 38 B.C., Horace refers to the criticism of his earlier work. “If I have had my laugh because silly ‘Rufillus smells like a scent-box, Gargonius like a goat,’ do you think I am a spiteful, snappish cur?” Satire can be delivered with venom or with a smile, *ridentem dicere verum*. Horace learned you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

Hence, we need to handle the law carefully. Not only does it expose sin, but it can multiply sin. “When the commandment came, sin sprang to life” (Rom 7:9). You tell me not to put my hand in the cookie jar? I will! The law also produces anger. “Law brings wrath” (Rom 4:15) and ultimately it kills. “I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death” (Rom 7:10). Here’s a pastoral fine line. On the one hand, we are duty bound to speak the law. On the other hand, we want to do so in a way that does not drive the hearer away. A large number of people in our day and age are not so loyal to their congregation and denomination that they’ll come back to get beat up Sunday after Sunday. They just walk away. Romans 1:24, 26, “God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts . . .” God gave them over. I remember Martin Scharlemann saying, “God has given us the terrible ability to say ‘no’ to him.” The pastoral fine line is to let the law work its condemnation but in such a way that the hearer remains in dialogue with the law through our ministry so that the gospel can be heard with faith, *fides quae* and *fides qua*. Martin Chemnitz describes “the true use of the Law, namely that it ‘imprisons all under sin, that the promise of grace might be given’” (Gal 3:22; *Loci Theologici*, II, 336). Satire can help do this.

In I.3.19–28, Horace speaks about forbearance. He begins with a criticism of a favorite target, a singer named Tigellius. Then Horace goes from the specific to the general. “Now someone may say to me: ‘What about yourself? Have you no faults?’ Why yes, but not the same, and perhaps lesser ones.” (Horace is giving us the common view of civil righteousness, not the depth of our rebellion against God [AC II].)

When Maenius once was carping at Novius behind his back, “Look out, sir,” said someone, “do you not know yourself? Or do you think you impose on us, as one we do not

know?” “I take no note of myself,” said Maenius. Such self-love is foolish and shameless, and serves to be censured.

(“I thank Thee, God, that I am not like other people are.”)

When you look over your own sins, your eyes are rheumy and daubed with ointment; why, when you view the failings of your friends, are you as keen of sight as an eagle or as a serpent of Epidaurus? But, on the other hand, the result for you is that they, too, in turn peer into your faults.

Just like the Pharisee, Horace was thankful for his lot in life and his “righteousness.” Jesus gently takes us to the article of the church’s standing or falling, the justification of the sinner by grace through faith (AC IV). Again, the sermon script can be prepared by quoting Horace or by satirizing some anonymous pompous religious person of your own creation or by just dramatically retelling the parable, preferably with some contemporizing sentences. However you choose to do it, remember *ridentem dicere verum*. Deliver with a smile so that the people smile with you and thereby open their hearts to the descent of the Spirit.

*We need to handle the law carefully.
Not only does it expose sin, but it
can multiply sin.*

I have used Horace because I have been blessed by a classical education; but there are many other satirists in the classical and postclassical eras, as well as in contemporary America. My suggestion is that when you use satire—yours or another’s—be gentle. *Ridentem dicere verum* because, and this is my second concluding point, we’re living in a postmodern, post-church age that does not accept the existence of absolute truth. “You have your opinion; I have mine. Who are you to tell me that I’m wrong?” We Christians have a relationship with all people because of the innate law in our hearts. Satire can build on that, moving us from innate law to revealed law and finally, we pray, to grace. And lastly, we can’t avoid the effort of preparing insightful sermons with the cop-out that the word of God is efficacious. Of course it is efficacious but, as my professor and later the president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Robert Preus, pointed out, the word of God is not magic. It has to be understood for it to work its divine purpose. To that end, satire can help. **LOGIA**

Fundamenta fideliter iecit

Lutheran Eloquence and the Muses of Classical Scholarship

ROBERT W. ULERY JR.



THE LATIN WORDS OF MY TITLE are taken from the beginning of Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory*, where he says:

There is need as well for no ordinary eloquence, so that the orator may speak fittingly and copiously about each of those matters which we have laid forth. And those persons are the more unbearable who mock this skill as insubstantial and unproductive. Unless this eloquence *has faithfully laid the foundations* of the future orator, whatever one builds upon them will fall to ruin: (she is) necessary for children, pleasurable for the elderly, the sweet companion of hidden things, and that which even by herself, in every field of study, has more of accomplishment than of show.¹

So what Quintilian predicated of Eloquence I make bold to say of Lutheran Eloquence and perhaps of Lutheranism and Luther himself, as I attempt to relate this fact of my religious upbringing to the work I have done for forty years as a professor of Latin and Greek, mostly Latin. My graduate education was in a secular institution with a mixture of students of all religious backgrounds in the tumultuous 1960s. But before and after that graduate education there were three things that shaped me as a Lutheran and a classicist: the centrality of the word in Lutheranism, and the influence of the scholarly pastor; German classical scholarship (*die klassischen Altertumswissenschaften*) and its influence on the vital work of a Latin scholar; and the Germans and Lutherans I encountered in the intellectual traditions of Tacitus and Sallust.

There is little need to remind you of the centrality of the word in the Lutheran tradition. Luther said:

As we love the gospel, so let us cling to the study of the ancient languages. . . . These languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; they are the larder in which this food is stored; and as the gospel itself points out, they are the baskets in which are kept these loaves and fishes and fragments. If through our neglect we let the languages go (which God forbid!), we shall not only lose the gospel, but the time will come when we shall be

unable either to speak or write a correct Latin or German (AE 45: 360).²

To be a "servant of the word" is to be a classical scholar, a philologist, with the ability to read and interpret texts. In the preface to his study of Isaiah, Luther wrote:

Two things are necessary to explain the prophet. The first is a knowledge of grammar, and this may be regarded as having the greatest weight. The second is more necessary, namely, a knowledge of the historical background, not only as an understanding of the events themselves as expressed in letters and syllables but as at the same time embracing rhetoric and dialectic, so that the figures of speech and the circumstances may be carefully heeded (AE 16: 3).

This emphasis will be seen to be a guiding principle of later German scholarship.

I had an effective "servant of the word" as my pastor in Goshen, Indiana, as I grew in the faith in the 1950s, Paul Melanchthon Brosy. He had been named after both Paul and Melanchthon by his father, also a Lutheran pastor, and the combination of names appears to have worked the Roman magic of *nomen/omen* as he mastered the art of preaching like Paul and educating like Melanchthon. As a result, church was for me a place that supported the intellectual side of my striving within a middlebrow culture, just as the music of the liturgy and hymns and organ and choir undergirded the musical side. In my high-school years I encountered two elements that formed the basis of my life, Latin and the pipe organ. Learning Latin depended upon an educational foundation strong in reading and analytical thinking, which Latin furthered in important ways, just as learning

1. Quintilian (first cent. A.D.) *Institutio Oratoria* I.4: *Eloquentia quoque non mediocri est opus, ut de unaquaque earum quas demonstravimus rerum dicat proprie et copiose. Quo minus sunt ferendi qui hanc artem ut tenuem atque ieiunam cavillantur. Quae nisi oratoris futuri fundamenta fideliter iecit, quidquid superstruxeris corruet: necessaria pueris, iucunda senibus, dulcis secretorum comes, et quae vel sola in omni studiorum genere plus habeat operis quam ostentationis.*
2. In his 1524 address *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany, That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools*. I owe both this quotation and the following one to Carl Springer on *Renascentes Musae*, <http://renascentesmusae.blogspot.com/>

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to play the organ depended upon a solid musical foundation at the piano. Pastor Brosy fostered both interests, as I went from being his acolyte to his organist and he followed my successes in school and my aspirations.

Church and family led me to higher education at Yale. There I found in the Lutheran campus ministry further support both intellectual and theological, thrown together with all varieties of Lutherans under a wonderful pastor from the Scandinavian tradition, Richard E. Olson, who continued as my pastor for the journey of nine years to the doctorate in classics.

Each of these two servants of the word, in his own way, laid the foundation for what I attempt to do in this world as a scholar and teacher of Latin and Greek. In doing so, they were following a precept that is most tellingly (and classically) stated in what are known as “The Last Written Words of Luther.” Not so much the very last words, “Wir sind Bettler. Hoc est verum,” although the combination of German and Latin is very telling. What preceded that is more to my purpose here:

1. No one can understand Vergil’s *Bucolics* unless he has been a shepherd for five years. No one can understand Vergil’s *Georgics*, unless he has been a farmer for five years.
2. No one can understand Cicero’s *Letters* (or so I teach), unless he has busied himself in the affairs of some prominent state for twenty years.
3. Know that no one can have indulged in the Holy Writers sufficiently, unless he has governed churches for a hundred years with the prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha, John the Baptist, Christ and the apostles.³

This pairing of the reading of texts of classical antiquity and those of the Bible occurs also in a quotation from Melancthon:

Indeed, when the excellent Father [that is, God the Father] had begun again to turn His attention to the wretched, and was going to give back to us the Gospel, because of His generosity He also restored [the classical] writings, by which the study of the Gospel would be assisted.⁴

This emphasis upon the word and its link to a higher education newly fed on the Greek and Roman writers of classical antiquity came into my life at a very early stage and continued through my own education, thanks to these Lutheran servants of the word.

The role that Lutheranism and the Reformation played in laying the foundation for classical scholarship became ever clearer as my education advanced and I was introduced to the great

contributions of German scholarship. There is some irony in the fact that Rome’s most formidable enemy became the leaders of scholarly investigation into classical antiquity by the end of the nineteenth century. Germany’s predominance has continued to the present day, even though the scholarly traditions of other countries and cultures have made their own distinctive contributions (often building on the best of German work). Of course, the Germans who made these contributions were not necessarily Lutherans — they may have been irreligious or even Roman Catholic! But the impetus from Luther and Melancthon to extend education to a broad segment of society, and to use classical literature to enhance skills of reading and interpretation, had a profound impact upon the development of German scholarship.

There I found in the Lutheran campus ministry further support both intellectual and theological.

But it may be objected at this point that this German classical scholarship was essentially created out of a new impulse arising from the Enlightenment at the end of the eighteenth century, a new scientific movement that rejected the humanist drive to find in the works of classical antiquity the source of a new learning: “Down with antiquities,” wrote Bacon, “and citations or supporting testimonies from texts; down with debates and controversies and divergent opinions; down with everything philological.”⁵ Anthony Grafton and others have shown that the humanism of the Renaissance and Reformation was “neither simple nor impractical,” but anticipated the methods of the later scholars, and that it was rich and complex and concerned with practical realities.⁶ As a classicist noted ten years ago in reviewing a study of Renaissance and Baroque German Hellenists, “It may come as a surprise to many classicists that philology had a thriving existence in Europe, and notably in Germany, between the Renaissance revival of the classics and the invention of modern *Altertumswissenschaften* at the end of the eighteenth century.”⁷

The usual view of the progress of scholarship in the modern period gave primacy in the fifteenth century to Italy, in the sixteenth to France, in the seventeenth to Holland and England,

3. Internet Christian Library, “The Last Written Words of Luther,” (WTr 85, 317–318, no. 5468), <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/beggars.txt>

4. Quoted by Jon Bruss, also on *Renascentes Musae* (above, n. 2), from *Philip Melancthon: Orations on Philosophy and Education*, ed. Sachiko Kusakawa, trans. Christine F. Salazar, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 74–75.

5. Quoted by Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 2.

6. *Ibid.*, 4. See also Lewis W. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 281.

7. James I. Porter, review of *Hellas in Deutschland*, by Walther Ludwig, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2000.09.05.

and then in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to Germany.⁸ But the reality is more interesting, more complex, and reveals more continuity. The Germans deeply involved in the humanist movement began with Agricola and Reuchlin, and in the Reformation period Melanchthon and his pupil Camerarius.⁹ Even though the wars of the next century made scholarly enterprises very difficult, the educational system based upon the classics remained unchanged and laid the foundation for the powerful movements that began in the eighteenth century. Melanchthon may well be the principal reason for the staying power of the peculiarly Lutheran approach to the classical curriculum: inspired by Erasmus's learning, he encountered Luther at Wittenberg and became his coworker, developing a Protestant hermeneutic that continued to be refined and expanded in the following centuries. Even if that way of reading the Scriptures did not affect classical scholarship in the same way that Erasmus did, his effect on the German school system is arguably what laid the foundation for the great architecture of German scholarship that was built in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁰ The sophistication that Melanchthon brought to the educational enterprise was equally grounded in Luther's practical concerns for the future of the Christian people, who needed schooling as much as they needed the word of God in their own language.¹¹

There is, however, another influence of Lutheranism on German classical scholarship that may be cited here: the emphasis upon ordinary labor as a vocation. Certainly the medieval monks who saved classical texts by copying them and preserving them in libraries were motivated by a sense of vocation. But Luther brought that idea out of the monastery into the daily lives of everyone in the community. While Luther's primary intent was, we may imagine, to elevate the harder lives of the bulk of humankind engaged in manual labor, I was influenced to apply it to the work that I did, even though it involved hard

work at tasks that did not have instant gratification or win easy acclaim from the general public (or even from fellow scholars). To quote my present pastor:

Human labor, no matter how menial, is service to the neighbor in obedience to God's commandment of love. That is why one should labor with joy in the human community charged with the care of the earth. Christians honor God by serving and, whatever their vocation, they should demonstrate such service by working carefully. Work and vocation are the ministry through which God uses his people to extend his love. . . . That is why Christians should not regard labor as a dull duty, but rather as an opportunity to assist God in his ministry to the world.¹²

Martin Luther understood the words of Jesus that we are sent into the world. He wrote, "What is our work in field and garden, in town and house, in battling and in ruling, to God, but the work of his children. Our works are God's mask, behind which [God] remains hidden, although [God] does all things."¹³ This approach to work and vocation, however grounded it may have been in Luther's own German character, was one of his gifts to the further development of that character, one that played a significant part in fostering the kind of work for which German scholars later became famous or notorious in the field of classics.

It is certainly the case that I have always been drawn to the most practical aspects of the work of a classical scholar. My initial aim was to be a Latin teacher such as I had encountered in high school. But when I decided to go to graduate school and earn a doctorate, I was drawn to the academic equivalent of manual labor, the recension of manuscript evidence for texts, the editing of texts, and philological analysis of language and texts. Whether this is due to Germanic genetic material, Lutheran faith, or personal perversity, one hesitates to say. Manuscript work in the text of Tacitus led me past the Middle Ages into the Renaissance, and then came the invitation to catalog the mostly Renaissance commentaries on Tacitus written in Latin, then the invitation to do the same for Sallust and the medieval commentaries. Exploring a possible analogy between the care of an ancient discipline and the care of aged parents, I have compared this kind of necessary work to the daily necessary care for the physical body of the aged person, best done with love but sufficient if done with simple competence.¹⁴

The detailed work that typified the German dissertation and thus determined the subsequent scholarly production of the German scholar was to me the most appealing work, not

8. Grafton, *Defenders*, 11; evident, for example, in Alfred Gudeman, *Grundriß der Geschichte der klassischen Philologie*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1909; reprint, Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967), 167–253.

9. On Agricola and Reuchlin, and others, see the excellent account in Spitz, *Religious Renaissance*.

10. See, for example, the brief account in Rudolf Pfeiffer, *The History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 90–94.

11. Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: New American Library, 1950), 335: "The Bible, just as it stood in Luther's rendering, was a great educational tool; but more was needed, obviously for children but also for adults, who were almost equally ignorant. The children should be taught at church, at school, and at home; and to that end pastors, teachers, and parents should receive prior training. Hence Luther's plea that Catholic schools be replaced by municipal schools with a system of compulsory education including religion. 'The Scripture cannot be understood without the languages,' argued Luther, 'and the languages can be learned only in school. If parents cannot spare their children for a full day, let them send them for a part. I would wager that in half of Germany there are not over four thousand pupils in school. I would like to know where we are going to get pastors and teachers three years from now.'"

12. Notes from the Rev. Dr. Ronald A. Rinn, Augsburg Lutheran Church, Winston-Salem, NC.

13. Martin Luther, *Day by Day We Magnify Thee* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 298, quoted in James B. Hofrenning, "Vocation as Masks of God," *Lutheran Partners* 19, no. 4 (2003).

14. See notes to the next section, and Robert W. Ulery, Jr., "De Senecute Studiorum: On Old Age and Antiquity," *Classical Journal* 106 (2010–2011): 229–36.

the great idea to write the most important book about an author or a part of classical history or an ancient artifact. Luther said that whatever you are called to do is doing God's work in this world, and subsequent generations of German scholars, when their lives were not turned upside down by war, built that idea into a great tradition of *Altertumswissenschaften*. That, and the idealistic notion of teaching the next generations how to read the ancient languages, has been the focus of my professional life.

The Annals placed before a German public the inspiring figure of Arminius turning against the Romans.

Having thus followed my heart into this profession and my inclination into the particular labor of the manuscripts and classical tradition of Tacitus and Sallust in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, I encountered figures of the period of the Lutheran Reformation that may be briefly noted here. For Tacitus, the story begins in the monasteries of Germany, where in the Middle Ages it appears that a single manuscript in Fulda survived the loss of so many authors, perhaps because one of his works was about Germany; the manuscript was used by only a few readers and writers, until a part of it containing some books of the *Annals* traveled south to an Italian monastic library, where it was copied and made its way late in the fourteenth century to Florence. Another part, containing the minor works (including the *Germania*), remained in Germany until it was brought to Italy by manuscript hunters in the fifteenth century. A third part, containing the remains of the first six books of the *Annals*, came to Italy in 1508 and appeared in print in 1515 at the very time of Luther's unsettling activity.¹⁵ Thus the German monks are quite likely to be the reason for the survival of a single manuscript of the works of Rome's greatest historian, but only when that manuscript traveled to Italy was it rediscovered in the Renaissance. And its intellectual tradition began anew.

About 1470 the printing press began to make Tacitus available to a larger reading public. The *Germania* was the first work to be printed (Bologna, 1472); soon after, the surviving *Annals* and *Histories* and the *Germania* with the other minor works followed as Tacitus's collected works, joined in 1515 by the newly discovered initial books of the *Annals*. These *Annals* placed before a German public the inspiring figure of Arminius turning

against the Romans and leading his German people, a powerful symbol for the reformers and German nationalism.¹⁶ Equally important for classical scholarship in Germany was the impetus Tacitus's rediscovered works provided for antiquarian and philological research.¹⁷ The very first Latin commentaries were concerned with historical matters, including the correction of the faulty text transmitted by the thin thread of medieval tradition, and with identifying the ancient and modern names of peoples and places in Tacitus's *Germania*, and both commentaries are coincident with the Lutheran Reformation: the largely historical commentary of the north Italian Andreas Alciatus in 1517 (on the *Opera*), and the "Commentariolus" of the Alsatian humanist Beatus Rhenanus in 1519 (on the *Germania*), which he expanded to a fuller commentary in 1533.¹⁸ Beatus Rhenanus was a friend of Erasmus and an important figure in Renaissance textual criticism and early printing.¹⁹

Another commentary on the *Germania* is by Jodocus Willichius (Wilcke), a German humanist and doctor of medicine, who met the reformers, especially Melancthon, on a visit to Wittenberg; his 1551 commentary is largely geographical.²⁰ At the end of the century came commentaries from professors of history (Beuther, 1594) and of law and philology (Colerus, 1602); but the former was an adviser to the bishop of Würzburg, and the latter says that he finally secured a teaching position by becoming Roman Catholic.²¹ Nor can much connection be drawn between Lutheranism and the most important Tacitus scholar of the sixteenth century, Justus Lipsius, who likewise subordinated his religious affiliation to the possibilities of academic appointment, switching from Roman Catholic to Lutheran to Roman Catholic to Calvinist and dying a Roman Catholic.²²

In the preface to his 1533 commentary, Beatus Rhenanus mentions a young scholar named Andreas Althamer: "Moreover, I would have been a bit more prolix, had not the young scholar Andreas Althamer recently, as I hear, illumined this little work with his own modest commentary."²³ Althamer's *Scholium* on the *Germania* were submitted to a publisher in 1521 but withdrawn on the advice of friends, and were first printed in 1529, the year after his *Catechism* and at a time when he was already deeply involved in the Lutheran movement.²⁴ His religious commitments

15. Robert W. Ulery Jr., "Cornelius Tacitus," in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1960–), 6:91–94 (with bibliography); Mary F. Tenney, "Tacitus through the Centuries to the Age of Printing," *University of Colorado Studies* 22 (1935): 358–60.

16. See the portion of the Arminius dialogue of Ulrich von Hutten in Gerald Strauss, ed. and trans., *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 77–78; find the complete dialogue in *Tacitus: The Classical Heritage*, ed. and trans. Ronald Mellor (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 13–23.

17. Ulery, "Tacitus," 94.

18. *Ibid.*, 102 and 140.

19. See John F. D'Amico, *Theory and Practice in Renaissance Textual Criticism: Beatus Rhenanus between Conjecture and History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

20. Ulery, "Tacitus," 150–53.

21. *Ibid.*, 155, 136; for Colerus's Sallust commentaries, see Patricia Osmond and Robert W. Ulery, Jr., "Sallustius Crispus, Gaius," in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, 8:279–281 and 300.

22. Ulery, "Tacitus," 112–21; see Mellor, *Tacitus*, xxvii.

23. Ulery, "Tacitus," 141.

24. *Ibid.*, 142.

kept him from completing other scholarly projects, but he did expand the *Scholia* into *Commentaria* in 1536.²⁵ Althamer is an excellent example of “the close connection of the humanist and reformatory movements, the predominant influence of Luther in Germany, the practical turn of the Reformation, the vigour of controversy among its leaders, and the part played by it in municipal politics.”²⁶ The dedicatory preface of his 1529 publication, addressed to Georg, Margrave of Brandenburg, is full of German national feeling, and contains as well a Latin poem to the reader by Eobanus Hessus:

You, O Scholar, who seek new material of Teutonic fame, will now see here new deeds of your old fatherland. How are they “new” which Tacitus wrote a thousand years ago? Because the old writings gleam with new splendor. . . . Althamer, Germany owes to you whatever light it has from the early time of Tacitus.²⁷

Philipp Melanchthon is to be found everywhere in both the theological and educational side of the Lutheran movement. His work on Latin and Greek includes influential grammars of both languages (Greek, 44 editions 1518–1622; Latin, 84 editions 1525–1757), and texts with commentary on Aristophanes, Aratus, Aristotle, Hesiod, Theognis, Demosthenes, Lycurgus, and Terence, Cicero, Ovid, Quintilian, and, of particular interest here, Tacitus and Sallust.²⁸ That level of scholarly productivity is remarkable and a prime example of the foundation of the structure of classical scholarship laid by Lutherans in this period. Of Tacitus’s works he was concerned to make the *Ger-*

mania more widely read; he added to his text a commentary linking the proper names with those in current use, sometimes going beyond this to more substantive commentary; it was first published with Ulrich von Hutten’s *Arminius* in 1538, a collocation that speaks to its inspirational and educative goals.²⁹

In the case of Sallust, the historical monographs had been known and used in schooling throughout the Middle Ages, with a tradition of commentary in Latin that served the educational purpose by painstakingly interpreting and paraphrasing the text for the young. In the new humanist education the texts were read with the aim of reforming the study of grammar and rhetoric and fostering the moral education of the young. Erasmus recommended Sallust’s monographs, and Melanchthon, having used a quotation from the *Jugurtha* in his *Encomium eloquentiae* of 1523 to stress the importance of reading history, in his *Scholia* commented on both Latin style and moral precepts; Luther himself would quote Sallust in lectures and notes on Old Testament books.³⁰ The *Scholia* cover both the *Catiline* and the *Jugurtha*, and appear as brief marginal notes on selected passages; the notes are found in Melanchthon’s own hand in a 1510 Aldine Sallust at Harvard (Houghton Library, Ls 5.115.4*).³¹

This, then, is one classicist’s experience of the foundation faithfully laid by Lutheranism: the centrality of the word and the influence of the scholarly pastor in my upbringing, the way in which the coincident phenomena of Renaissance and Reformation led to the great flowering of German classical scholarship that dominates the classical scholar’s life and work, and a few notable instances of Lutheran scholars at work on the texts of Tacitus and Sallust. **LOGIA**

25. *Ibid.*, 148. The later edition is now available in reprint (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2010).

26. J. P. Whitney, review of *Andreas Althamer der Humanist und Reformator*, by R. von Kolde, *The English Historical Review* 12 (1897): 566.

27. Latin text in Ulery, “Tacitus,” 142.

28. Gudeman, *Grundriß*, 215–16.

29. Ulery, “Tacitus,” 149–50; Melanchthon closes the commentary thus: “I have made this brief collection for the sake of the young, so that I may invite them to the study of antiquity and history, which is both morally useful and nourishes erudition. I shall elsewhere explicate more methodically what has been annotated here.” This promise he seems not to have fulfilled.

30. Osmond and Ulery, “Sallustius,” 206–7.

31. *Ibid.*, 253.

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Teaching Greek at the Seminary

JOHN G. NORDLING



I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF teaching beginning Greek at Concordia Theological Seminary since fall 2006 — most often, though not always, to men who have not studied Greek before, and quite often have not studied a foreign language before. Compared to undergraduate Greek learners, seminary students are more highly motivated to learn and typically do everything within their powers to learn and master Greek. Many students have given up earlier careers in lucrative professions, sold houses, cars, or entire businesses (sometimes at a loss) to come to seminary, and will now subsist at a lower standard of living than previously. Now they are here, with all their strengths and weaknesses, and the only thing standing between them and formal theological study is the ten-week Greek class.

The entire situation is fraught with danger. For example, what if the student sells his house in good faith, moves with his wife and family to Fort Wayne, tries to begin a new life here — but just cannot learn Greek? This has happened. And what about the student adept at programming computer algorithms as an engineer, but who now discovers how much memory work is involved in learning Greek — and all in ten weeks? Or the young enthusiast, assured by congregational and district personnel that he has a knack for drawing outsiders to Christ — now facing Greek for the first time, a challenge he had not dreamed existed? These are the situations, indeed, that give considerable distress.

Thankfully, however, the beginning Greek class at the seminary has accommodated each type of student mentioned, and many more besides. At present, Greek stands as the portal for all subsequent learning at the seminary for at least a sizable minority of students attracted here. And to those who say such “crash courses” in Greek cannot succeed, in fact by far the vast majority of such students can learn Greek in ten weeks — and quite adeptly, in some cases. I claim, further, that the way Greek is being taught and learned at our seminary may well be a harbinger of how the classical languages will be taught, learned, and cultivated in many places that value Greek and Latin in the not-so-distant future. In what remains of this paper, then, I would like to comment on what is involved in teaching Greek at the seminary and what benefits students receive from this study. My point throughout is that Greek remains essential for

the office of the holy ministry, not only for the church of today, but also, more importantly, for the church of tomorrow.

By the end of the first day Greek students are hard at work learning the Greek alphabet. It does not take long for them to learn their *alpha*, *beta*, and *gammas* in a day or two with little effort. At our seminary we use Voelz’s *Fundamental Greek Grammar*;¹ this textbook lays out the alphabet in the order in which students are supposed to memorize it² and requires students to read John 1:1–5 in Greek vocables — “pronouncing each word carefully”³ — long before they understand, cognitively, what the script means, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (John 1:1), and so forth.

On the morning of the second day I usually write χαίρετε on the board, and ask a volunteer to pronounce it. With a little effort, and after perhaps several attempts, a student stammers χαίρετε. I explain to the perplexed students that, inasmuch as χαίρετε occurs eleven times in the Greek New Testament,⁴ most often as a joyful greeting, I shall be addressing them thus at the beginning of each day: χαίρετε, πάντες! (“greetings, all!”). One of the most important occurrences of χαίρετε appears at Philippians 4:4 which I adapt slightly as follows:

χαίρετε ἐν (τῷ) κυρίῳ πάντοτε·
πάλιν ἔρω χαίρετε.

This I reluctantly translate as follows: “Rejoice in (the) Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice!” But there is a certain euphony to the way the statement stands, untranslated, in the Greek. After speaking it through in Greek several times, the class discovers that the Greek words can be set to melody!⁵ This is the famous “song” that I use to begin the Greek hour precisely at 8:00 A.M. every day no matter what: “REJOICE in the Lord always; again, I will say, REJOICE!” These few words might stand as the polestar of the students’ entire existence, as we blaze through beginning Greek at the rate of one chapter of Voelz per day. We will be meeting the manifold challenges of Greek together, sing-

1. James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*, 3rd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007).
2. *Ibid.*, 1–2.
3. *Ibid.*, 6.
4. Matt 5:12; 28:9; Luke 10:20 (twice); 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 2:18; 3:1; 4:4 (twice); 1 Thess 5:16; 1 Pet 4:13.
5. The melody used is the one commonly set to the song, “Rejoice in the Lord Always, Again, I Say, Rejoice!”

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ing the while — first with the Χαίρετε “song” every day, then with the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus Loves Me, Doxology, Beloved, and Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man — all in Greek. I am open to still other Greek songs and ditties the students may henceforth discover. So singing hackneyed Greek songs together is a very good way of keeping all the students together, and I shamelessly resort to this tactic.

By the third day, when students have been introduced to the alphabet and can scarcely sound out the words, Voelz’s *Fundamental Greek Grammar* introduces another great step in the acquisition of the Greek language — namely, accenting and punctuation.⁶ Greek has three basic accents: the acute, circumflex, and grave, and these may fall only upon the final three syllables of any Greek word — the ultima, penult, and antepenult. Verb accent is recessive, like the receding hairline of a middle-aged man (several of whom may sit in the classroom and so serve as living object lessons!), but noun accent is persistent — meaning the accent will stay on the same syllable on which it begins in the nominative case, unless the ultima turns long in succeeding cases. I might as well be speaking Mandarin Chinese to those who have never had the privilege of studying Greek before; but my reason for bringing this up now is that the students can absorb quite complicated rules of accentuation before they know a whit of Greek — that is, before they can tell a nominative from an accusative, or a genitive from a dative.

Learning Greek represents constant passage from the relatively simple to the more complex, from what students know to what they do not know yet — but what they can learn by analogy: hence, mastery of the noun declensions from what has been learned about accents, the first declension on the basis of the second, present active participles on the basis of the third declension, more difficult vocabulary on the basis of cognates already learned, and so on. Voelz’s *Fundamental Greek Grammar* does an adequate job of laying out the material progressively, then reinforcing what has been learned by constant exercises, Greek-to-English sentences, and thorough — indeed, exhaustive — explication in copious prose.

In making the course my own I have added two sets of quizzes, administered four days out of five,⁷ and composition exercises — that is, two sentences per day from English into Greek. A virtue that emerges from the necessity of going through the material so quickly is that students do not have time to forget it. At the rate of one chapter per day, we complete the forty-two chapters of Voelz’s *Fundamental Greek Grammar* by the end of week nine, leaving the final week to read 1 John in Greek and prepare for the final exam. By then students are ready to begin

the required exegetical sequence, approved in the seminary’s new curriculum — Gospels I (Matthew), Gospels II (Luke/Mark), Pauline Epistles (Galatians/Romans selections), Gospels III (John), six Greek Readings courses, and, for the students of exceptional interest and ability, Advanced Greek.⁸ As for the beginning Greek course, morale is for the most part high, and students complete the ten weeks with the impression that they have achieved one of life’s great accomplishments, such as graduating from high school, or (more like it!) surviving boot camp in the U.S. Marines.

Learning Greek represents constant passage from the relatively simple to the more complex.

Learning Greek in the manner described exacts a toll on students — even on students who, in their earlier lives, were extraordinarily adept at what they did. It helps to have a young, flexible, and retentive mind — preferably one under thirty-five years of age. Wisdom comes with advanced years, but not necessarily the ability to learn Greek easily. To be sure, an older person can learn Greek, but the process becomes more difficult — sometimes much more difficult. A lot depends on how the student actually used his God-given brain earlier in life: has it been twenty-five years since the student darkened the door of a classroom, or did the student live in French-speaking Ghana, pilot an airplane, or serve as an Arabic translator for the Marines on reconnaissance in Iraq? The latter three activities, I submit, will have prepared students well for learning Greek at the seminary, although generalizations are not easily made: one of the best students I ever taught constructed props for a drama company out of college; another was a middle-aged wheat farmer from South Dakota. God bestowed on each a flexible mind and near photographic memory, enabling them to write nearly perfect quizzes, missing an occasional accent, if that.

Still, the overall goal is to turn every student who enters the M.Div. track into a competent Hellenist, regardless of background, ability, desire to learn, or even attitude — which, at first, can be quite negative. It always breaks my heart to lose a student by the end of the first week, right when the process of learning Greek begins to take hold. Students soon find that while native intelligence and a good memory certainly help in the learning of Greek, in the final analysis it is dogged determination and stubbornness that enable the student to submit

6. Voelz, *Greek Grammar*, 8–12.

7. Monday and Friday, brief vocab quiz; Tuesday and Thursday, paradigm quiz; Wednesday, no quiz. “Brief Vocab Quiz”: (1) passive vocab (5 words); (2) active vocab (3 words); (3) noun-adjective pair, verb conjugation, or noun-participle combination; (4) principle parts (1–2 verbs); (5) composition (English to Greek). “Paradigm Quiz”: (1) nominal declination or verbal conjugation; (2) passive vocab (6–8 words); (3) translation (Greek to English).

8. For the impact most of these courses have had on the new curriculum at Concordia Theological Seminary see Charles A. Gieschen, “They Bear Witness to Me”: Christ, the Scriptures, and the New Curriculum,” *For the Life of the World* 9, no. 3 (July 2005): 18–19.

to the crushing and repetitive process of learning Greek well. Learning Greek with one's mind is a lot like lifting weights or running with one's body; which is to say that one works up to learning Greek well over time, and students—even of quite modest abilities—are often delighted to discover what astonishing success can be achieved over the long haul by devotion to routine. Thus the beginning Greek class sets a foundation for, and establishes attitudes for, learning, which professors at this seminary hope will become a life-long submission to the word of God for which reason congregations call, or at least should call, pastors. The parable of the growing seed in Mark's Gospel puts the matter well:

Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, he knows not how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. (Mark 4:27–28; my translation)

The mystery here is that the seed sprouts and grows, even though the world—to say nothing about the student—knows not how. The learning of which the Bible speaks is the sort that is done to the learner in spite of himself—that is, in spite of one's supposed abilities, faults, interests, foibles, or failings. That is exactly the type of growth, increase, and harvest that will happen also for the pastor who submits to the word of God in his parish, and to the congregation—such as it is—that submits to that pastor's preaching: "All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head."

Our students, unlike learners in more traditional Greek programs, are not pulled in several directions at once. Incoming seminarians are supposed to be single-mindedly dedicated to the task of learning Greek—which means, practically speaking, no rival courses in other departments, no job, and, at least in the summer, no field work responsibilities in local congregations. Instruction consists of two to three hours per day with me in the morning, followed by a mandatory study session every afternoon taught by my student tutor, who also serves as grader and go-between. If I may liken my task of presentation to that of a plow, busting through the sod, clods, and hardpan that typically resists cultivation, my tutor's role is to caress the soil by raking, sifting, stroking, and soothing the students, helping especially those who experience the most difficulty in learning. Self-absorption and despair are two problems with which we must deal. If it is easy to identify the struggling student who daily gets beat up by the quizzes, what about that gifted student who, if you let him, will keep his abilities only to himself, and to others of his kind?

Our challenge is to put relatively weak and strong students together in the buddy system. Such group work inspires the class to think collectively about itself and its members, instead of just a bunch of guys and gals going through Greek individualistically—as is typically the case in undergraduate classrooms. At seminary the gifted ought to share their abilities with others who have been gifted differently. Students are primarily responsible for the learning that goes on in the Greek

classroom—not the professor or the tutor. Our task is to set the process up and keep it going. Of course, it goes without saying that mutual help and enabling others to succeed is exactly what should be going on in Lutheran congregations, too—to cite St. Paul: "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2 RSV). Paul envisions here a communal bearing of the load of being a Christian:

When the burdens of life become simply unbearable for any member of the community, the others, if they are truly spiritual, will lighten his load by sharing his burdens and thus enabling him to stand.⁹

This is what we want for our Greek students too: to keep Greek from becoming "simply unbearable" for any member of the class, and to enable him or her "to stand." So Greek inspires students to be mindful of others, not just themselves, a good attitude for a pastor or deaconess.

Incoming seminarians are supposed to be single-mindedly dedicated to the task of learning Greek.

So far I have been describing how to help and retain students who are "Greekly challenged," if I may refer to them thus; but an equally, or even more pressing, concern is how to motivate, challenge, and stimulate those who have a particular ability at Greek and who—unless they learn otherwise—may form the impression that Greek is easy or, at best, a mere requirement for more lofty courses in theology later on. Greek professors ought to expect more of gifted students—by putting them on the spot or sparring with them intellectually—while also comforting, consoling, and encouraging the more challenged students without insulting them by accepting mediocrity. Indeed, a successful Greek class is kind of a combination of *choir rehearsal* (where the voices of singers of varied ability meet and mingle harmoniously) and *karate workout* (where students should expect to get beat up sometimes). Thus it behooves the enterprising Greek professor to know the names and relative abilities of all the students as soon as possible—to encourage the weak, challenge the strong, and ignore no one.¹⁰ Students who put on airs of superiority need to be humbled, quickly; yet I believe each student needs the opportunity to strut his stuff, flap his

9. Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 287.

10. This is how Father Reginald Foster conducted his summer Latin class in Rome. See John Nordling, "A Lutheran Goes to Rome," *LOGIA* 8, no. 1 (Epiphany 1999): 39–43, esp. 41.

wings, cry “cock-a-doodle-doo,” and otherwise demonstrate a rapidly developing proficiency in Greek, to the joy and admiration of all.

Ironic banter is the best way professors such as I should engage beginning Greek students on a daily basis. Thus I relate a historical detail here, a point of grammar there, some episode that happened years ago when I was a Greek student — nor am I above making some hapless student who is not as well-prepared as he should be squirm a bit. Wiseacres should not be suffered but put to the test immediately. An effective ploy for dealing with cockiness is a game I call “converting plurals to singulars, and singulars to plurals.” For example, if given the sentence πέμπει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ δίκαιον καὶ ἀγαθὸν τέκνον ἐξ οἴκου εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν (“The son of man sends the righteous and good child from [the] house into the church”),¹¹ change plurals to singulars and singulars to plurals, keeping everything else the same — and do so immediately! After initial shock sets in, most students rise to the challenge and eventually stammer: πέμπουσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὰ δίκαια καὶ ἀγαθὰ τέκνα ἐξ οἴκων εἰς τὰς ἐκκλησίας (“The sons of the men send the righteous and good children from [the] houses into the churches”).

M.Div. students face a raft of graded exegetical courses in Greek.

When I pick on the one hapless student, remaining classmates are supposed to do the conversions silently on their own: can they meet the challenge correctly before the flustered student can? This and similar exercises force students actually to think Greek thoughts, instead of merely decipher sentences passively — which is the epitome of tiresome, trite, and tedious Greek instruction. It behooves Greek professors nowadays to expect more, better, and faster of students, while guarding every student’s pride and dignity — a tall order indeed. A little orality in the classroom also makes for more effective class time. And, believe it or not, some of the students — not all — enjoy the satisfaction of surviving one of my barrages by providing correct, rapid-fire answers to every question asked. Students surprise themselves and one another when standards are high and expectations clear.

But beginning Greek is not the be-all and end-all of Greek instruction at the seminary. M.Div. students face a raft of graded exegetical courses in Greek, purposely set in the curriculum to keep students engaged in Greek throughout their years here and into the first call. For the best Greek students

on campus we offer Advanced Greek. The main difference between Advanced Greek and any upper-level classics course in the country is the types of texts read. At the seminary, we stick to texts related to the Bible: Septuagint, Greek fathers, and Josephus — texts that, often for ideological reasons, are excluded from the classics canon. At the seminary, however, we are not ashamed of Koiné or of the Greek literature related to the New Testament, of which there is a massive amount. Otherwise, however, Advanced Greek is run the same way any graduate seminar in classics was at UW-Madison — three to four pages of Greek per session, demanding midterm and final exams, seminar reports, an eight- to ten-page research paper, and finally the delivery of the same at my house in the company of their peers who critically engage the scholar over ice-cream sundaes.

We Lutherans should cultivate the students who are really capable in Greek and help them along to peak potential. Professors need to identify early which students will one day likely be teaching their own Greek students, presenting papers at SBL, writing articles and commentaries, and using Greek faithfully to teach the church of tomorrow, when today’s Greek teachers are dead and gone. A wholesome knowledge of Greek is not some luxury from a bygone age intended for a few specialists at the seminary, but rather a way the entire church transmits her teachings well and faithfully to present and future generations through activities germane to the office of the holy ministry — yet, preferably, not restricted to that office. The question should not be how little Greek can we get into a man and still call him a pastor in some sense, but rather how we can use today’s technology and educational advancements to teach the Greek like it has never been taught before in the history of Lutheranism and thus bring philological competence to increasing numbers of laypersons and children — not just to an increasingly well-educated clergy. This direction, I submit, would be a strong indicator of our church’s vitality in the world, and represents a wholesome way for our church to grow at present and in the future.

Seminarians do not learn Greek to impress outsiders or snow them with factoids — “This is a genitive absolute, that a potential result clause; this, a jussive noun clause; that, a future more vivid condition,” for example. The list of such distinctions seems endless, though admittedly those who engage in the interpretive task necessarily enter “a labyrinth of methods, concepts and terminology.”¹² When all is said and done, however, the only acceptable reason for learning Greek at all is to enable one better to articulate the gospel in the “target language.”¹³ When a New Testament author — Matthew, say — produced a gospel in the mid first century A.D.,¹⁴ he set in motion an arrow,

11. The Greek sentence (not the translation) appears as Practice Sentence F.1.e in Voelz, *Greek Grammar*, 42.

12. Matthew S. DeMoss, *Pocket Dictionary for the Study of New Testament Greek* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 9.

13. See DeMoss, *Dictionary*, 120: “target language. *n.* The language into which a translation is made, as opposed to the source language. Also called the receptor language.”

14. I accept the dating of David P. Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004), 20, 40.

as it were, that moved through subsequent historical epochs to our own time. The message was “launched” by St. Matthew two thousand years ago for a churchly community consisting of the faithful and catechumens then and there, but it was intended for any and all subsequent ecclesiastical communities that would ever spring up as a result of the faithful ministrations of Matthew’s apostolic and pastoral continuators: “Go . . . disciple . . . baptizing . . . teaching . . .” (Matt 28:19–20).¹⁵ Today’s called and ordained pastor represents a culmination of the process, although his faithful preaching both magnifies the original preaching unleashed millennia ago and sets a foundation for still other pastoral continuators, until Christ Himself returns in glory: “Behold, I am with you [μεθ’ ὑμῶν] all the days, until the consummation of the age” (Matt 28:20). Μεθ’ ὑμῶν in Christ’s climactic promise is formally connected in Matthew’s Gospel to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus (1:23) and to the institution of the Lord’s Supper (26:29): “The continual presence Jesus promised [at the conclusion of Matthew’s Gospel] was realized in the Eucharist.”¹⁶

Consider, then, how important one’s command of English is for articulating the gospel. Not just any random thought or sentiment in the target language will do, but only that English thought or expression that is constantly checked against what has been given in the Greek original. Sloppy, inaccurate, and inelegant thinking in English must constantly be drubbed out of beginning and intermediate Greek students by exercises whereby translation skills are rigorously honed by instructors who should be truly at home in the source language, Greek. At the same time, English thoughts and phrases which do in fact clearly and accurately convey what the source language transmits need to be identified as such, nourished, strengthened, and above all practiced—like a difficult passage in a Bach chorale, or a deft move on the basketball court. The goal is for students speaking in the vernacular to magnify clearly, elegantly, and eloquently in the target language what the source language conveys. In other words, translation is necessary.

Nor should there be any room for the notion that pastors and teachers of the church can make out well enough without the source language (Greek, in this instance), but merely approved English translations of the same—or, what is even worse, simply access whatever sermon may happen to appear on SermonCentral.com, or similar internet sites. Μὴ γένοιτο! Preaching that convicts sinners and delivers Christ and his gifts moves constantly from ancient text to living expression thereof in the person and ministry of the called and ordained pastor—the *pastor loci*. At the risk of sounding slightly blasphemous, I have thought lately that the properly prepared pastor proclaiming the word of God is a virtual incarnation of the original text he has so assiduously studied: not only has he plumbed the text deeply, like a sprouting seed putting down a taproot into the “wellsprings of salvation” and sending up stems, leaves, flowers, and fruits into God’s future where Christ is “all in all” (vertical dimension); but he must also, and perhaps, even more impor-

tantly, use proper and correct English to connect the word to the “here and now” across vast linguistic and cultural distances (horizontal dimension). Good English, then—or rather competence in the vernacular target language (whether English, German, Spanish, Swahili, Russian, Chinese, and so forth)—is what brings the fruit of the ancient text home to us, the then and there into the here and now, and connects our history to Jesus Christ who “is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8 RSV).

Sloppy, inaccurate, and inelegant thinking in English must constantly be drubbed out.

A widespread problem in the church today is preoccupation with the horizontal dimension, that is, in getting the gospel out to others: people groups, foreign tribes, and mission fields, across the linguistic and cultural divides. But at least as pressing a concern should be for the church to keep her proclamation connected to the past and looking ahead to the future, which is Christ’s future (vertical dimension). The proclamation I envision is essentially cross-shaped, uniting the horizontal and vertical dimensions in one office holder, the “pastor,” who utilizes both Greek and English well. Both languages—and the vertical and horizontal dimensions each represents—are essential to the task of preaching.

Not long ago there was a complaint in the *Lutheran Witness* that some of its articles were written in “a pedantic style and language” that only seminary professors and pastors could understand, and that it should “come down to earth” and “reach out” to laypersons.¹⁷ Point well taken. But we should watch out for the opposite problem, too—language so folksy, homey, and in tune with what people think in 2012 that it never rises beyond the familiar and the mundane. Luther maintained that there ought to be a distinction between what he called “simple preacher[s] of the faith” and one who truly expounds Scripture—or, “as St. Paul puts it, a prophet” (AE 45: 363). The preaching Luther had in mind digs deeply into ancient texts and engages them. It is such engagement, in fact, that keeps preaching lively, delivers the whole treasure that is Christ, and goes on the offensive by waging battle against darkness, error, and heresy. Now, to be sure, the “simple preacher” can carry on quite well by using vernacular translations and living a holy life.

But when it comes to interpreting Scripture, and working with it on your own, and disputing with those who

15. See Scaer, *Discourses*, 271.

16. *Ibid.*, 167.

17. So Lesa Harr, *Lutheran Witness* 129, no. 2 (February 2010): 4.

cite it incorrectly, he is unequal to the task; that cannot be done without [the] languages. Now there must always be such prophets in the Christian church who can dig into Scripture, expound it, and carry on disputations. A saintly life and right doctrine are not enough. Hence, languages are absolutely and altogether necessary in the Christian church, as are the prophets or interpreters; although it is not necessary that every Christian or every preacher be such a prophet, as St. Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 12[:4–30] and Ephesians 4[:11]. (AE 45: 363)

When Luther expressed these sentiments in *anno Domini* 1524 he was engaging a materialistic culture that was by no means favorable to the schools of his day. Some parents were asking, if a youth was not destined for the church or a learned profession, why he should waste his time on an education that had no direct relationship to the world of trade and industry. He should rather learn a trade and thus secure his economic livelihood!¹⁸ The society in which Luther dispensed this wisdom really was not so very different from our own. Criticisms like the one above that occasionally appear in the *Lutheran Witness* reflect the society of which we are part and should not deflect our purposes. A pastor should speak at the level of his congregation and not adopt airs; but he should also make every effort to increase his knowledge of the original languages throughout his ministry and mine these texts deeply for the benefit of the parishioners who called him to be their pastor. The pastor needs to express the profundities of an ancient text in laymen's terms and bring them home to his congregation, but conscientious pastors humbly realize that Greek texts are indeed bottomless, pouring forth the gospel inexhaustibly — like Moses' rock that, when struck, watered not only the children of Israel but also the flocks and herds (Num 20:11; see Exod 17:6; 1 Cor 10:4).

Language study, then, enables the properly prepared candidate of theology to bring home to the congregation the full glories of the gospel, so that it is not merely folksy, this-worldly, human-centered — in a word, boring (let us call such preaching what it is!). The farmers and the grandma Schmidts of the Missouri Synod are capable of recognizing good preaching when they hear it, and such good preaching always reposes upon a preacher who knows the original languages well and can state in plain English what they mean.¹⁹ The church has need of prophets also, not only "simple preachers." Or perhaps another way of putting it is that the "simple preachers" should become more "prophetic" by learning the ancient languages well to begin with and by increasing their knowledge and delight in them throughout their ministry.

I have tried to demonstrate that the seminaries can continue to teach Greek well to sometimes woefully underprepared students in ten short weeks. I have had the gall to suggest that the way the seminaries are teaching Greek — namely, in rapid and intensive fashion, with no opportunity for students to for-

get (because they are learning so quickly) — portends how the classical languages likely will be taught, learned, and cultivated anywhere else in modern America that values this treasure, not just here. It is very tempting for the church of today — with nary a thought for tomorrow — simply to dispense with Greek as one more cultural artifact, the way German went out of style in the Missouri Synod at the beginning of the twentieth century or the way buggy whips were no longer necessary when the Model A Ford came into production in 1903. But learning Greek well is not nearly as optional as many think it is. Pastors who do not use hard-won language skills in their ministries frequently embarrass themselves and impoverish congregations. Conversely, pastors capable of using the languages well connect calling congregations to God's history, which looks forward and backwards at the same time. "Behold, I make all things new!" cries the one seated upon the throne near the end of the Bible (Rev 21:5).

*A pastor should increase his
knowledge of the original languages
throughout his ministry.*

This process of "making new" is exactly what an ancient text does when a suitably prepared pastor mines its depths and connects its treasures to modern hearers. Too often we think of language ability as a relic of the past, of a bygone synodical system in which every would-be pastor studied Greek for several years, not several weeks. But the ancient languages are capable of being taught more efficiently now than ever before, and students nowadays are every bit as intelligent and eager to learn as they were in the '50s and '60s, the period regarded as the golden age of the synodical system. And that is good, because there is as much need now for the languages as was ever the case in the past — especially now when the emphasis has been placed rightly on missions and on dealing faithfully with potentially divisive matters, such as the role of women, the way we worship, vocation, sexuality, and a host of other issues that perplex Christians of good will. All such problems are best dealt with by pastors and theologians who know the languages well and are as much at home in the biblical world as in the twenty-first century. I guess I shall have to say that Greek — and the learning it represents — never will go out of style, even if one day it will be cut from the seminary curriculum or if a critical mass of people, in both church and society, think classics and the languages are irrelevant. The barbarians have been at the gates before — always with predictable results.

But becoming defensive and waxing morose on these issues is to allow pessimism to have the final say. This conference and the people gathered here indicate that there is at least a fascina-

18. See editor's notes, AE 45: 342.

19. See Brian Hamer, "Proclamation and Communication in Lutheran Worship Resources," *LOGIA* 19, no. 3 (Holy Trinity 2010): 41.

tion for things Lutheran and classical in our circles. At a time when few classicists are Christian (let alone Lutheran), and candidates of theology can become ordained without a whit of Greek, there may yet be an opportunity for Lutheranism and the classics — and the classics and Lutheranism — to help each other out. Simply put, people preparing for the ministry should be steeped in the ancient languages (as was the case when the church was at her best in the past), and people teaching the classics should be Christian. This conference looks to the day when, forgiven by Christ, all Lutherans and classicists shall rejoice in

one another's gifts and give thanks to the One from whom all blessings flow. **LOGIA**

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