

The background of the cover is a reproduction of Raphael's fresco 'The School of Athens'. It depicts a group of ancient Greek philosophers in a grand, vaulted architectural space. Plato is shown pointing upwards, while Aristotle gestures towards the earth. Other figures include Pythagoras, Euclid, and various other scholars engaged in discussion and study. The architecture features high arches, columns, and a coffered ceiling.

# Digressio

ROMAN ROADS PRESS MAGAZINE  
WINTER 2025

## *Memory*

*The Role of Memory in Education*

*Memory:  
The Common Guardian*

Mystie Winckler

*What, Why & How to  
Teach a Fire*

Reuben Jansen

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Cover: The School of Athens  
Raphael (1509–1511), fresco

# WHAT IS *DIGRESSIO*?

Owen Barfield once said about C.S. Lewis that “what he thought about everything was secretly present in what he said about anything.” Over the last few issues of *Digressio* and throughout Roman Roads Press’ curriculum, we have advocated the use of *digressios*, or digressions, in teaching—those distractions from the point, side stories and interesting anecdotes along the way of history or literature or science that capture our imagination and hook our memory. But a secondary benefit to a *digressio* approach to learning is that it can’t help but interconnect our knowledge. Lewis had not kept the various threads of his learning separately spooled in his head but had put them all to use on the loom of his intellect. They were so interwoven that he could not utter a word without pulling on the whole intricate fabric of his extensive knowledge.

This sort of interweaving is not only an effective way of organizing knowledge, it is also an effective pedagogical tool. When a teacher strays from the main point of a lecture because the subject at hand reminds him of a story, the lesson concepts are more likely to knit themselves into the fabric already forming in a student’s mind. A *digressio* intertwines with the imagination and memory. It is the story the child brings to the dinner table, tells his friends, and remembers. It prompts the curiosity that allows him to make more connections with his other areas of knowledge. It becomes part of a child’s education.

Digressios are particularly effective with younger children. As you educate your children, use digressios as tools and opportunities whenever possible. They are not mere distractions. More often, they are the real education.

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*Daniel Foucachon*

FOUNDER, ROMAN ROADS PRESS

## THEMA

# MEMORY: THE COMMON GUARDIAN

BY MYSTIE WINCKLER



We can all picture the perfect early elementary student: rattling off lists of declensions, prepositions, and presidents, the student's accomplishments prove the efficacy of classical education. That, anyway, is the reasoning for both doing the memory work and showing off the memory. We consider memory the supreme achievement partly because of its visibility. The amount of information the 6-year-old can repeat demonstrates to skeptical relatives that education is happening, that homeschooling is valid and viable. A young child who can nimbly articulate all manner of facts is indeed delightful, but is such a one a paragon of classical education? From Cicero and Quintilian in the classical era itself to the revival of the tradition today, classical education has prioritized memory development, especially for young students. Dorothy Sayers' essay, "The Lost Tools of Learning," inspiring a movement of education revival, attempts to return wayward moderns to old, memory-laden paths. However, as we continue

to recover and revive an education rooted in classical and Christian ideals, we must be sure we not only understand what Sayers herself was saying about memory work, but also what the tradition reveals about historic practice. When aligned with Quintilian, Hugh of St. Victor, and Comenius, Sayers' insights about memory work are illuminated and clarified in unexpected ways.

In her famous essay, Sayers shares four key observations about memory. First, she says students should practice their memory work aloud, individually and as a group, "for we must not forget that we are laying the groundwork for disputation and rhetoric."<sup>1</sup> Memory as preparation for public speaking is in keeping with Quintilian's vision of educating the orator who can not only articulate and enunciate correctly, but who also delivers a speech with grace. Second, Sayers advises that the students' memories

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy L. Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning," in *Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 156.

be stocked with a clear historical timeline not only of their own country but also of God's salvation history. Hugh of St. Victor also began his students with knowledge of history, desiring young students to know names and dates and events before studying the liberal arts directly.<sup>2</sup> Third, Sayers recommends that memory work be tied to visual and imaginative content, not merely sounds of syllables.<sup>3</sup> In this she concurs with Comenius, who laid down the principle: "as far as possible, instruction should be given through the senses, that it may be retained in the memory with less effort."<sup>4</sup> Finally and perhaps most famously, Sayers recommends focusing on filling the memory of young students before serious studies begin, during what she calls the "Poll-parrot stage," which extends from the time a child can read and write until they are around 11 or 12. Quintilian, Hugh of St. Victor, and Comenius all share her observation that memory is natural and strong at this age as well as her application that it ought to be the primary element of education during this time. Thus, in several of her key ideas about memory, Sayers is indeed faithful to historic sources.

Few classical sources are cited more by medieval and renaissance educators than Quintilian, so it is reassuring to find echoes of Quintilian in Sayers' thoughts on education as well. Quintilian's goal in educating was developing an orator, so his purpose and methods for memory work were tailored to achieve that end. Because memory is most retentive in the young, Quintilian argues, they should be taught to read and write because both skills are "entirely a matter of memory."<sup>5</sup> Sayers shares this emphasis

**Memory is such an integral part of rhetoric that it is one of the canons. Memory is the "common guardian" of all the canons of rhetoric, providing safekeeping for knowledge and skill.**

when she says that the strong memories of the young should be harnessed to learn not only their native tongue, but also Latin and a contemporary foreign language.<sup>6</sup> However, memory, in Quintilian's view, is not a stage or phase any orator ever outgrows. In fact, memory is such an integral part of rhetoric that it is one of the canons. As he put it, memory is the "common guardian" of all the canons of rhetoric, providing safekeeping for knowledge and skill.<sup>7</sup> However, Quintilian's goal for memory is larger than storing particular words away; it includes what might now be called muscle memory training as well: "Force him to learn select passages by heart and repeat them standing, clearly and in the way he will one day have to plead."<sup>8</sup> Thus, a student's memory is stored not merely with the words, but the stance and style proper for delivering them as well.

Sayers agrees that memory work is a foundation for future rhetorical use, and her primary call to action for educators is to make a "progressive retrogression" to medieval systems of education. None presents that scheme more systematically and clearly than Hugh of St. Victor. For Hugh, education is about forming wisdom, which requires friendship with Christ, Who is Himself Wisdom.<sup>9</sup> Memory training begins the path of learning that ends in wisdom and eloquence.<sup>10</sup> Hugh advocates that children learn history via an elaborate memory palace. An imaginative treasury full of knowledge prepared a student for meditative reading; thus Hugh extended classical memory palace techniques beyond public speaking to personal reading and thinking. According to Ivan Illich, "Hugh not only revives the old art of memorization but radically

<sup>2</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 136.

<sup>3</sup> Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning," 156.

<sup>4</sup> John Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius*, trans. M.W. Keatinge, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907), 139.

<sup>5</sup> Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, trans. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1:73.

<sup>6</sup> Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning," 155.

<sup>7</sup> Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 2:25.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1:241.

<sup>9</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 46.

<sup>10</sup> Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, (University of Chicago, 1993), 52.

transforms it by placing it in the service of *historia*.<sup>11</sup> Hugh's direction to "diligently commit to memory the truth of the deeds that have been performed" in history corresponds with Sayers' thoughts on memorizing dates and God's revealed historical narrative, but his attitude and hers are worlds apart.<sup>12</sup> Nowhere in Hugh is there a sense that "it does not greatly matter which dates."<sup>13</sup> His goal for memory was not to impress anyone with the ability to rattle off names and dates, but rather to have the tools of wisdom and understanding instantly available within one's own mind so as not to be hampered by the need to look up formulae or basic truths.<sup>14</sup> Although Sayers does make the offhand comment that the dates memorized do "not greatly matter," yet she also says to memorize what "can usefully be committed to memory."<sup>15</sup> Her overall goal and project must be kept in view: "to teach men how to learn for themselves."<sup>16</sup> Both Hugh and Sayers cultivate memory to give students the tools of learning, not to possess a collection of trivia.

Though at first it appears he recommends merely memorizing of a timeline with names, dates, and places as is done today by those following Sayers' model, Hugh's program is not one of a few historical or informational pegs but of an entire mental, imaginatively-engaged framework for salvation history within which students perform feats of intellectual acrobatics.<sup>17</sup> A vision for memory as the ability simply to store away and reproduce verbatim series of random data points is inadequate to the scholastic tradition Sayers tells us to emulate; it is being satisfied with far too small a repayment on the effort that

**The medievals thought of memory as recollection, the ability to hunt out of the treasure stores of the mind associations and knowledge.**

these worthy educators were aiming at. Rote repetition alone would not have been proof to the medieval schoolmaster that memory had been achieved. As historian Mary Caruthers notes, modern psychology has led us to exclude "from [memory's] concerns the ability to reconstruct such information, whether logically or by a mnemonic scheme."<sup>18</sup> The medievals,

on the other hand, thought of memory as recollection, the ability to hunt out of the treasure-stores of the mind associations and knowledge. Caruthers goes further, stating, "Rote repetition, since it is not 'found out' by any heuristic scheme, is not considered recollection or true memory."<sup>19</sup> The true heart of Sayers' essay is to turn

back the pages of history and do, as far as we are able, what the scholastics were doing in education.

Sayers shares with John Amos Comenius a commitment to a noble, generous education offered not only to the elite but to all. For both of them, that generous education must include a strong memory program. Like Sayers, Comenius believed young students should develop their memory. The young, notes Comenius, have a "tenacious" memory that must be harnessed and cultivated while his mind is still "quite wet and soft and fit for receiving all images that come to it."<sup>20</sup> According to Comenius, the training of the capacity for memory aligns with nature, for "Nature prepares the material before she begins to give it form."<sup>21</sup> Youth, he says, is the best time to dedicate to education for then the mind is "fresh and gathering strength; then everything is vigorous and strikes root deeply." He ties memory and sense perception together closely, claiming that "as far as is possible, instruction should be given through the senses, that it may be retained in the memory with

11 Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, 45.

12 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 135–136.

13 Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning," 156.

14 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 87.

15 Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning," 156–157.

16 Ibid., 164.

17 Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*, 42.

18 Mary Caruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 2008), 22.

19 Ibid., 23.

20 John Amos Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, 58–59.

21 Ibid., 114.

less effort.”<sup>22</sup> Although it is easy to overlook, Sayers concurs: historical dates should be learned “provided that they are accompanied by pictures of costume, architecture, and all ‘every-day things,’ so that the mere mention of a date calls up a strong visual presentment of a whole period.”<sup>23</sup> Though songs, chants, and flashcards have been a go-to application of Sayers’ emphasis on memory, her comments indicate a more elaborate and imaginative undertaking.

Unlike Sayers, Comenius stressed a memory program integrally tied to understanding: “For that only which has been thoroughly understood and committed to memory as well, can be called the property of the mind.”<sup>24</sup> Memory, according to Comenius, is the stem of knowledge which bears the fruit of an ease with language and practical, productive skills. However, if memory is the stem, then its roots must be tended and strong: “the educator of the young [should] give special attention to the roots of knowledge, the understanding, [which] will soon impart their vitality to the stem, that is, to the memory.”<sup>25</sup> The idea Sayers propounds, that information can be memorized and known without being understood, appears at first to flatly contradict Comenius.<sup>26</sup> However, letting the author interpret herself, the essay as a whole reveals that by “understand” she’s likely referring to an ability to give “rational explanations” and display a “power to analyze” when the developmentally appropriate form of knowing for the young ought rather to rely on “a strong imaginative appeal.”<sup>27</sup> On this point Comenius and Sayers agree, for both are insistent that education must fit a natu-

ral progression of ability and development.<sup>28</sup> Thus, a closer reading of Sayers’ overall message pushes us to rethink our approach to memory in the young years.

Sayers’ name of “Poll-Parrot” for the early stage of education, combined with her remark that understanding is optional, has led to an application of memory work unknown to the historic sources she calls us to emulate. A parrot mindlessly repeats his betters, and, what is more, his repetition gets him nowhere. For the sake of catchiness, Sayers sacrificed clarity. Although Sayers spends nearly twice as much space in her essay on grammar students learning languages than on facts of different subjects, teachers today emphasize the facts of subjects rather than the language acquisition Sayers identified as the main activity.<sup>29</sup> Where are the classical educators today with grammar students fluent in three languages? Acquiring multilingual reading and speaking fluency before going on to studying the liberal arts is in keeping with the tradition found in Quintilian, Hugh of St.

Victor, and Comenius. Emphasizing a gathering of assorted facts is not. According to Hugh, “the more you collect superfluous details the less you are able to grasp or to retain useful matters.”<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Sayers couldn’t be proposing a program of memorizing the facts of subjects because the whole concept of a school “subject” was part of what she was attacking.<sup>31</sup>

Rather than memorizing lists and definitions, the medievals conceived of memory as “a storehouse of inventoried topics that ideally would contain all previous ways-of-saying ethical truths like ‘justice.’”<sup>32</sup> Because she was advocating for a return to an old way, we ought to examine the meaning of vital topics like memory to ancient and medieval ed-

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22 Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, 139.

23 Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” 156.

24 Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, 152.

25 Ibid., 120.

26 Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” 157.

27 Ibid., 157.

28 Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, 143.

29 Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” 154–155.

30 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 89.

31 Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” 147, 150, 156.

32 Caruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 30.

ucators rather than assume our common usage today is adequate.

Sayers says that the purpose of memory is “as a gathering-together of material for use,” but she does not actually give a method for accomplishing it.<sup>33</sup> Instead, she wants us to return to the older sources. To learn a thing “by heart,” Quintilian notes that “students of any age who are concerned to improve their memory by study should be willing to swallow the initially wearisome business of repeating over and over again what they have written or read,” even “as it were chewing over the same old food.” He also advises assigning symbols to written sections being memorized so that the imagination is engaged as a prompter to the next section. Even simply memorizing from the same written copy of a work ties the mind and the eye together so a stronger connection is made and “when he speaks, he is almost in the position of a person reading aloud” because his mind’s eye is following the page he had so many times repeated.<sup>34</sup> Hugh recommends the learner create his own outlines, summaries, abstracts, and narrations which are then to be regularly reviewed even after they are “stored in the little chest of the memory” so that they can be called forth easily when needed.<sup>35</sup> Comenius brings traditional Latin wisdom back into play, recommending students not only write out and repeat material to fix it in the memory, but also teach it to others to fully imprint information on the mind.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, he recommends having visual representations on the wall of the classroom to cue memory. Whatever prompts are used, he admonishes that it is constant review, constant rereading, that keeps memory retentive. Memory is always at play when true learning takes place, which is why all educators should be sure the capacity is expanded and exercised.

Sayers never intended her essay to be the basis of a full school program, as she makes clear at the out-

set.<sup>37</sup> We are following Sayers’ truest and best insight when we take her advice to look to the past and appropriate for today their aims and methods.<sup>38</sup> Quintilian, Hugh of St. Victor, and Comenius provide rich and nuanced concepts and frameworks for developing memory in meaningful ways with students. The goal of memory work is not to insert the coin or give the command and have the proper product come out of the mouth. We are more truly aligning with Sayers herself when we listen to and apply ancient and medieval wisdom. When our students can talk to one another not only in complete sentences within their mother tongue, but also in Latin and in a modern foreign language, then will their memories be trained to receive the liberal arts. By enriching the purpose and practice of our memory work, we can avoid vain repetition and ensure strong habits of mind that lead to wisdom and eloquence.

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33 Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” 156.

34 Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, 5:75.

35 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 94.

36 Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, 157.

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37 Sayers, “The Lost Tools of Learning,” 145.

38 Ibid., 149.

# POETICA

## WHY WE NEED EPIC POETRY

BY DR. JOE CARLSON



Many have referred to Milton's *Paradise Lost* as the last great epic poem, and this is probably true. While more recent prose works could certainly be considered part of the epic genre (*Moby Dick*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *The Lord of the Rings*), the seeds of epic poetry have seemingly lain dormant for nearly half a millennium. But what is an epic? With regard to poetry specifically, what are the characteristics that determine which poems are in and which are out? Put another way, why do we speak of Homer, Vergil, Dante, and Milton in the same breath, while other great poets and poems stand to the side? Culturally, we have lost a palette for excellence in poetry. We have dieted on sugar cubes for decades, and as a result have no taste for real food. But a culture will not survive on such fare. They need substance, something for teeth to sink into. They need heroes who do not wear capes or fight for DEI, but actually build cities, establish empires, and protect their homes and homeland from the sons of Belial. What

we need is a reintroduction to the epics. Consider this a preface.<sup>1</sup>

Every culture has a myth. What do I mean? Every people group has some “tribal myth that unites” them as a people:

The mythic awareness that results permeates the society, not as an occult power granted to the few but, rather, as a heightening of the natural state of sentient beings aware of existence as having meaning. It produces a network of symbols, a web wherein insights are captured, a matrix where intuition can dwell; from it, we might say, extends a kind of lightning rod to attract the divine [inspiration]. The high arts, science, philosophy, prophecy are particularly attentive to this medium and are responsible

<sup>1</sup> In what follows I will largely be using Louise Cowen's insightful definition of the epic as it appears in her introduction to *The Epic Cosmos*. All in-text references are to: *The Epic Cosmos*, ed. Larry Allum (Dallas, TX: The Dallas Institute Publications, 2014).

for discerning and bringing to the community whatever extrasensory messages are granted them. The poet in particular has the task of listening to the gods, the angels, the presences that are outside the self, outside the community's paradigm, as the supernatural agencies go about their seemingly random selection of events to be crowned with significance. The gods' choices define and beckon a people; the epic poet as conscious artist lets society know its identity and its mission.

**The epic poet is the messenger, the self-conscious emissary from above, the conduit through which the transcendent imposes itself onto a complacent people.**

This is the role of the epic poet. Using the pre-existing web of symbols, insights, and intuitions, the poet tells society who it is and why it is. But more than a glorified junior high pep rally, the epic poet situates this prophetic word within the relationship between the people and its gods (or, for the Christian poets like Milton, the Triune God of Scripture). The epic poet is the messenger, the self-conscious emissary from above, the conduit through which the transcendent imposes itself onto a complacent people. The epic poem itself serves as a tangible and unavoidable artifact that continually confronts a people with their own mythic history. I hasten to add that mythic history is not a contradiction in terms, nor does the first term qualify the second out of its connotations of literal truth. Mythic, in the sense I am speaking of here, has to do with the culture shaping power of story. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden in Genesis 1–3 is literal history. It happened in time and space. If Eve had a smartphone, she could have taken a selfie with the dragon in front of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is literally true. But it is also a mythic story in that it has powerfully and indelibly shaped our society in significant ways. The true and

historic activity of the Garden, as recorded in Genesis, has produced a bevy of symbols and images that continue to shape human culture, nearly 6000 years later. It is this mythic quality of historical stories that brings a heightened awareness of the meaning embedded in literally everything we see and do. That the historical stories of Scripture—the Garden, the Exodus, the Promised Land, the Cross, the Upper Room—have an enduring mythic power does not deny their historicity. Nor does their historicity deny their mythic power. The two states can (and do) exist simultaneously.

I spend time hammering this home because in our modern era we are under the impression that something true in nature and history must be devoid of a cultural, and even spiritual power. Myths necessarily refer to something like a fairy tale or other imaginatively made-up stories. Thus, stories either really happened or they are myths. But this is a false dichotomy. True stories attain the status of myth (without forfeiting their historical nature) when they take on enduring influence and culture-shaping power, as we see with *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. It is also true that non-historical stories can attain the same status. That the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, and

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*Divine Comedy* have become mythic in their enduring power to shape culture is unarguable. However, this is because each of these poems is anchored in something historical and human (the Trojan War, the conquest of Italy, the political unrest of the late Duecento). As such, each touches on what is universally true about human nature. The main

characters in each of these poems (Achilles, Odysseus, Aeneas, Dante-pilgrim) are identifiably human (however larger-than-life their contexts make them). And in this way they still communicate something

true, even if the pilgrim never actually scaled a mountain full of spirits in the South Pacific.

This idea of the mythic is the necessary foundation for all epics, though it is not unique to the epic genre. Rather, poetry in general, including imaginative literature, “is the vehicle for giving form to the myth, bringing into consciousness, where it may be contemplated and known. Unlike folktales or legends, a literary work of art produces in mimetic form the wholeness of a people’s unconscious sense of themselves, providing an image of humanity in action in a world constituted by value.” That said,

the epic in particular, in its story of a hero’s conquest of disorder and establishment of a cosmos, has a close relationship with the mythic. But rather than being myth, epic is the literary genre that gives tangible form to this vital seed of a community’s life, that not only portrays a world in the making but, by looking toward final things, brings about a new order and fulfills the implicit mythic promise.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the epic genre can be broadly defined by its “function of *cosmopoesis*, its making of a cosmos wherein the other genres find their place and within which human life may be envisioned in its varied dimensions” (10). Put simply, the epic cosmos is an imaginative landscape that mimetically (by imitation) encompasses everything there is, including that which we cannot see. It cannot be defined logically, nor itemized in any way. It must be intuited, through the matrix of symbol and allusion that permeates the world. This is *cosmopoesis*, the act of speaking a complete cosmos into existence. Importantly, this happens at the level of cultural memory: “The poetic

cosmos... comes into being from the act of bringing the myth into consciousness—from shaping the past into memory...” (16). Cultural memory is necessarily curated by our poets, and our epic poets specifically. They take past events and rework them into relevant

culture-building tales that speak directly to the human condition. Through images and stories, symbols and songs, the epic poet formalizes a culture’s founding history, keeping the past always present. The result of a culture-wide acceptance of the epic is a mutually agreed upon identity (the poet telling them who they are) and purpose (the poet telling them why

they are). This is what the epic poem does, grounded in its mythic power.

With this as an introduction, what are the specific qualities of the epic genre? Four key distinctions have been identified:

A primary feature of the epic cosmos is its penetration of the veil separating material and immaterial existence, allowing an intimate relation between gods and men and a resultant metaphysical extension of space. A second feature is its eschatological expansion of time, and, third, its restoration of equilibrium between masculine and feminine forces. The final feature, one that is no doubt paramount in its importance, is the epic’s sense of motion, its linking of human action to a divine destiny, toward which it senses history moves. (11)

More than simply the presence of gods in the narrative, the epic genre takes for granted and normalizes the penetration of the divine into the human realm. The epic landscape by definition includes the transcendent and spiritual realms. In crafting a story, the epic poet consciously identifies himself as a link between the human and the divine, calling on the Muses for inspiration and guidance in telling

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<sup>2</sup> Louise Cowen, “Myth in the Modern World.”

the story. But more than that, the story itself centers on man's communication and interaction with the divine. Thus Achilles petitions Zeus via his goddess-mother; Odysseus regains Ithaka with the help of Athena; Aeneas achieves Italy, guided and protected by Venus; and Dante-pilgrim escapes the dark wood with help from Virgil and Beatrice. In *Paradise Lost*, the divine element of the story takes on an even closer immediacy, as Milton imagines the conversations of both the demons in Pandemonium and the Father and Son in Heaven. Adam and Eve are likewise guided (or misguided) by celestial (or infernal) beings. And in *Paradise Regained*, the main characters are Satan and Jesus; thus, the epic landscape naturally makes room for the transcendent realities of angels, demons, gods, and the God of gods.

The inclusion of the transcendent naturally means an inclusive view of time as well. Just as we pass into ethereal realms, so too we journey into eternal regions outside of time. Tragedy focuses on a single and completed action; comedy the restoration of a particular thing that has been broken; lyric the interior response to a particular image or moment. But the epic landscape, in addition to its vertical expansiveness (including the supernatural and divine), expands horizontally as well. "Epic poets have a larger view of temporality than other poets. They see the Alpha and Omega, the entire scheme of things, though they are constrained to speak of this beginning and end in terms of the human society they know" (15). The epic poem is, therefore, shaped by a certain timelessness. Characters enter regions that are not bound by time, which communicates a universality to the reader, giving us the impression that if we were in those regions, we would behold the same events. This serves to strengthen the bond between the hero and the culture he is founding.

**In crafting a story, the epic poet consciously identifies himself as a link between the human and the divine, calling on the Muses for inspiration and guidance in telling the story.**

The third quality identified is the restoration and re-harmonization of opposites within a culture. Societies are born out of the civilizing force of human dominion and endeavor. This presupposes, in the mythic sense, a chaos out of which order is brought, the formlessness and void of Genesis 1:2. The contrasting masculine and feminine forces referred to above symbolize those elements that seemingly contradict each other and need to be brought into harmony for worlds to be built. The epic genre captures this through different means, but most often through characters that represent and embody the opposing forces that need to be reconciled: Zeus/Hera, Neptune/Athena, Jupiter/Juno, Virgil/Beatrice, Adam/Eve, masculine force/feminine wisdom. The epic holds these equal and opposite forces in balance, which again is the only way for civilisation to be built: "The epic assumes that the sacred marriage of the two equal and complementary powers is possible and that in that wedding the whole world is renewed" (22). In this vision of harmony, the epic poem provides a window into something real and necessary for those living in times when that balance has been disturbed. Thus, the epic not only provides a vision of the past, but hope for the future as well.

Which brings us to the fourth quality of the epic genre: eschatological redemption. The epic poem is oriented toward the "culmination of history," precisely because the "total action [of the epic] is by far greater than the deeds of the hero" (22–23). The hero represents something much larger than himself, something universal and universally true. The epic puts forward a moral cosmos, a deep and permeating sense of true and false, good and bad, beautiful and ugly. "The epic cosmos, in itself, implies a force, an energy that impels a people forward. Though such a movement is portrayed through the actions of one person, it affects the life of all, expressing an elemental will

within a people, unrecognized among them without the hero's urgency, his pressing outward against the forces pressing inward..." (23). This, again, is how the epic poet tells a people who they are and why they are. Through the agency of the hero and the heroic action, the people of a culture are awakened to their own identity and purpose, and are filled with a desire to accomplish great things. The mimetic action inspires them, raises their spirits, and gives them a vision of what is possible. But more than that, the epic casts a vision of what will be, inevitably, in the culmination of all things. Obviously, there is a difference between the Pagan and Christian epics with regard to this eschatological vision. For the Pagan, a cyclical pattern of war and peace is only resolved in the laying down of individual wrath, the restoration of the city, the establishment of an empire. For the Christian, it is the Beatific Vision and the victory of Christ over the chief representative of sin and death. But in either case, a vision of future redemption is cast, made possible through virtuous loyalty to a people's fundamental identity and purpose. This is the prophetic mantle of an epic poet. He is moved by the inspiration of a higher will, called to inspire his readers with what can be in the here and now through a clear picture of what will be at the end of all things.

All this together gives the epic genre of poetry an ability to "norm" a people. It is "the mode from which civilisation emerges, the originary *poesis* that enlarges its people's scope, enabling them to enter history. It makes conscious the major symbols of society, shaping its sense of purpose, its forms and standards" (25–26). It looks back to teach us to treasure those worthy elements of our inheritance and to prepare us to take part in our own individual world-building callings. For if the epic teaches us anything, it is that we exist in that same poetic

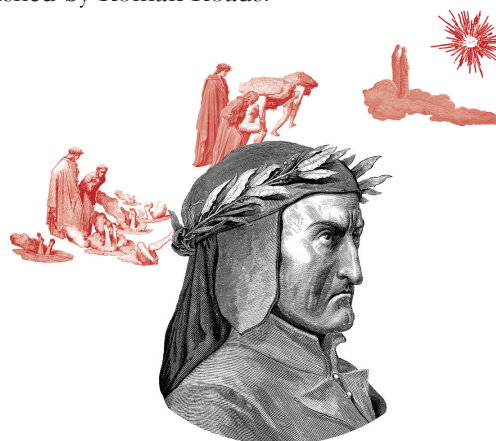
world and are called to heroically strive against the obstacles in our way, to overcome through virtue and faith, and embrace the dominion to which we are called.

**This is the prophetic mantle of an epic poet. He is moved by the inspiration of a higher will, called to inspire his readers with what can be in the here and now through a clear picture of what will be at the end of all things.**

Joe Carlson (PhD Literature) lives in Moscow, Idaho with his wife and son. He graduated from New Saint Andrews College with a BA in Liberal Arts in Culture, and from the University of Dallas with an MA in Humanities and a PhD in Literature. He has managed a chain of coffee

shops, published (micro) epic poetry, co-pastored a church, co-founded a university campus ministry, and taught many different kinds of classes over the years. Currently, he is an adjunct lecturer at New Saint Andrews College, a humanities teacher with Logos Online School, and a curriculum developer at Roman Roads Press. He is the author of, among other things, the Dante Curriculum, which includes

an original blank verse translation of the *Divine Comedy*, published by Roman Roads.

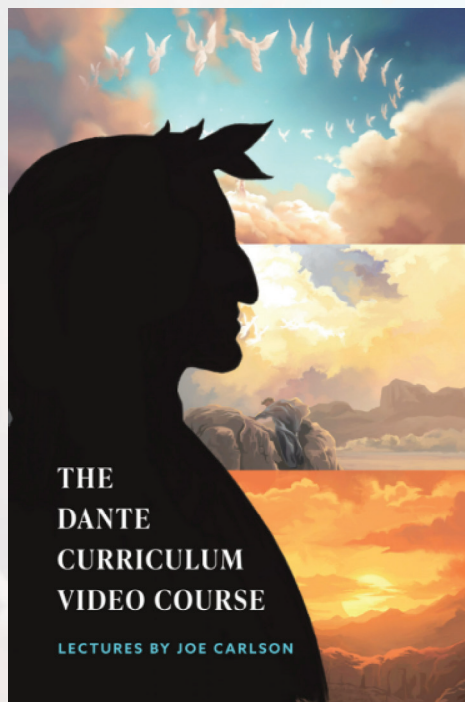


DANTE ALIGHIERI

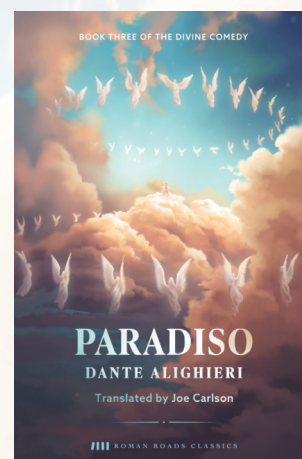
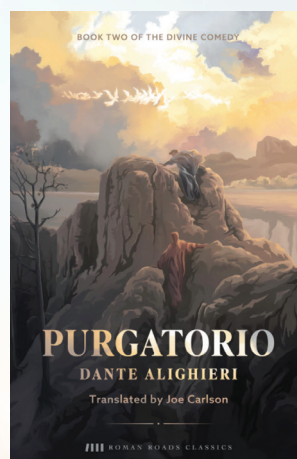
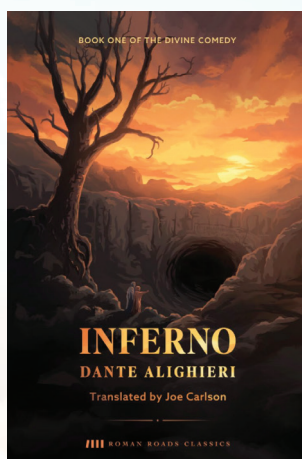
AD 1265–1321, Florence, Italy

**Learn about Dante Alighieri in Old Western Culture:  
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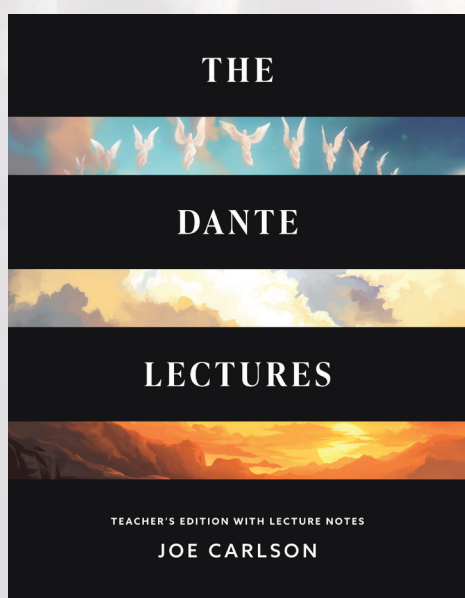
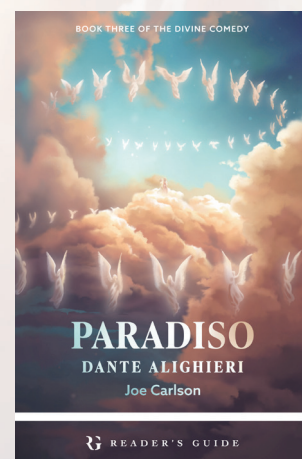
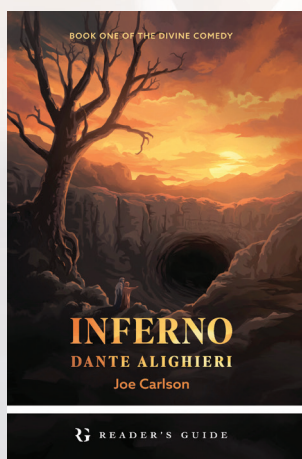
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## LITTERAE

### REFLECTIONS ON READING ALOUD

BY WES CALLIHAN



In one of his many delightful letters, the Roman nobleman, lawyer, and governor Pliny the Younger explains rather disconsolately to his correspondent that he had not been able to read lately... because he had a sore throat.

What? we ask. How can a sore throat keep a person from reading? If I had a sore throat I would take it as a wonderful opportunity to read in bed without feeling guilty about all the other things I needed to get done. Was it because the pain was too distracting? No. It's because reading, in the ancient and medieval worlds, was *always* done aloud, so a sore throat meant that your main organ of reading—your voice, not your eyes—was incapacitated.

Pliny's adoptive father, Pliny the Elder, had a slave whose entire job was to read aloud to him while he dressed, bathed, ate, or rode in his litter. There was no time to waste; there were too many books and too little time! But even when he read himself, he read aloud.

Everyone who reads classics is familiar with the story in Augustine's *Confessions* of his group of friends sitting in the cathedral in Milan watching in fascination as Ambrose, the great bishop and eloquent preacher, read from the Scriptures at the front of the church... in silence. The young Augustine and his friends wonder to each other at what the reason might be; but the point is that such behavior was most unusual and called for surprised comment.

There are isolated instances in ancient literature of people reading silently—in Euripides' play *Hippolytus*, Theseus silently reads a letter in the hand of his dead wife. Plutarch, writing in the early second century AD, says that Alexander the Great, in the fourth century BC, read letters from his mother silently, but his soldiers were astonished at this. Ptolemy, after whom the geocentric theory of the solar system was named, says in the second century AD that on occasion people read silently to keep their thoughts from being distracted by the sound of their

own voice—but it is clear that he is describing an odd phenomenon which requires explanation. In the mid-fourth century, Cyril of Jerusalem asks the women in church who are reading (presumably prayers or the psalter) while waiting for the ceremonies to begin to read quietly, so that only their lips move and so that others will not hear what they say. In other words, they were reading aloud—the normal thing—and he had to ask them to read quietly (though not silently).

But as a rule, reading silently did not begin to be anything like common until after the invention of the printing press halfway through the second millennium AD. As in the ancient world, evidence of silent reading shows in the Middle Ages. As often happened, a weary copyist in some monastery in the 8th century adds at the end of a manuscript that

“no one knows what efforts are demanded. Three fingers write, two eyes see, one tongue speaks, the whole body labors.” The tongue is as weary as the fingers and eyes. But in the next century, the first regulations requiring silence in the monastic scriptoria appear. And it’s not hard to imagine why. The Rule of St Benedict does not envision much

in the way of academic work in a monastery, but by the ninth century, the copying of manuscripts had become an important aspect of the work of monasteries in Europe where the decay of the old Roman world made the preservation of texts critically necessary. But it’s also not hard to imagine the low rumble of noise in a monastic scriptorium where several—or several dozen—monks are simultaneously muttering aloud to themselves, or being dictated to, as they work. So regulations requiring silence would have helped to preserve the desired monastic peace and silence—and given some rest to weary tongues.

But reading silently really became widespread in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Due to the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth

century, printed materials were suddenly available on a massive scale. Before Gutenberg, books were expensive and even the relative few who could afford them only owned a handful at most. Furthermore, until the invention of punctuation and the separation of words in a line of text, all of which happened at various points in the Middle Ages, reading aloud was necessary to make sense of the written lines. So all these changes made reading much easier. The evidence strongly suggests that reading aloud continued to be common well into the eighteenth century, but reading silently was no longer rare. Now we are so used to it that we think—wrongly—that it’s what humans have always done, rather than being a very recent phenomenon.

In a fascinating historical aside, the rise of reading aloud has a curious and close connection with the change in Western society in attitudes toward personal privacy. Again, we think that our attitude is how people have always been, but for most of western history, at least throughout the Middle Ages and until the eighteenth century, there was little privacy in anyone’s life, even in bed. Most people

lived in small houses with only one or two rooms and most people slept with others in the same bed, entire families in many cases. Even in the highest circles of society, that of the monarchs, this was the case—a queen’s handmaid in the Middle Ages might climb into bed next to her mistress for warmth just as entire families in the lowest dwelling would sleep together for warmth in winter.

But after the Middle Ages expectations changed regarding individual privacy, and bed curtains began to separate individuals from others in the room. And long after individual bedrooms became more common in middle class Europe and America and this purpose fell away, bed curtains still remained as

**Reading, in the ancient and medieval worlds, was always done aloud, so a sore throat meant that your main organ of reading—your voice, not your eyes—was incapacitated.**

decorative accoutrements and to preserve warmth in a cold room.

What does this have to do with reading? As bed curtains became more common and individuals found a new personal privacy behind them, they could do something people very rarely ever did before—they could read in bed! For many of us, this is a profound pleasure but one we take for granted. It is another very recent development in our civilization.

But think—if you want privacy while you read in bed, you won't find it reading aloud because people outside your bed curtains, perhaps sewing or repairing a harness or cooking a stew, will ask you questions about what you're reading. So you read silently. But when are we in bed? Generally at night when we need light. And until the invention and widespread availability of electricity—something even my own parents did not have until they were in high school in the 1940s in rural western America—if you want to read in bed, you have to use candles or lanterns, and suddenly fire becomes a problem. So in the eighteenth century, there are stories of people dying in bed because they fell asleep while reading with a candle burning which set fire to the bed curtains. Lord Walsingham died in 1831 because of just this, and his wife died jumping from a window to escape the fire. Samuel Johnson, the famous eighteenth-century author, dictionary composer, and contemporary of Gibbon, Adam Smith, and the Founding Fathers in America, read in bed so much that all of his wigs were burned back to the fabric mesh that held the hair, and his servant had to stand ready with a new wig to put on his master's head every time Johnson left his house.

One of the most famous opera singers in the eighteenth century, Caterina Gabrielli, about whom delightful and often hilarious stories are told, was once summoned to Sicily by the Viceroy to sing for

several engagements. At her first engagement she didn't show up. Servants were sent to find out why and she was discovered reading in bed behind the curtains, so engrossed in her book that she'd forgotten her engagement. She apologized graciously but refused to put down her book and leave her bed. Our hearts are warmed toward her.

Moralists in the eighteenth century warned that reading in bed was dangerous—fires, remember? But what they really worried about was moral degeneration. After all, what good could come from isolating oneself from the world and reading a novel? Shocking! We roll our eyes. But these moralists were onto something—though only dimly, they

grasped that a sea change was occurring in culture, from a more communal to a more individualistic attitude about human life and fulfillment. Along with everything else that was changing in this new Enlightenment age—a rise in materialist thought, a new reliance not on revelation but on reason because of the obvious power of the new sciences, the growing attack on Christianity via Deism, etc.—this individualistic attitude was part of a move away from the Christian world that had been building for fifteen hundred years, a Christian world which understood human good to be bound up in community with others.

This is not to say that reading silently, or privately, is anti-Christian. The history and philosophical relation of reading to the structure of civilization is infinitely more complex than that. But it is to suggest that there are vastly important issues hidden behind seemingly insignificant historical details, and worthwhile questions to ponder which are raised by innocuous and charming historical anecdotes.

What, for example, are the implications of reading aloud when reading good books versus reading silently? When you read aloud, three entrances of

**Along with everything else that was changing in this new Enlightenment age, this individualistic attitude was part of a move away from the Christian world that had been building for fifteen hundred years.**

knowledge are in use—the eyes, the ears, and the mouth. When your tongue, palate, throat, and lungs are shaped by the words you say, even as they are the ones doing the shaping, your whole person is being shaped by what you read, because you are more than a mind. King David may have meant more literally than we think his command to “*taste and see that the Lord is good.*” It is gnosticism to say that our bodies don’t matter when it comes to reading or thinking, just as it is gnosticism to say that they don’t matter in prayer or worship. Is reading silently gnosticism? It depends on the situation, the person, and the habit. *I will* say that reading aloud is *better* than reading silently.

Are there times when eating quickly is justified? Yes—if the food you’re consuming isn’t worth much. No one eats Doritos slowly, savoring each bite (at least no one I know). They’re not worth eating slowly. But no one in his right mind would hastily devour a Thanksgiving meal his mother had lovingly been preparing for days. That would be rude in the extreme to his mother, and he would get far less of the nutrition available. In the same way, some reading material should be devoured quickly—and silently, because you can read faster when reading silently—because it’s not worth anything more; news, blogs, etc., are the kind of Doritos reading that should be taken in quickly. But great books, poetry, anything into which time and energy has been poured by the author, these should always be read slowly, leisurely, lovingly, and aloud, as much as possible, in order to be charitable to the author and to receive as much of the nutrition as he put into the work. Remember that he was almost certainly muttering aloud as he wrote, and our reading should be no faster than the human pace at which he wrote, and we should hear what he heard as he spoke while he wrote. Aristotle said that letters are the signs of sounds. They are not meant to replace sounds.

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An old Latin adage goes like this: *verba volant, scripta manent*. This is most commonly translated something like, “words fly away, but written things remain.” The idea is that spoken words are ephemeral, but in writing there is permanence, a useful concept in law and politics, perhaps. But there is another way to understand this adage—written things remain fixed, fossilized, inert, lifeless. But when they are read, when they are spoken, they come to life and take wing and soar.

Wesley Callihan has taught the classics for over 25 years. He is the main lecturer for the Old Western Culture curriculum by Roman Roads Press that guides students through the great books of Western culture from a Christian perspective. He has also published a new prose rendering of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with Roman Roads Press. Wes has a history degree from the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho, and he has taught at both Logos School and New Saint Andrews College. He has six children, and many grandchildren.



**HOMER**

c. 850 BC, Ionia, Greece

Learn about Homer in  
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# TROJAN PENGUINS

## BEWARE OF SECULAR PUBLISHING HOUSES BEARING GIFTS

BY DR. JOE CARLSON



### WHAT TO THINK, NOT JUST HOW TO THINK

Education is not just teaching students how to think; it's teaching them what to think as well. The fully trained student, whose convictions and affections have been cultivated by the Word of God, whose loyalty to Christ has been proved through many different trials, both physical and spiritual, is equipped to sift through the dross of modern academia and find the nuggets of gold. And realistically, the student I have just described will never be the child in your classroom. Training takes years, decades even. It takes the multiplicity of life events, coupled with "a long obedience in the same direction" under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. The very real value you are giving to your students is necessary. But as I am sure you will agree, it is not sufficient. Your students are, Lord willing, well on their way toward that end. However, right now they are still very impressionable and easily distracted by the wrong thing. Teaching them how to think (logic, socratic dialogue, the right set of questions) is like giving them a hammer. But if that is all we give them, they will start using that hammer in potentially dangerous ways. They need to know what

the hammer is for, when to use it, when not to use it, what kinds of hammers go with what kinds of projects. More is needed than asking the right questions (the hammer); our students need the right answers as well (the instruction manual). And that is not something we should leave them to discover on their own.

Why am I emphasizing this? This seems fairly obvious, right? The problem is, if we don't teach our students what to think, the world will. The world is simply not concerned with teaching your students how to think: they want to dispense answers as quickly and as attractively as they can, before your student has time to process what is happening. And our students are in the world far more than we realize. Every internet ad, every social media post, every new video game, every hit song, every magazine cover at the grocery store, is an answer being foisted on your student's impressionable mind. Often, they don't even know what the question is, or have time to figure it out, before the world's answer has taken root. Put another way, if we are not consistently teaching truth, the lies will overwhelm them. If we are not daily drawing their affections toward what is true, good, and beautiful in explicit, demonstrable ways, their affections will be drawn toward whatever is shiny, attractive, and emotionally cheap.

## TROJAN PENGUINS

The importance of this was borne in on me recently after casually picking up my Penguin edition of *Paradise Lost*. As a teacher in the Classical Christian world, I value books. We all do. That's why we are here, to read and enjoy these great works together with our students. But then I stopped and read the back of the book. In the center of the description, I found this:

Long regarded as one of the most powerful and influential poems in the English language, *Paradise Lost* still inspires intense debate about whether it manages to 'justify the ways of God to men' or exposes the cruelty of Christianity and the Christian God. John Leonard's illuminating introduction is fully alive to such controversies...

To verify that this was true, I actually read the introduction. While Dr. Leonard is no doubt a very capable scholar, his introduction to *Paradise Lost* was seething with dismissiveness toward the Christian faith. His selection of critics to highlight, and godless commentators to feature, made it clear that he was telling the student *what* to think about *Paradise Lost*, clearly intimating that to argue Milton was a faithful Christian was ludicrous. This is not a unique stance. A friend of mine recently submitted an article to a prestigious Milton journal and was rejected because he, and I quote, "assumed Milton took Jesus seriously."

While the lower prices and nice formatting of Penguin Classics make them attractive, more often than not they are Trojan horses, designed to infiltrate the classroom and destroy the student's implicit faith

**The fully trained student, whose convictions and affections have been cultivated by the Word of God, whose loyalty to Christ has been proved through many different trials, both physical and spiritual, is equipped to sift through the dross of modern academia and find the nuggets of gold.**

in the sincerity of a certain author. Nowhere is this more evident than in the publication of classic works of Christian art (such as the very orthodox, Christian, and even Calvinistic *Paradise Lost*). And Penguin is not alone. The Oxford World's Classics are no better. In the Introduction to their edition of *Paradise Lost*, I find this gem, "*Paradise Lost* barely allows its heretical views to be seen; it similarly suppresses its politics. If the poem managed to have an immediate afterlife it was as much due to what was being denied as to its recasting of the founding myth of Christian culture." Do we want our students reading that? That the story of Genesis was a myth? That *Paradise Lost* is heretical? (Hint: it's not. To the extent that we think so, we have imbibed the secular scholarship, thus proving my point.) Yes, there is opportunity to defend both Milton and Scripture against such statements, but do we want to spend our limited instruction time on defending against false claims instead of positively instilling a wonder in our students for the text itself? Personally, I do not think our students need to be exposed to these made up controversies, fabricated to undermine the reader's

understanding of the *prima facie* meaning of the text, which for *Paradise Lost* is the magnification of the Son of God. Our education should not just build walls of critical thinking to rebuff falsehood. We should also be filling our classrooms with what is actually true! A thriving love for truth, an affection for the good, and loyalty to what is actually beautiful is the most powerful defense against falsehood.

And don't even get me started on the recent editions of the Norton Critical Editions series:

once great collections of solid criticism and commentary paired with the text, now chock full of feminist and gender ideology, again, *offering students answers*. And so I ask again, is this the best we can

do? Why do we allow these Trojan horses (or Trojan penguins) into our classrooms? Your students are not yet fully trained. They are not yet fully equipped to engage with the secular academic monolith that seeks to undermine the Christian faith wherever it may be found.

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*But... but... We can't have our students believing what the great Christian authors like Dante and Milton believed! That would undermine the decades-long efforts of our secular project!*

To which we reply: Yes, that's exactly right.

## THE ALTERNATIVE

Here is where you can help. We are at the beginning of a grand project to topple the Penguin. You can help us by not only using our versions of Homer, Dante, Milton, Cicero and others, but suggest the texts that you think would be most helpful to you right now, texts that need a solid Christian introduc-

tion or Reader's Guide, written from the perspective of teachers and professors who not only love literature, but love Jesus as well.

When it comes to texts for your classrooms, remember not only to consider your student's minds,

but their affections and their faith as well. We do this by training their intellects for the intellectual battle and by ordering their loves for the battle of their hearts. Secular introductions and in-text commentaries are an unrecognized and unseen no-man's-land, where we often leave our students undefended. But the book we read should not be shrouded in such a war. They should be orchards of truth, deep behind our own front lines, nourishing the minds and hearts of our children, not only training

them how to think, but giving them answers as well, answers that draw them to Christ.

Secular publishing houses are leaving gifts at the gate of your classroom. **Don't let them in.**

**Our education should not just build walls of critical thinking to rebuff falsehood.**

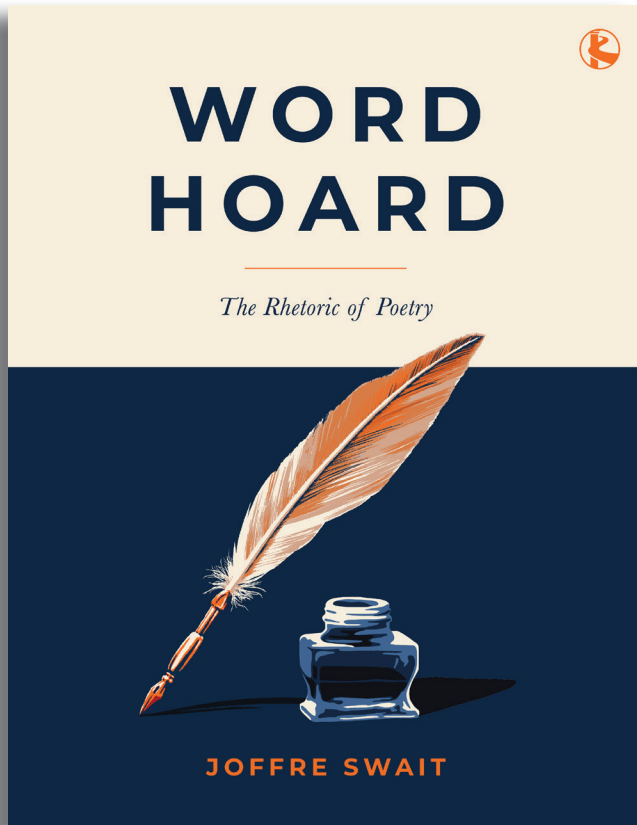
**We should also be filling our classrooms with what is actually true! A thriving love for truth, an affection for the good, and loyalty to what is actually beautiful is the most powerful defense against falsehood.**

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\*Some parts of this curriculum are forthcoming.

*Word Hoard: Poems Every Christian Should Know* is a collection of poems from the 13th to 20th centuries, from Geoffrey Chaucer to W. H. Auden. This anthology is both a companion to *Word Hoard: The Rhetoric of Poetry* and a standalone publication. With introductions by poet and teacher Joffre Swait, this book brings together in one volume some of the best poems of the English language.

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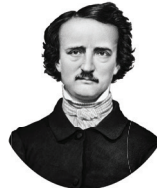
Geoffrey Chaucer  
1343–1400



John Milton  
1609–1674



Edgar Allan Poe  
1809–1849



G. K. Chesterton  
1874–1936



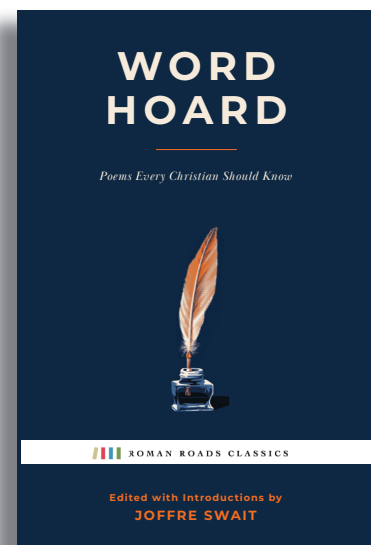
Edmund Spenser  
1553–1599



Anne Bradstreet  
1612–1672



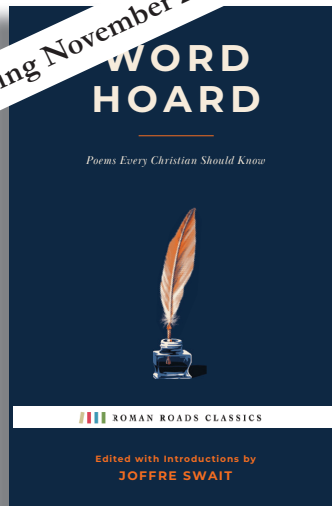
Emily Dickinson  
1830–1886



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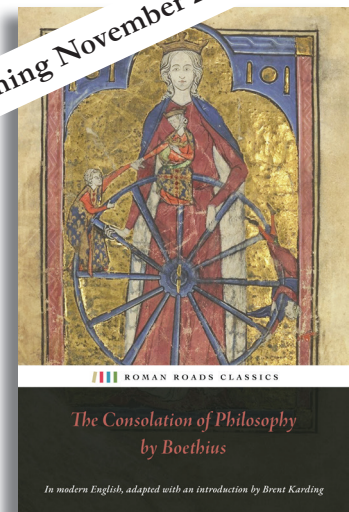
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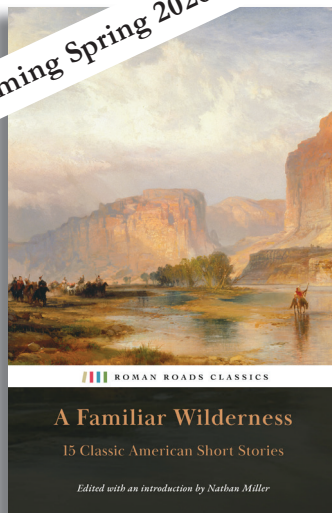
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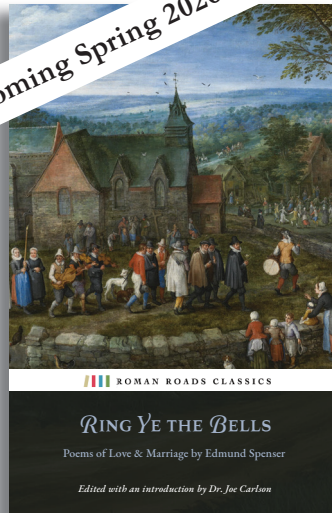
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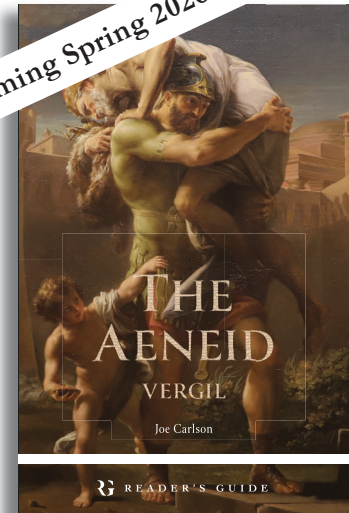
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## PEDAGOGICA

# WHAT, WHY & HOW TO TEACH A FIRE

BY REUBEN JANSEN



### WHAT IS THE STUDENT?

**T**he nature of the student will inform *what* we teach, *why* we teach what we teach, and *how* we teach what we teach. It is extremely important then that we (as parents and teachers) understand the nature of the student properly. Is he a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate which you can etch any image onto? Or is he more unpredictable, maybe even unruly?

Plutarch presents a dichotomy between two conceptions of the student with a helpful metaphor. He says, “The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled.” And Plutarch is right. The student is made in the image of the almighty God and his potential is not limited like a water bottle or a milk jug.

### WHAT WE TEACH

Even though as Christian educators we understand that we are tasked with caring for immortal souls, we often make curricular choices as if that were not the case, as if the pupils in our care were vessels like excel spreadsheets that need to be filled with certain data points.

We do this when we teach English grammar to 7-year-olds. (Before I make too many enemies, I should make clear that I do think grammar is important, but there is a better way to go about teaching grammar which I will allude to later.) Have you ever noticed that 7-year-olds can’t explain what a direct object is? I have, because I’ve experimented on them when they come into my choir class. I have yet to find a 7-year-old (or 8 or 9-year-old) who can explain

what a direct object is in their own words. They can sing a little jingle *about* direct objects, but they have no real idea what a direct object is, much less does the jingle improve their speaking or writing.

We do something similar when we teach young kids Latin chants and charts without teaching them how to say anything in Latin. Proponents of this kind of curricular choice will say, “Sure, they don’t know what it all means now, but some day they will!” Translate this into Plutarch’s metaphor and you get, “Sure, they’ll be fires someday, but for now they’re just vessels.”

What about math? The math curricula I’ve seen teach divisibility rules. And divisibility rules (like English grammar and Latin chants) are not inherently bad. But what does the curriculum require? That the students simply memorize the facts, not that they contemplate the rules. A student that can figure out how the rules for divisibility by 2, 4, and 8 work (it’s easier than you think. Hint: 2 goes into 10 and 4 goes into...) might try to figure out how the rule for 3 works, and whether or not there’s a rule for 33 (there is, and it’s a doozy). This student sounds like a fire that has been kindled. But, “Don’t worry, Sam, it doesn’t matter why the rule for 3 works; you just need to memorize it. Plus, we have one-hundred-nineteen other lessons to get to, so we don’t have time for that!”

## TREATING THE STUDENT LIKE A VESSEL

What we teach ought to be informed by our understanding of the nature of the student, but it’s not enough just to teach the right things; we also have to teach the right things for the right reasons. Often when we give students bad reasons to justify why they are learning something, it is because we have

forgotten that the student is a fire, and we have begun to view them as a vessel. When we justify our curricular choices, the primary way we err is by explaining to the students how practical this or that subject will be for them when they’re adults.

To understand what utility has to do with treating the student as a vessel, consider the nature of a vessel. Vessels come in certain shapes and sizes, and we fill them with certain things so that they will be useful in specific circumstances. We fill a vase with flowers, and we fill a cooler with ice and beverages to bring to the beach. But vessels are not very pliable: each vessel is designed for a certain function and when you try to use a vessel “off-label” you run into problems. Try filling your vase with ice and drinks.

First, you’ll only be able to fit a quarter of the drinks you want, and second, your vase doesn’t have wheels or a lid which means most of your ice will be spilled on the sand. You might look pretty hip on the beach with your vase cooler, but you will still be thirsty.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with a vessel. But a vessel is meant to be filled for some

predetermined purpose. And here is the point: this is not the nature of a student. A student is not “that which will someday perform a certain function in society.” A student is not a future engineer or a future landscaper. He might be an engineer or a landscaper in the future, but that is not what he is, that is just what he will do. And yet when a student asks, “Why do we have to learn this?” a teacher most often responds with something like, “Well, you’re going to need it if you’re going to be an engineer/doctor/manager” which sounds an awful lot like the task of the teacher is to figure out what career path a student is destined for (what kind of a vessel he is). It is as if the teacher has a handful of little rectangular candies and tries them on all the students just to see if anyone might be a Pez dispenser.

## TREATING THE STUDENT LIKE A FLAME

There is nothing wrong with utility, and if a student didn't learn anything useful over thirteen years at school, that would be cause for concern. The point is that utility is not a good motivator because it does not take into account what a student is. When a teacher uses "utility" as a rationale for something the student is learning, the teacher implies that the student is a vessel and not a flame. A vessel is static, designed for one job, but a flame is alive and sometimes unruly; there's no telling where it might end up. A vessel that holds one liter will never hold two, but a flame, when it's finished licking up these branches, might go looking somewhere else.

If we want our students to be like a flame, if we want them to pursue learning without compulsion, we need to help them find the right motivations. There are three things that motivate the child who is a flame, three things which touch the soul: truth, beauty, and goodness. Utility is great, but it does not deserve a place among those three. When God created *ex nihilo* it was not utility that prompted Him. When He sent His Son to the cross, He didn't make a pros and cons list with all the practical implications on the left-hand side. What practical benefit did God derive from His very good creation? What practical benefit did God receive from making His Truth incarnate?

The student is made in the image of this God who does not appear to be all that concerned with practical implications. When God makes a covenant with his people, He is not concerned with getting the better end of the deal. In human terms, God gets by far the worse end of the deal. How is that practical? So, when a student, an image-bearer, asks, "why do we need to learn this?" he is not asking why something

is practical or how it will boost his future salary by three percent. The student wants to know that what he is learning is true, good, and beautiful, not just for the future, but for the present as well. When we pursue truth, beauty, and goodness, we find that the Lord graciously adds unto us everything that we need. "All these things will be added unto you" is true for education as well. When we seek first the Kingdom of God in educating our children, God gives us the things that we need, the practical stuff, the food, drink, and clothing.

## WHY WE TEACH WHAT WE TEACH

There is not enough space here to consider all the true, good, and beautiful reasons for learning any subject, so a single example will have to suffice. Latin is perhaps the best place to start because it is the most common target of the question, "Why do we have to learn this?" The Latin teacher is quick to list all the practical benefits of learning Latin: it teaches English vocabulary, it teaches English grammar (better than an English grammar textbook can), and Latin teaches students to think analytically at blazing

When we pursue truth,  
beauty, and goodness,  
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everything that we need.

speeds. All these things and more are true, but they are not good reasons for learning the subject, because the child is not a thing that is destined for some job that requires, for instance, blazing fast analytical skills. Instead, these are just some of the useful secondary benefits of learning Latin.

The primary reason for learning Latin is to read Latin texts in their original language. It is difficult to describe how different it is to read the opening lines of the *Aeneid* in Latin than it is in English. If it were possible to describe what it's like to read a certain verse in Latin, then an English translation would be a perfect equivalent. "Arms and the man

I sing” works pretty well, it even preserves much of the rhythm of the original (which is integral to Latin poetry), but it feels odd to begin an English sentence with a direct object. Not only that, but “the man” is an atypical direct object for the English verb “to sing.” In Latin, however, sentences often begin with direct objects, and it is not uncommon to see objects like *virum* (man) for the Latin verb *canere* (to sing).

You may have heard of a foreign word that doesn’t translate into English. *Gezellig* is a good Dutch example. It’s often translated as “cozy,” but a Dutchman will be quick to explain that “cozy” doesn’t quite capture it. You might be cozy reading a good book in the morning with a cup of coffee, but the scene couldn’t be described as *gezellig* because *gezellig* never happens when you’re alone. You might ask the native Dutch speaker what the word really means, and even though he understands the word perfectly, and even though he speaks English fluently, he won’t be completely satisfied with the explanation he gives you. What this means is that the Dutch speaker is able to have a thought that is captured by the word *gezellig* that you as an English speaker just can’t understand.

The same is true of Latin, and even more so than Dutch, because Latin differs from English a lot more than Dutch does. There are thoughts and there are ways of presenting thoughts in Latin that an English speaker cannot comprehend... yet. And this perhaps gives us a glimpse into the reason why God gave us so many languages. We cannot grasp an infinite God in all his glory with finite language, but many languages get us further than just one.

Another great reason to learn Latin is that Latin is the language of our ancestors. Learning the Language of one’s ancestors is a joy in itself. As I learn Dutch, the language of my grandparents, I can imagine, “My opa used this phrase when he was just a

boy.” When I started learning, I wrote (and continue to write) letters to my oma in her mother tongue, something that I never did in English.

Since we are all inheritors of Western Civilization, our grandparents spoke Latin. Vergil, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Newton, Jefferson, Tolkien, Lewis, the list of men who shaped the world we live

in (our grandparents), and loved Latin, goes on. I don’t know whom I will see first, my great-grandfather who only spoke Dutch or Augustine who spoke Latin, but when I go to glory, I am excited to speak to both in their native tongues.

Reading glorious texts in their original language (thinking thoughts that can only be thought in another language) and learning the language of one’s ancestors are just two reasons for learning Latin that touch the soul, that motivate the student who is a living, breathing fire to be kindled.

Understanding that a student is a fire and not a vessel informs what we teach and why we teach, but it will also inform how we teach.

## HOW WE TEACH WHAT WE TEACH

Understanding that a student is a fire and not a vessel informs what we teach and why we teach it, but it will also inform how we teach. Latin serves as a good example again.

Perhaps the vessel analogy will make a lot of sense to people who have spent any time doing declension charts in Latin. In many Latin classes, students get empty charts (empty vessels) to fill with different endings, and in many cases the students do not understand what these endings are for. Students who learn this way typically do not hanker for more.

There is nothing wrong with memorizing declension charts. I have used them with my students to help organize what they know, and we’ve also used charts for review. The problem is when the charts become an end in themselves. If Latin quizzes only

ever test the declension endings but there is no translation or composition section, then there's a good chance the students aren't actually learning Latin and will quickly burn out.

*Picta Dicta Latin Primer* teaches Latin through examples, much like the way we learned our mother tongue, but with a systematic, incremental approach. Some of *Picta Dicta Latin Primer*'s illustrations are funny. Every third-grade boy chuckles when he sees the example in Chapter Five *digitus in naso est* (the finger is in the nose). The curriculum uses jokes because it understands what the student is. It understands that a third-grade boy loves comedy and will go home and tell his parents a joke in Latin. It's important to get the child speaking Latin, desiring to communicate in Latin, because the child who can say, "The finger is in the nose," desperately wants to know how to say, "The finger is in the beehive," and how do you say, "bee sting" and, "The boy ran away crying"?

When Latin is taught this way (or when any subject is taught with a proper understanding of the

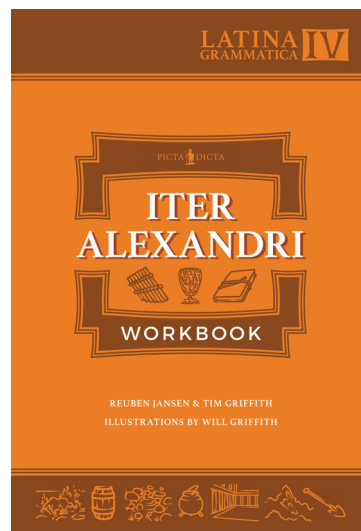
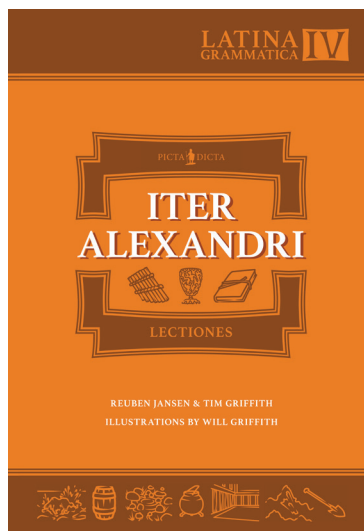
child) it is easy to see how a student may be compared to a fire. Fires grow of their own accord. They don't necessarily stay where you set them, and when it comes to students, this is very exciting. More than exciting, it is a major goal in education. We don't want our students to cease learning in twelfth grade or after they've gotten their bachelor's degree. We want them to learn new languages, learn math, read history, and read the Bible for life. The way we get there is by starting with a proper ontology of the student (knowing who and what they are) and making sure that we are consistent with our ontology in what we teach and how we teach it.

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Reuben Jansen (New Saint Andrews College, BA '16) is the author and illustrator of the *Picta Dicta Latin Primer*. He teaches Latin, Music, and Math in a small Classical Christian school in North Carolina.

## INTRODUCING GRAMMAR 4

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SEE PAGE 53 FOR MORE INFORMATION

# HUMANITAS

## WHY LITERATURE STILL MATTERS

### *And How to Teach It Like It Does*

BY DR. SCOTT POSTMA



#### THERE WAS A BOY CALLED EUSTACE CLARENCE SCRUBB, AND HE ALMOST DESERVED IT.

**T**he *Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* begins with this remarkable introduction of Eustace because he is C. S. Lewis' protagonist in this particular story. And by the end, Eustace (his name means good harvest) will be converted by the story, the gospel story, which, in effect, makes this a story about the power of story; it is literature about why literature still matters.

Unfortunately, there are many ways in which literature has been attacked, misrepresented, misused, avoided, dismissed, cancelled, treated as an ornament in the store window, or just turned over to utility, and it is perilous not to confront these attitudes toward literature. If we fail to realize its real useful-

ness toward moral sensibilities and fostering human flourishing, literature will not just become irrelevant. It will become a dangerous tool in the hands of postmodernist theorists.

Literature still matters because it teaches us what the real world is like, it provides us with some perspective on the flow of history, and it has the potential to strengthen the moral life of the reader. There are other reasons why literature still matters, but here I will focus on these three, and then conclude with some tips for educators on how to teach literature like it does matter.

#### LITERATURE AND REALITY

C. S. Lewis' friend, J. R. R. Tolkien, who was a notable author in his own right, explains that imaginative literature like Lewis' Narnia series of which fantasy is the core, works toward something he calls recov-

ery, “the return and renewal of health, the regaining of a clear view” of our primary world.<sup>1</sup>

Fantasy is made out of the Primary World, but a good craftsman lives his material, and has a knowledge and feeling for clay, stone and wood which only the art of making can give. By the forging of Gram cold iron was revealed; by the making of Pegasus horses were ennobled; in the Trees of the Sun and Moon root and stock, flower and fruit are manifested in glory.<sup>2</sup>

Because it is easy for us to get caught up in the monotony of daily life and miss those important signs and features of reality, Tolkien says, “We need... to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness.”<sup>3</sup>

While there are other, albeit more inadequate, means of cleaning our windows and regaining a clear view of our world, imaginative literature like Lewis’s Narnia series accomplishes this thoroughly. This type of literature animates our imaginations to teach us what the real world is actually like.

The modern world that Eustace had come to know through his “books on information” and his life under the supervision of Harold and Alberta is an artificial, faddish world characterized by minimalism and socialized institutions; it is cold and sterile and all the people are vegetarians, non-smokers, and teetotalers; and, instead of dragons, there are only dead beetles pinned on a card.

In contrast, we learn in *The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader”* that the world is often unpretentious and

routine, then suddenly dangerous and stormy. It is a world where real friends are virtuous, forgiveness is necessary, and redemption is possible. It is a world where nobility is something to be desired, where people can be very different from each other in many ways, but all share the same way of celebrating—feasting with food and drink. It’s a world filled with many delightful gifts, but a world that is also filled with hard work, perilous adventures, and real, live, fire-breathing dragons.

## THE FLOW OF HISTORY

In his 1976 classic, *How Should We Then Live?*, Francis Schaeffer famously asserted,

There is a flow to history and culture. This flow is rooted and has its wellspring in the thoughts of people. People are unique in the inner life of the mind—what they are in their thought world determines how they act. This is

true of their value systems and it is true of their creativity. It is true of their corporate actions, such as political decisions, and it is true of their personal lives. The results of their thought world flow through their fingers or from their tongues into the external world. This is true of Michelangelo’s chisel and it is true of a dictator’s sword.<sup>4</sup>

**Literature still matters because it teaches us what the real world is like, it provides us with some perspective on the flow of history, and it has the potential to strengthen the moral life of the reader.**

In *The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader,”* Eustace is lost when confronted with the harsh realities of the real world because he had read all the wrong books. He had read plenty of books on exports and imports and governments and drains but all those books were weak on dragons. He loved picture books with grain

1 J. R. R. Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories” in *Tree and Leaf: Including Mythopoeia and The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2001), 57.

2 Ibid., 59.

3 Ibid., 58.

4 Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 19.

elevators and fat foreign children doing exercises in model schools, but the wonder of ancient treasure possessed by most boys had never fired, let alone forged, his imagination; he had no idea what dragons were or what treasure was for.

To gain this kind of historical perspective, a person must read what C. S. Lewis called “the old books.” Lewis says,

If you join at eleven o’clock a conversation which began at eight you will often not see the real bearing of what is said... sentences in a modern book which look quite ordinary may be directed at some other book; in this way you may be led to accept what you would have indignantly rejected if you knew its real significance. The only safety is to have a standard of plain, central Christianity (‘mere Christianity’ as Baxter called it) which puts the controversies of the moment in their proper perspective. Such a standard can be acquired only from the old books... Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period and that means the old books.<sup>5</sup>

Lewis goes on to explain that the unfortunate thing about reading only modern books is that they weaken our guard against and increase our blindness to error. He says, “Where they are true they will give us truths which we half knew already. Where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill. The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing

through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books.”<sup>6</sup>

Lewis’ words remind us that there is a body of literature, sometimes called the Great Books, or “the best that has been thought and said in the world,”

and “a collection of things remembered” from which to draw so that we might think through the big ideas that have shaped the various ages of western history.

The reason so many young people today are being hoodwinked by bad old philosophies dressed up in modern garb, why so many so-called conservatives, even Christians, are surprised with the emer-

gence of some of the watershed political movements like Critical Theory, or with the rise of petty tyrants, or even with things like gender confusion, same-sex marriage, and the most recent twists on racism is because as a society, we have not been reading the right books, the old books.

If this generation had been reading the right books, we would have known something about dragons and we would be little surprised by their behavior. Additionally, we would have recognized the valuable treasures that have been accumulated in western society, and why it is important to conserve these treasures.

## THE MORAL LIFE OF THE READER

Finally, literature still matters because it has the potential to shape the moral life of the reader for the better. Though it is much debated—yay, even ridiculed—by modern literary critics, this belief has long been held by the classical tradition from Aristotle, who held that the mark of good literature was its ability to satisfy the moral sense, to Sir Philip Sidney who asserted that the poet “comes unto you, with

<sup>5</sup> C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 218–219.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 220.

a tale which holds children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner, and, pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue.” (*Poetics*, Book XIII)

Commenting on Sidney’s *Defense of Poetry*, Lewis explains in what way literature satisfies and shapes the moral sense (hint: it’s not in the way so many suppose). Lewis writes,

‘The respectable theory that poetry is ‘delightful teaching’ is here ready to slip into the manifestly absurd theory that the scenes and the persons of the poem are mere examples, in themselves as arbitrary and sapless as the symbols of algebra. But any such development is precluded by the whole nature of Sidney’s thought. If poetry does not ravish, it is for him nothing. The ‘Golden world’ which it presents must be set forth ‘in so rich Tapestry’ as Nature never knew, must lure us into itself. The images of virtue are no mere *moralitas*, no powder hidden under jam. They are the final sweetness of that sweet world, ‘the form of goodness, which seen we cannot but love’.

The assumption that the ethical is the aesthetic par excellence is so basic to Sidney that he never argues it. He thought we would know.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, literature still matters because it allows us to recognize forms of goodness that serve to order our loves. Even stories that we would argue are not “good stories” in their own right, stories that perpetuate a less than desirable worldview, are stories that must interact with the grand story of God and the cosmos as it has been set forth by Him.

7 C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the 16th Century Excluding Drama*, ed. Frank Percy Wilson and Dobrée Bonamy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 346.

Terry Eagleton, who wrote one of the most standard works on literary theory, asserts that “If literature matters today, it is chiefly because it seems to many conventional critics one of the few remaining places where, in a divided, fragmented world, a sense of universal value may still be incarnate; and where, in a sordidly material world, a rare glimpse of transcendence can still be attained.”<sup>8</sup>

## TEACHING LITERATURE LIKE IT MATTERS

In order to teach literature like it matters, educators must separate learning from grade achievement and instead focus on cultivating literary people. This is better accomplished—or at least there is more hope of accomplishing it—by removing the various contenders with and obstacles to the pedagogical authority of the text. This means that the teacher must also recognize and submit to the pedagogical authority of the text to the classroom. In *Humane Education*, Donald Verene wisely observes,

The dull teacher may have knowledge but not true language for it. Such a teacher can instruct but has not ability to delight or move, and thus is boring. The comedic teacher is shallow and a menace to the subject matter, because such a performer is a sham. The comedic teacher is a sophist and enjoys the success that the sophist often enjoys. The comedic teacher’s aim is audience satisfaction and often such teachers are

the recipients of rewards. Neither boredom or comedy is sustaining for the student. The

Literature still matters because it allows us to recognize forms of goodness that serve to order our loves. Even stories that we would argue are not “good stories” in their own right must interact with the grand story of God and the cosmos as it has been set forth by Him.

8 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 208.

truth of the subject matter is what makes possible both the teacher and the student.<sup>9</sup>

The teacher must also approach the Western Canon by engaging it Socratically, as a body of things remembered, by asking good questions. To cite Verene further:

This Dialectic between the theoretical and practical is what motivates the discussion of the truth of the text or subject matter in humane thought. Socrates is the inventor of the question. The question opens up the subject. The starting points of thought are always metaphors. Thus in studying the text, the student should first be directed to locate the metaphors, the “root metaphors,” so to speak. The meaning of these metaphors becomes the subject of the question. What is held in the

metaphor begins to be cognizable. One question leads to another because we are always ignorant of the shape of the whole.<sup>10</sup>

In a world of would-be literary assassins, literature still matters because it teaches what the real world is like, provides perspective on the flow of history, and it has the potential to strengthen the moral life of the reader. But for it to be effective, educators must believe literature matters in these particular ways and teach it like it does.

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Scott Postma (PhD) has served as a minister for 20 years and been a Christian educator for more than 25 years. He is the CEO of Kepler Education, an online education platform, where he has taught Old Western Culture among other courses. Scott regularly writes for his substack, *Books and Letters*, at ScottPostma.net.

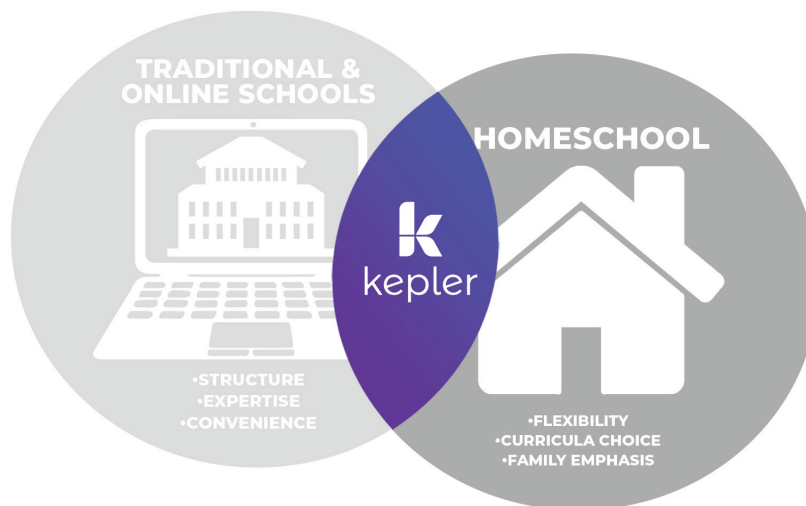
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<sup>9</sup> Donald Phillip Verene, *The Art of Humane Education* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 23.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 27–28.

## FINALLY.



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## IN MEDIAS RES

### “A MYRIAD EYES”

#### *Creating the Right Kind of Reader*

BY CHRISTIANA HALE



How should we define a “good book?” Who gets to decide on the metrics? *Are* there in fact metrics that a book must meet to be considered “good”? In C. S. Lewis’s book *An Experiment in Criticism*, he presents an alternative. Rather than classify a book by what kind of book it is, he suggests instead that books be classified by what kind of reader reads them. Perhaps, the book has no need of meeting an arbitrary list of metrics. Perhaps, a good reader isn’t someone who reads good books, but instead good books are those read by a certain sort of reader.

But if we adopt, for a moment, Lewis’s proposed method, a natural question will arise—how does this change our conception of what makes a good book? Suddenly, the world of “good books” expands to include any book in which a discerning reader finds something of value. It is not limited to “highbrow” books that some erudite academy of scholars has

deemed (after much intense deliberation) to include on the list of great books. A great or good book is, quite simply, a book read by a great or good reader. Which leads to another question—what is a great or good reader?

Educators or parents often ask themselves how they can encourage their students to enjoy reading or perhaps how they can get them to read more “good books.” However, the focus should rather be less on the kinds of books we encourage our students to read and more on the types of readers we want them to become. We seek to shape readers who will *create* the lists of the good books—the next generation of the curators of culture and the archivists in the halls of great literature. What does this type of reader look like? A good reader is one who reads widely and deeply, who reads with discernment and enjoyment in equal measure.

And so, what then? If we want our students and children to be this type of reader (and we should), then first we must endeavor to be this type of reader ourselves. And it starts with first avoiding the common pitfalls of both the overly scrupulous and the indiscriminate.

## A DIET OF WORDS

Words feed us. Stories feed us. When we read, we take in what we are reading in a very particular way. Just as we digest food in such a way that it essentially becomes a part of us—breaking down and giving energy to our cells, sending nutrients where needed, causing us to grow and change physically—so too do our reading habits shape and mold us as individuals. We recognize this, even subconsciously, in the way that we talk about reading: we all know “voracious readers,” or that some people “devour books.” And just as it matters what and how you eat, it obviously matters how and what you read. Reading choices are *shaping decisions*, just as food choices are. It is common knowledge that a diet of corn dogs and ice cream not only affects the shape and function of your body, but it also affects your tastes. It is possible to lose the ability to enjoy a truly spectacular meal. After subsisting on Twinkies, a decadent French patisserie may present nuances and refinement that are beyond the partaker’s ability to understand or even enjoy. In much the same way, a steady diet of only one author, or even one genre, limits a reader’s ability to broaden their horizons. Certain types of literature will soon seem out of reach or beyond them. They are imprisoned by their own “taste” and so are not free to explore entire worlds that wait just out of reach.

Just as it matters *what* you read or eat, it also matters *how* you read or eat. Everyone recognizes a picky eater or glutton. When it comes to food, we typically

spot the misuse of this blessing fairly easily. But when it comes to reading? What are the ditches to avoid there? If our goal is to create the types of readers who have the discernment and freedom to determine which books ought to be read, then we need to be aware of the pitfalls that await the unsuspecting.

## THE PICKY EATER

The picky eater is someone who, for one reason or another, is limited to a few types of food by their own tastes or perhaps by outside pressures to conform to an expected standard. These are the same temptations that face readers. A picky reader is limited in what he enjoys and what he is *able* to enjoy. Perhaps this is a

self-imposed state. They long ago decided that they prefer western romance to every other type of literature and so anything else is beyond their grasp. Or anything else does not live up to their expectations of what literature *should be* (i.e. western romance). The personal tastes of the reader have stolen the steering wheel and

have, therefore, crossed many roads off the map for being “too steep” or “too long” or “too close to the mountains.” But if the mountains are never attempted, they will never have any idea of the sort of view they are missing from the top. The reader whose personal taste has become the standard by which all literature is judged is ill-suited to the task of declaring which books are “good” and which are not. They are not free to make those decisions. Their own tastes have chained them to an arbitrary standard that rejects the majority of literature out of hand, because it does not fit into their narrow category of “approved” reading.

Picky eaters can also arise because of outside pressures—pressures from the tastes of the group as a whole or the pressure from desire for excellence, a desire that can likewise stem from the individual or the group. Ironically, this kind of pressure is often ex-

**We seek to shape readers who will create the lists of the good books—the next generation of the curators of culture and the archivists in the halls of great literature.**

exercised to push readers in completely different directions—either to reject what he sees as the common, crass “popular” fiction of the masses or to reject works of high literary merit simply because they have been lauded by the austere critic and appear on every list of “top 100 books you should read before you die.”

The desire to stand out or blend in, to only read that which is as deep as the Mariana Trench or to only paddle about in the warm, shallow waters of the kiddie pool—all of these are temptations of the picky eater. To reject certain books out of hand because they are a “certain kind of book” or because a “certain kind of person reads them” is to banish oneself from a myriad worlds, a myriad conversations, a myriad minds with a myriad thoughts that are all part of the reality of God’s world. Lewis says that “it sometimes sounds as if the reading of ‘popular’ fiction involved moral turpitude. I do not find this borne out by experience.”<sup>1</sup> Lewis himself admits enjoying what he calls popular fiction. He was a broad reader, not afraid to spend a morning on the Alpine heights of what we would call “great literature” before descending to the shallows of the pool in the afternoon. Emulating this attitude towards reading involves training, discipline, and the desire to know and experience that which has been previously considered unapproachable. Whether they are there by choice or circumstance, because of pressure from within or pressure from without, the blinders on picky readers need to be removed before those readers can make larger claims about what constitutes good literature.

## THE GLUTTON

In contrast to the picky eater, we have the glutton. When it comes to eating, once again it is easy to spot extreme excess, either in the sheer amount of food

consumed or in the disproportionate amount of “unhealthy” foods in an eater’s diet. But in reading, this weakness is harder to spot, in part because we are no longer a reading culture. In a world of video games and gaming apps on phones, movies and streaming services, social media and personalized algorithms (all entertainment platforms that don’t require literacy or even extended, focused attention), we are quick to see readers *of any sort* as automatically belonging to the intelligentsia, at least at some level. Parents are happy to see their kids read at all. Never mind what. In the realm of food, indiscriminate consumption is just as unhealthy, just as deadly, as excess consumption. In other words, *what* you put in is just as important as *how much* you put in.

While seeking to avoid the snobbery of the picky eater, we should be willing to paddle in the shallows. There is nothing inherently wrong with enjoying a fluffy piece of popular fiction, just as there is nothing wrong with going to the county fair and eating an elephant ear the size of three dinner plates. But if you eat elephant ears for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, you will soon have a whole host of problems. Readers willing to consume junk food indiscriminately, perhaps out of disdain for the snobbishness of the picky eater, can quickly turn into picky eaters themselves, only veering the other direction. The shallows, after all, are warm and easy to paddle in. It’s colder out in the depths and the waves are high and choppy. Unfortunately, they don’t often stop to think about just why the shallows have so many warm patches.

But the other danger that the glutton faces is the refusal to put down a book. They read everything they can get their hands on and there is a sort of pride of place in the fact that they are a ravenous reader. Not finishing a book is quitting. It is a mark of shame or cowardice. But the fact is, there are some truly horrible books out there that simply ought not to be read.

1 C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, 5.

And if our goal is to create the sorts of readers that have the wisdom to make those calls, to call the bad literature bad and the good good, then they need to *practice* doing this. Some books need to be read all the way through, despite their error, in order to intelligently articulate precisely why they are so dangerous. Others do not deserve that time and attention. There are millions of books in the world, and lifetimes would not be enough to read them all. Willingness to put a book down because it fails to deliver enough that is praiseworthy to pay for the time spent is called discernment, not cowardice. The victory of finishing that massive deep-fried, triple-stacked hamburger in one go before washing it down with a jumbo soda and a ride on the Gravitron loses its luster when you're puking your guts out in the parking lot. Finishing, all by itself, is no virtue. The virtue is found in the direct object—finishing *what*?

## CONCLUSION

What guards the good reader from treating a tragedy [...] as a mere vehicle for truth is his continual awareness that it not only means, but is. It is not merely *logos* (something said) but *poiema* (something made). The same is true of a novel or narrative poem. They are complex and carefully made objects. Attention to the very objects they are is our first step. To value them chiefly for reflections which they may suggest to us or morals we may draw from them, is a flagrant instance of 'using' instead of 'receiving.'<sup>2</sup>

We return once more to Lewis's suggestion in *An Experiment in Criticism*—that books are more accurately assessed by what kind of readers read them than what kind of books they are. Instead of

<sup>2</sup> *Experiment in Criticism*, 82.

saying that bad readers are those who read bad books, why don't we try saying that good books are those read by good readers? We've seen what a good reader is not. So what then is a good reader?

A good reader is a *free* reader. Pickiness and gluttony, in different ways, shackle the reader and enslave him to his own tastes and appetites. A reader who is free reads with broad discernment. He can pick up any book, receive it with gratitude, knowing that he has the tools to assess it fairly and accurately. He picks up the book, not seeing it as an object to be placed under a microscope and dissected, but as a living whole, an organism that will act on the reader just as much as the reader is acting on it. "We are so busy doing things with the work that we give it too little chance to work on us. Thus increasingly we meet only ourselves. But one of the chief operations of art is to remove our gaze from that mirrored face, to deliver us from that solitude."<sup>3</sup> A spirit of criticism, Lewis argues, ought to be subjected to a spirit of receiving. We receive the work first as it presents itself. We should be open and willing to let the book, the author, work on us as they intend. Criticism only follows this readiness to enjoy what has been put before us.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was

in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:1–5)

**Willingness to put a book down because it fails to deliver enough that is praiseworthy to pay for the time spent is called discernment, not cowardice.**

If we are Christians, that means, by definition, that we must be people of words. Because we are people of *the* Word. The Word that is Christ, the Word that is a Person, the Word that created all things and that continues to up-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

hold all things. You might not be a big reader. Your kids might not be big readers. But none of us has the option to not be in the Word. If you are in Christ, you are in the Word and this means, among other things, reading your Bible. And if you are going to read your Bible, you need to know *how* to read it. We need to know how to be the kind of readers that we ought to be—free readers, not chained to any pre-conceived tastes or prejudices. Readers that freely receive, prepared and willing to be shaped by what we receive.

[I]n reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in

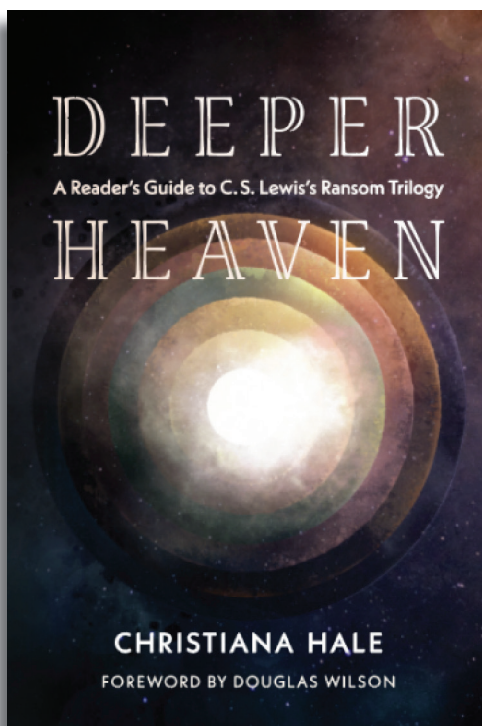
knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.<sup>4</sup>

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Christiana Hale is a graduate of New Saint Andrews College (B.A. '15, M.A. '17, M.F.A. in Creative Writing '22). She teaches junior high and high school Latin and English literature at Logos School in Moscow, Idaho, as well as persuasive writing and C. S. Lewis electives at New Saint Andrews College. She is the author of *Deeper Heaven: A Reader's Guide to C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*, and is currently working on two middle-grade novels and a reader's guide to C. S. Lewis's novel *Till We Have Faces*.

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<sup>4</sup> *Experiment in Criticism*, 141.



DeeperHeaven.com

C. S. LEWIS' RANSOM TRILOGY, better known as "the Space Trilogy," is a much-neglected and yet critically important part of Lewis' works. It has captivated and bewildered readers since its publication, and though hundreds of books about Lewis have been written, few seek to navigate the maze that is Lewis' "space-travel story." These books are a distillation in novel form of one of Lewis' favorite subjects, a subject whose melody is woven into almost everything that Lewis ever wrote: the Medieval Model of the cosmos.

*Deeper Heaven* is a guide and companion through the magical web of medieval cosmology, ancient myth, and critique of modern philosophies that makes up the oft-maligned "Space Trilogy." A student and teacher of literature and history herself, Christiana Hale will walk you through the Trilogy one step at a time, with eyes fixed where Lewis himself fixed his: on Deep Heaven and beyond. In the process, many questions will be answered: What does Christ have to do with Jupiter? Why does Lewis care so much about the medieval conception of the heavens? Why should we? And, perhaps the most puzzling question of all: why is Merlin in *That Hideous Strength*?

## MUSICA

# MUSIC AND MEMORIZATION FOR CHILDREN

BY KATIE BOUMA



It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Two of my siblings were getting married within the space of three months. The best. And in all the busyness of wedding preparations, social events, and travels, I had neglected one of the highlights of our homeschool year—the annual scripture recitation at our homeschool co-op. The worst.

I felt terrible about being the homeschool mom who had not only dropped the ball but watched it slowly bounce away all semester long. Each week I had put off the memorization project for other things, while our family's recitation date crept steadily closer. As terrible as I felt, my guilt was nothing compared to the horror of my second-grade daughter and first-grade son when they were informed that they had only one week to memorize all 18 verses of Psalm 115.

And yet, the night before our co-op recitation, my husband and I found ourselves sitting on the couch watching our two youngsters recite the entire Psalm. There were no painful pauses, no dead silences, and no eyes roving around the room as brains wandered, searching for words. They calmly quoted all 18 verses with accuracy and composure. One whole chapter in only a week. How was that possible?

*Music.* Music has become our favorite way to help our children with any kind of memorization—whether it is Scripture, state capitals, or science facts. Rhythm and melody form a glue that keeps all the pieces of even lengthy passages in place. Here are some of the reasons that I like using music as a memory tool in our homeschool curriculum:

It is *Engaging*. Our children are like most in that they are easily drawn to music. They become men-

tally, emotionally, and physically engaged when they are presented with new information through music.

It is *Efficient*. We spent our first years as homeschool parents preparing our children for recitations by simply repeating verses over and over. After a long week of grueling repetition, our student usually mastered the selection. But now with music in the mix, we spend a fraction of the time memorizing, as their minds seem to absorb facts through music like paper towels over spilt milk.

It is *Versatile*. Many people associate memory songs with trite, bite-sized academic facts, but music can be used to shape minds and hearts in non-academic ways as well. Fred Rodgers is well-known for using music to teach children about how to understand and manage their feelings. Our family uses songs and chants to teach our children about practical life skills (but I promised my husband that I wouldn't share our toddler's "bathroom song" here).

It is *Communal*. The communal aspects of music are well-acknowledged and far-reaching. In the context of a homeschool family's memory songs, we have come to appreciate how easy it is for siblings to sing their memory projects together, and for us parents to join in. This resource has brought us all a great deal of joy as we learn and remember together.

These are just a few of the ways our family has been blessed by music as a tool to fill our children's minds with good, true, and beautiful words. But once the words are there, how do you get them to stick? It's amazing how quickly a young mind can pick up a new piece of information, but if you're not careful, it can be lost quickly too.

One excellent read for any home educator is *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning* by au-

thor Peter Brown and two cognitive scientists named Henry Roediger and Mark McDaniel. At one point in their book, they share a study involving two groups

of Cal Poly baseball players who spent batting practice either 1) hitting curveballs over and over again, or 2) hitting random pitches. The group that exclusively hit curveballs used a method that the authors call "massed practice." This group initially seemed to improve more than the second group. The second group

that spaced out curveballs with other pitches employed "interleaved practice," and although they saw slower improvement at first, in the end the batters experienced longer-lasting results.

Massed practice can lead to something called "the fluency illusion." This phenomenon is very common among high school and college students who regularly (and casually) glance over readings or study notes, and assume that because of their repeated exposure to the material, they are learning it.

But repetition by itself doesn't guarantee memory. Why? Because massed practice is easy, and the human brain does not remember information that is easily come by as thoroughly as it remembers information that is harder to come by. In other words, there is a degree of desirable difficulty when learning and

recalling information. The authors of *Make it Stick* put it this way, "Where more cognitive effort is required for retrieval, greater retention results."

A related principle of optimal memory function has been popularized by Benedict Carey, a science writer for *The New York Times*. He talks about the concept of "distributed learning" in his book, *How We*

*Learn*. When a person spaces out their study of a subject instead of concentrating it (i.e. cramming), the result is that a person can learn "at least as much, and retain it much longer." He asserts that in some

**Rhythm and melody form a glue that keeps all the pieces of even lengthy passages in place.**

**Children become mentally, emotionally, and physically engaged when they are presented with new information through music.**

cases, distributed learning can “double the amount we remember later on.”

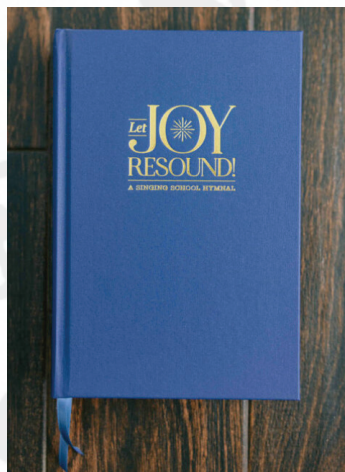
Memory songs can be used in a way that takes advantage of these principles of cognitive function. I think of our songs as little bags that make it easy for our children to carry around all kinds of information wherever they go. We can avoid the fluency illusion by using interleaved learning as we sing through a variety of information, instead of repeating the same facts over and over. And we can apply the principle of distributed learning by regularly revisiting the songs we have learned.

We spend a lot of time in our minivan singing and chanting through many pieces of memorization—Scripture, math, history/biography, poetry, science, and more. Each song can be conveniently pulled out, reviewed, and then returned to its corner of the brain for next time. Memory songs are en-

joyable, accessible, and portable, and when combined with key principles of optimal learning and memory function, they can be a powerful method for building up the minds and hearts of our children.

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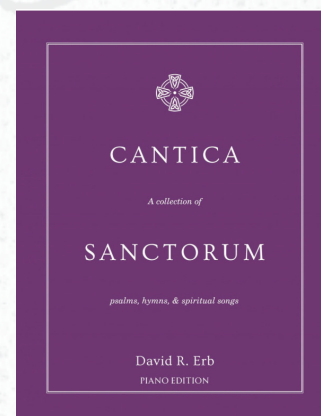
Katie Bouma is a writer and musician from Ventura, California. She was raised in a musical homeschool family of 10, and is now a homeschool mom herself. After graduation New Saint Andrews College, she and her siblings launched Saunders family folk band—Saticoy. Their original folk music is inspired by good, true, and beautiful sources such as Scripture, classic literature, and creation, to name a few. The band’s latest project involves writing Scripture songs that children and parents can enjoy together. For more information go to <https://tinyurl.com/saticoysongs>. Katie currently lives in Moscow, Idaho with her husband and children.



*Let Joy Resound: A Singing School Hymnal* is a project that was created to fulfill the need for schools and homeschools to have a succinct collection of hymns and psalms that can help foster a singing school or home where songs resonate throughout the room, halls, kitchen, chapel, and more. While we want to purposely train our children to be fully musically literate, we also want to give them a body of songs that can produce a singing culture. Not all hymn tunes and texts are equally accessible and effective in producing this goal. The hymns and psalms in this volume are joyful, vigorous, and hearty to sing. Whether you purchase these hymnals in bulk for your convocation or chapel gatherings or your own personal collection and devotion of historic hymnody, *Let Joy Resound* will be a helpful tool in promoting a singing culture that is steeped in the best of hymnody over the centuries.

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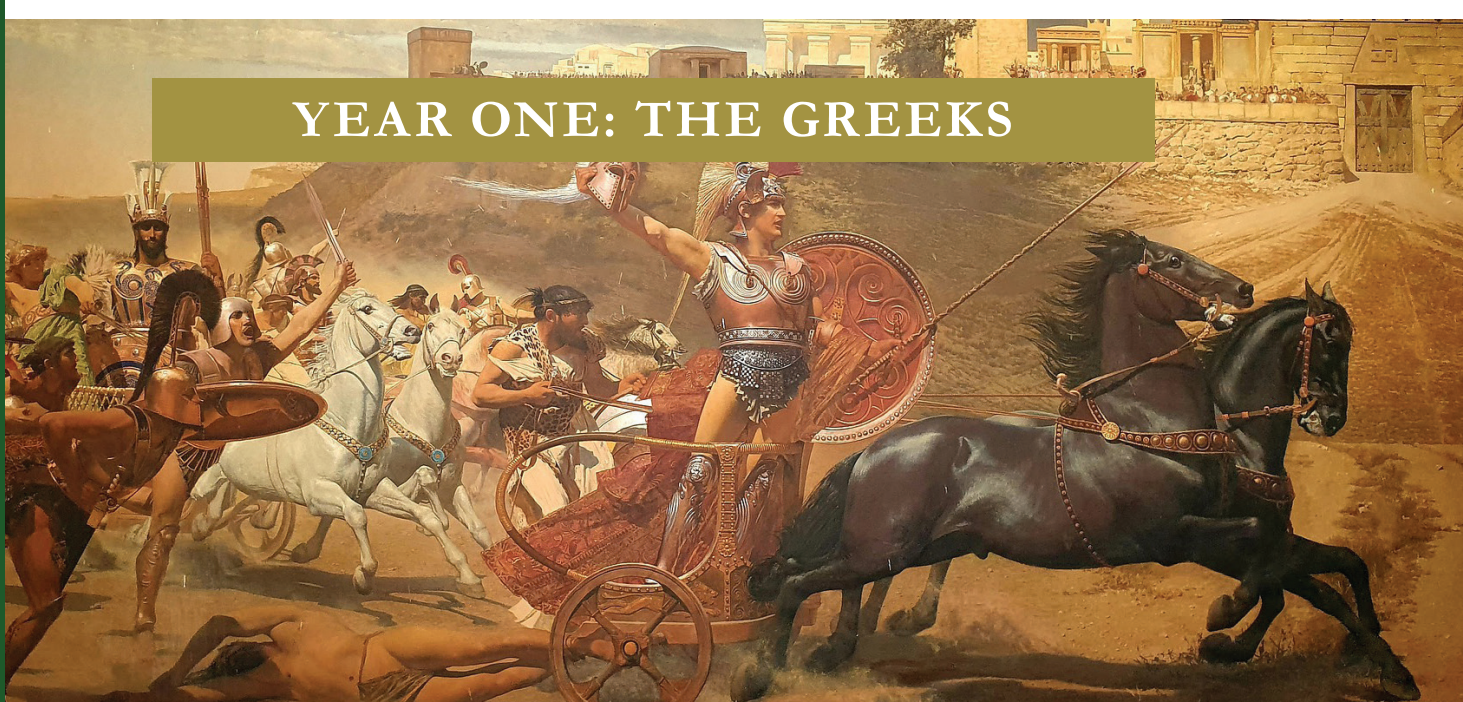
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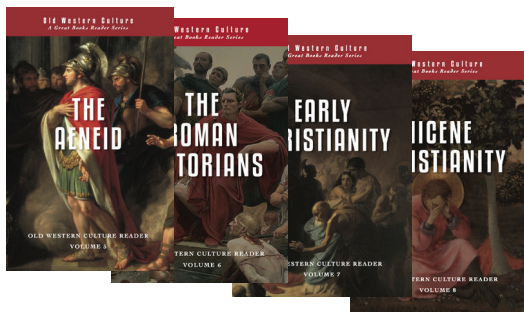
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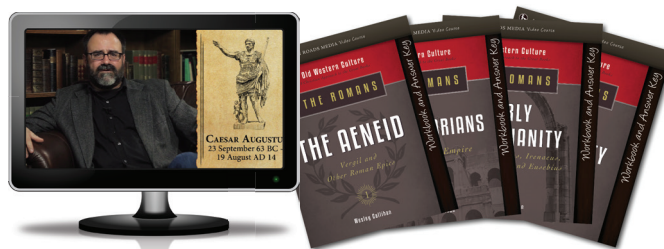
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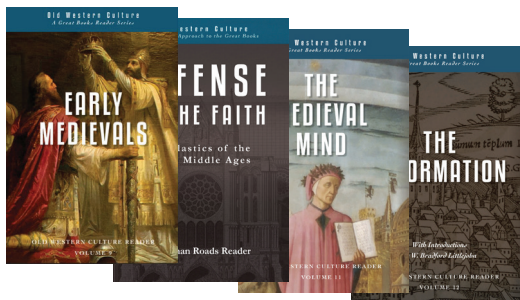
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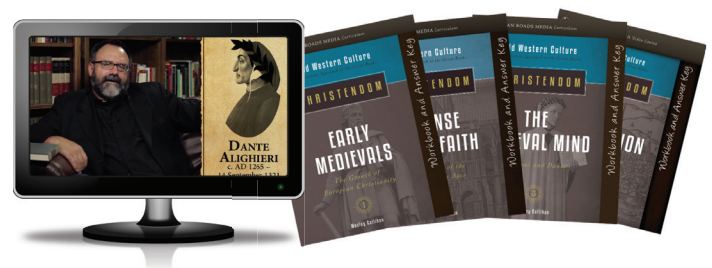
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- *Life of Charlemagne* by Einhard
- *Life of Alfred* by Esser
- *The Fount of Knowledge* by John of Damascus

### Unit 2: Defense of the Faith

- *Proslogium & Monologium* by Anselm of Canterbury
- *History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth
- *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine
- *The Conquest of Constantinople* by Geoffrey de Villehardouin
- *The Life of St. Louis* by Jean de Joinville

## VIDEO LECTURES & WORKBOOKS



### Unit 3: The Medieval Mind

- *Compendium* by Thomas Aquinas
- *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri

### Unit 4: The Reformation

- *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
- *Clericis Laicos & Unam Sanctam* by Boniface VIII
- *Defensor Pacis* by Marsilius of Padua
- *Sacrosancta & Frequens* by The Council of Constance
- *Julius Exclusus* by Erasmus of Rotterdam
- *Ninety-Five Theses, Letter to the Christian Nobility, Babylonian Captivity of the Church & The Freedom of the Christian* by Martin Luther
- *Exsurge Domine* by Leo X
- *The Schleithem Articles* by Michael Sattler
- *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* by Philip Melancthon
- *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin
- *The Decree of Trent* by The Council of Trent
- *Spiritual Exercises* by Ignatius of Loyola
- *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* by Zacharias Ursinus
- *Book of Common Prayer* by the Church of England
- *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* by John Foxe
- *An Admonition to Parliement* by Field and Wilcox
- *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Politie* by Richard Hooker
- *The Faerie Queene, Amoretti & Epithalimion* by Edmund Spenser

# YEAR FOUR: EARLY MODERNS

## THE TEXTS



**Base Curriculum:** Video Lectures (forever streaming)  
PDFs of readers, workbooks, and exams **\$299**

**Add-Ons:** Early Moderns Readers (print edition) **\$32 ea.**  
Early Moderns Workbooks (print edition) **\$16 ea.**

## LIST OF WORKS

### Unit 1: Rise of England

- *Sonnets, King Lear, Richard III & The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare
- *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning, Holy Sonnets X and XIV & Meditation XVII* by John Donne
- *Redemption, The Collar & Love III* by George Herbert
- *To His Coy Mistress* by Andrew Marvell
- *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity, On His Blindness, On the Late Massacre in Piedmont & Paradise Lost* by John Milton

### Unit 2: Poetry and Politics

- *Essay on Criticism, Essay on Man & Ode on Solitude* by Alexander Pope
- *Reflections on the Revolution in France* by Edmund Burke
- *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Coleridge
- *Intimations of Immortality & The Solitary Reaper* by William Wordsworth
- *She Walks in Beauty & The Destruction of Sennacherib* by Byron
- *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer* by John Keats
- *Ode to the West Wind* by Percy Shelley
- *The Lady of Shalott, In Memoriam, The Eagle & Crossing the Bar* by Alfred Tennyson

## VIDEO LECTURES & WORKBOOKS



- *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister, My Last Duchess & Fra Lippo Lippi* by Robert Browning
- *Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold
- *Song, A Better Resurrection & A Birthday* by Christina Rossetti
- *God's Grandeur, Windhover & Pied Beauty* by Gerard Hopkins
- *The Cask of Amontillado, Anabel Lee, To Helen, The Raven & The Bells* by Edgar Allan Poe
- *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville

### Unit 3: The Enlightenment

- *What is Enlightenment* by Emmanuel Kant
- *The Sidereal Messenger, Letter to Benedetto Castelli & Letter to the Grand Duchess* by Galileo Galilei
- *Discourse on Method & Meditations* by René Descartes
- *Laws of Gravity and Motion, General Scholium & Optics* by Isaac Newton
- *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* by David Hume
- *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* by Thomas Reid

### Unit 4: The Novels

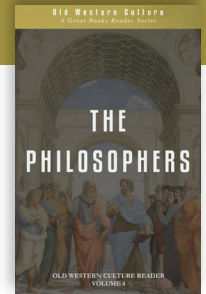
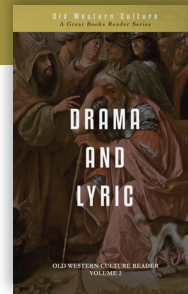
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
- *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
- Excerpt of *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky
- *The Bet* by Anton Chekhov
- Excerpts of *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien
- *De descriptione temporum, Xmas and Christmas & On the Reading of Old Books* by C. S. Lewis

## PURCHASE THE READERS



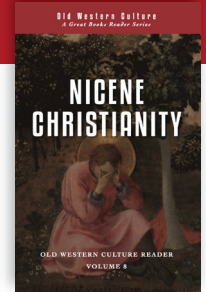
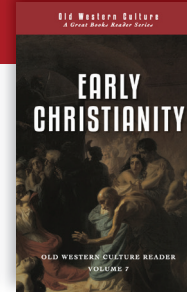
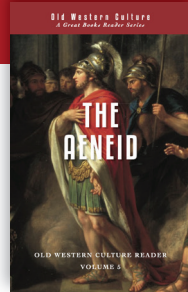
## YEAR ONE: THE GREEKS

- Volume 1: The Epics
- Volume 2: Drama and Lyric
- Volume 3: The Greek Histories
- Volume 4: The Philosophers



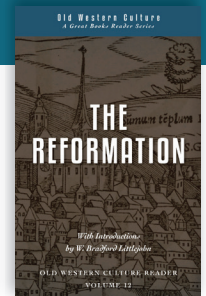
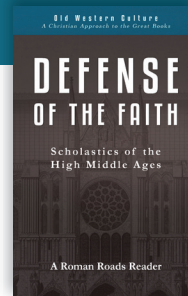
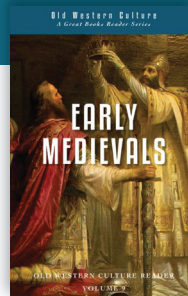
## YEAR TWO: THE ROMANS

- Volume 1: The Aeneid
- Volume 2: The Roman Historians
- Volume 3: Early Christianity
- Volume 4: Nicene Christianity



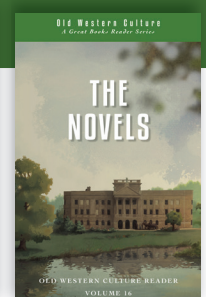
## YEAR THREE: CHRISTENDOM

- Volume 1: Early Medievals
- Volume 2: Defense of the Faith
- Volume 3: The Medieval Mind
- Volume 4: The Reformation



## YEAR FOUR: EARLY MODERNS

- Volume 1: The Rise of England
- Volume 2: Poetry and Politics
- Volume 3: The Enlightenment
- Volume 4: The Novels



# THE DANTE CURRICULUM

A new blank verse translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and comprehensive curriculum by Joe Carlson

TEXT • READER GUIDES • VIDEO CURRICULUM • INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION  
• AUDIOBOOKS • TEACHER RESOURCES

This new translation by Joe Carlson combines a very close reading of the original Italian with an accessibility that seeks to faithfully imitate what Dante himself accomplished in his masterpiece of a poem. It is rendered in Blank Verse to maintain a sense of the poetry, without being constrained by the limiting nature of English rhymes. The text includes comprehensive summaries for each canto, along with a scattering of footnotes when needed. All other notes and explanations are in the Reader's Guide, along with a semi-pastoral analysis of each canto. It is our hope and prayer that this new edition will help remove whatever obstacles stand in the way of modern students (and parents!) enjoying and delighting in this great work of art. As Christians, it is part of our shared heritage; it is a work for us to enjoy in the deepest sense, helping us to perceive the glory of God, leading us to our own beatific visions of the Triune majesty.



Blank Verse Translation **\$21.95 ea.**

Reader's Guide **\$18.95 ea.**

The Dante Curriculum Video Course **\$74.75**

The Dante Lectures: Teacher's Edition **\$45.95**

JOE CARLSON (PhD Literature) lives in Moscow, Idaho with his wife and son. He graduated from New Saint Andrews College with a BA in Liberal Arts in Culture, and from the University of Dallas with an MA in Humanities and a PhD in Literature. He has managed a chain of coffee shops, published (micro) epic poetry, co-pastored a church, co-founded a university campus ministry, and taught many different kinds of classes over the years. Currently, he is an adjunct lecturer at New Saint Andrews College, a humanities teacher with Logos Online School, and a curriculum developer at Roman Roads Press. He is the author of, among other things, the Dante Curriculum, which includes an original blank verse translation of the *Divine Comedy*, published by Roman Roads.

"To accompany his smooth and literate translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Joe Carlson has put together a series of excellent Reader's Guides that provide the necessary historical, literary, philosophical, and theological background. More than that, he provides incisive analysis that draws out the deeper Christian meanings and carefully-worded discussion questions that will challenge students and teachers alike to explore the full dimensions of Dante's great epic. A great resource for homeschooling parents and classical Christian teachers."

~ Louis Markos, author of *The Myth Made Fact: Reading Greek and Roman Mythology through Christian Eyes*

The Dante Curriculum Complete Bundle **\$243.40**

# DEEPER HEAVEN

## A READER'S GUIDE TO C. S. LEWIS'S RANSOM TRILOGY

by Christiana Hale

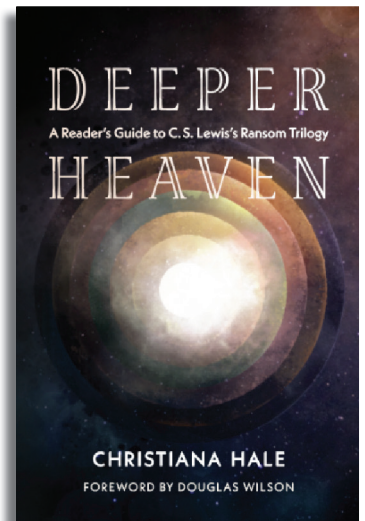


C. S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy, better known as "the Space Trilogy," is a much-neglected and yet critically important part of Lewis's works. It has captivated and bewildered readers since its publication, and though hundreds of books about Lewis have been written, few seek to navigate the maze that is Lewis' "space-travel story." These books are a distillation in novel form of one of Lewis' favorite subjects, a subject whose melody is woven into almost everything that Lewis ever wrote: the medieval model of the cosmos.

*Deeper Heaven* is a guide and companion through the magical web of medieval cosmology, ancient myth, and critique of modern philosophies that makes up the oft-maligned "Space Trilogy." A student and teacher of literature and history

herself, Christiana Hale will walk you through the Trilogy one step at a time, with eyes fixed where Lewis himself fixed his: on Deep Heaven and beyond. In the process, many questions will be answered: What does Christ have to do with Jupiter? Why does Lewis care so much about the medieval conception of the heavens? Why should we? And, perhaps the most puzzling question of all: why is Merlin in *That Hideous Strength*?

CHRISTIANA HALE (New Saint Andrews College, B.A. '15, M.A. '17, M.F.A. in Creative Writing '22) spends her days teaching Latin and English literature to over a hundred energetic junior high and high school students at Logos School in Moscow, ID, a classical Christian school seeking to train students with the kind of education that produced such minds as Lewis and Tolkien. When not teaching or writing works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, Christiana spends time with her parents and siblings, and enjoys the rolling hills of the Palouse and the deep woods of North Idaho. Sometimes, she even goes stargazing. **\$26.95**



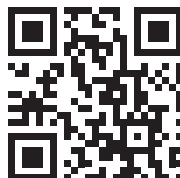
### Interviews with Christiana Hale

- The Eric Metaxes Radio Show
- Pints with Jack podcast
- Digressio podcast
- Muse and Hearth podcast
- The Renaissance of Men podcast
- The Gracious Guest podcast
- The Inklings variety Hour
- Christian Nerds Unite podcast
- Feminine Not Feminist podcast
- The Two Trees podcast
- Book Fare

All interviews can be watched at [DeeperHeaven.com](http://DeeperHeaven.com)

"Christiana Hale has done C. S. Lewis's readers a great service with this very well-written and carefully researched guide to the Ransom Trilogy. It is a thoughtful and helpful study of three novels that are often misunderstood but which, as the years go by, are increasingly showing their value and importance. Warmly recommended."

~ Dr. Michael Ward, author of *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis*



# PICTA DICTA

Picta Dicta is revolutionizing the world of Latin education by returning to the classical principles of learning Latin combined with today's technology. Using sight, sound, and context, students gain an intuitive grasp of Latin beginning in Primer I. Level-based readers that students enjoy are introduced early in the curriculum. The six levels take students from Zero to Vergil culminating in the reading of classical Latin texts.

## LATIN PRIMER SERIES



## LATIN GRAMMAR 3 & LATIN GRAMMAR 4

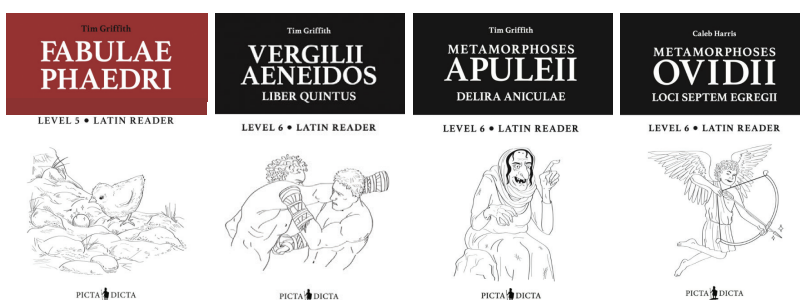


Visit [RomanRoadsPress.com/Latin](http://RomanRoadsPress.com/Latin) for up-to-date pricing on the Picta Dicta Latin program and components.

## LATIN READERS SERIES



Puer et Monstrum (Level 1/2 Reader)	\$22
Fabellae Simples (Level 1 Reader)	\$22
Mustelae Piratae (Level 1 1/2 Reader)	\$22
Marcus Mirandus (Level 2 Reader)	\$22
Marcus Captus (Level 2 1/2 Reader)	\$22



Fabulae Phaedri (Level 5 reader)	\$32
Vergilii Aeneidos (Level 6 reader)	\$32
Metamorphoses Apuleii (Level 6 reader)	\$32
Metamorphoses Ovidii (Level 6 reader)	\$32

# GRAMMAR OF POETRY

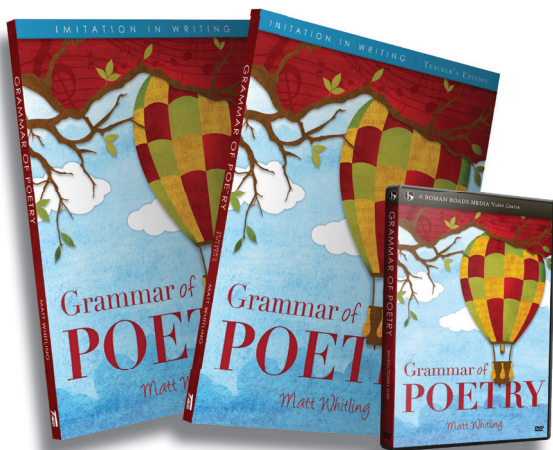


*“We are people of the Word,  
therefore we should be people of words,  
and that means learning how poetry works.”*  
- Douglas Wilson

*Grammar of Poetry* is the ideal introductory poetry course for students and teachers discovering the art of poetry. As a “grammar,” it teaches the fundamentals of poetry from scansion and rhyme to more advanced concepts like spatial poetry and synecdoche. Using the classical methodology of imitation

(advocated by educators like Quintilian and Benjamin Franklin), this text makes students become active participants as they learn the craft of writing poems. It also offers practical tips and helps, including how to use a rhyming dictionary, how great writers use figures of speech effectively, and even when to break the rules of poetry. Its goal is to show students how to capably interact not just with poems, but with language in any situation.

Developed and used at Logos School with great success, the thirty lessons in *Grammar of Poetry* contain instruction on ten powerful tropes, student activities for every chapter, riddles to solve, a glossary of terms, a list of over 150 quality poems to integrate, and real-life examples from Shakespeare to traditional tongue twisters. It is designed for a semester at the 6th–9th grade level, but is perfectly appropriate for anyone with basic writing skills and the desire to learn poetry.



Grammar of Poetry Student Text	\$22
Grammar of Poetry Teacher's Edition	\$24
Grammar of Poetry Video Course (DVD + streaming)	\$85
Grammar of Poetry Complete Package	\$131

## Why Study Poetry?

“Poetry teaches, shapes, edifies, and enriches us not by giving us a lecture, but by inviting us into an experience. Poetry surrounds us and ushers us into an imaginative landscape where we meet timeless truths in beautiful language. And the humility required to enter that landscape, one we don’t fully understand, teaches a better lesson: it fills our hearts with wonder. That wonder in turn gives us the right lens with which to see the world around us. This world is itself a poem, spoken in meter and rhyme by the Master Poet. If we are to begin to comprehend the beauty and wonder of the created landscapes around us, let alone the majesty of the Creator Himself, our eyes and ears must be attuned to the cadences of verse. For in poetry we touch the taproot of all living things.”

~ Joe Carlson, author of the new blank verse translations of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* published by Roman Roads Press

# FITTING WORDS

## CLASSICAL RHETORIC

**“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” ~ Proverbs 25:11**

Rhetoric is the art of using words well, and is measured by our ability to teach men the truth, to move men to goodness, and to delight men with verbal beauty. Effective speaking and writing is informative, powerful, and elegant. *Fitting Words* is a course that instructs students in the art of classical Rhetoric, providing them with tools of communication that will equip them for life. Intended for high school students and above, *Fitting Words* is a complete curriculum covering a year of instruction. In this course, students will learn the theory of using words well, study the greatest speeches of all time, and practice the skills of effective oratory.



Fitting Words Textbook	\$59
Fitting Words Student Workbook	\$24
Fitting Words Video Course (Blu-ray or DVD + streaming)	\$89
Fitting Words Answer Key	\$22
Fitting Words Exam Packet	\$10
<b>Fitting Words Complete Package</b>	<b>\$204</b>

### ***Fitting Words: Classical Rhetoric for the Christian Student—Seven Reasons Why***

#### **1. It is a curriculum.**

Rhetoric is the capstone of a classical education. In rhetoric, the student learns to synthesize the elements of his education, and to deliver his words with conviction, elegance, and persuasiveness. Because we all speak every day, rhetoric is one of the most important courses within a curriculum.

#### **2. It is comprehensive.**

*Fitting Words: Classical Rhetoric* is not a companion book. It is not a help. It is a complete and robust rhetoric curriculum, training students in the five skills of oratory: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery.

#### **3. It is Christian.**

The Lord presents Himself as a speaking God, accomplishing His will by His word (Isaiah 55:11). *Fitting Words* is anchored on the Word of God and written from a Christian perspective. Examples from Scripture are used throughout the lessons, and an appendix identifies more than 500 speeches in the Bible.

#### **4. It is classical.**

For thousands of years, the fathers of western civilization, including our church fathers, were trained in classical rhetoric. We desire to turn this generation back to the education of these great men. *Fitting Words* synthesizes the teachings of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, Augustine, and more, following the historical, classical tradition.

#### **5. It is a product of experience.**

*Fitting Words* is written by Roman Roads staff who have experience teaching classical rhetoric to young people.

#### **6. It is beautiful.**

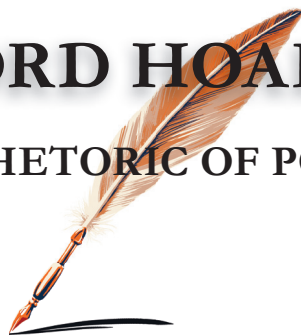
*Fitting Words* is beautifully designed and illustrated, balancing elegance with clarity.

#### **7. It is practical.**

Every lesson includes exercises for students to practice the concepts learned, discussion questions for thinking deeper, book suggestions for reading further, and a variety of thought-provoking quotes for developing memory.

# WORD HOARD

## THE RHETORIC OF POETRY



THIS BOOK IS A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO NOBILITY through understanding and wielding the English language in its most elevated forms. It is an exercise book on truth, beauty, and goodness as spoken.

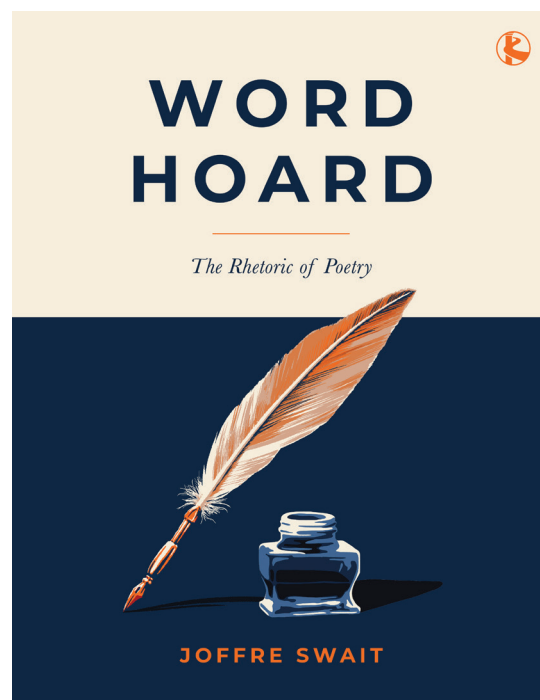
This book will help grow your skill and confidence in poetry, your aesthetic sensibility, and your rhetorical performance. As you will soon learn, our words are our greatest treasures, our finest tools, and our most dangerous weapons. As speakers of the good word, the good-spell, the gospel, we will not allow the destroyers and robots to hold the field.

As English speakers, we have an incredible poetic heritage. We come from a people who mightily and manfully valued verbs and verse. The speakers of Old English loved their swordplay and their poems and their poems about swordplay.

In this book, you will have the opportunity to read three different poems about snipers, and study each to learn its distinct virtues. You will learn about the technical aspects of poetry as a carpenter learns how to handle his tools: poetry was made for man, not man for poetry. There is no other curriculum on the market that will teach you how to love poetry and word-wielding as Faramir loved the deeds of war: “I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love only that which they defend.”

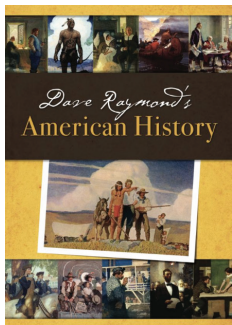
This curriculum is designed to teach you to love poetry not for its own sake, but for the sake of your Lord God and His people.

When you have completed *Word Hoard*, you will have comprehensively studied the formal elements of poetry, and read illustrative examples galore to help you understand the effect of each technique. You will have developed an understanding of trope and structure that will equip you not only to appreciate and compose poetry but to speak well in every circumstance. Learn more at [RomanRoadsPress.com/Rhetoric](http://RomanRoadsPress.com/Rhetoric).



### SUGGESTED SCOPE AND SEQUENCE



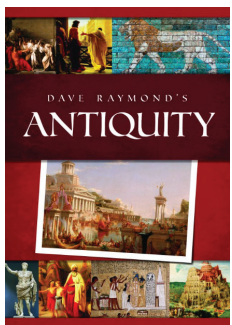
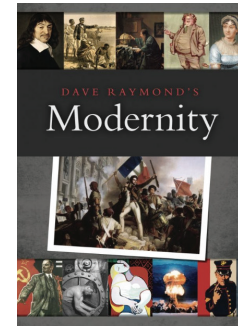


History is best understood through the dual lenses of dramatic story and godly wisdom. In this American History course, veteran history teacher and master storyteller Dave Raymond delivers a comprehensive and dynamic history of the United States by applying a Christian worldview to the characters, events, theology, literature, art, and religious beliefs of the nation. This is an engaging class for Middle School and High School students.

American History Curriculum Package **\$195**

In the second year of his history series, Dave Raymond turns his attention to the period of Modernity and the maturity of Western civilization. This course gives students a Christian worldview applied to the major developments in philosophy, science, art, theology, and government; an introduction to key historical figures such as Newton, Bach, Napoleon, and Jane Austen; and an exploration of the Enlightenment, Darwinism, Nationalism, and Victorianism.

Modernity Curriculum Package **\$195**

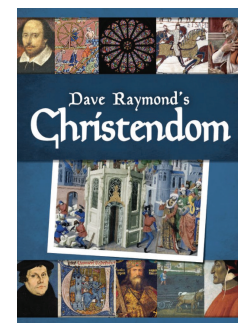


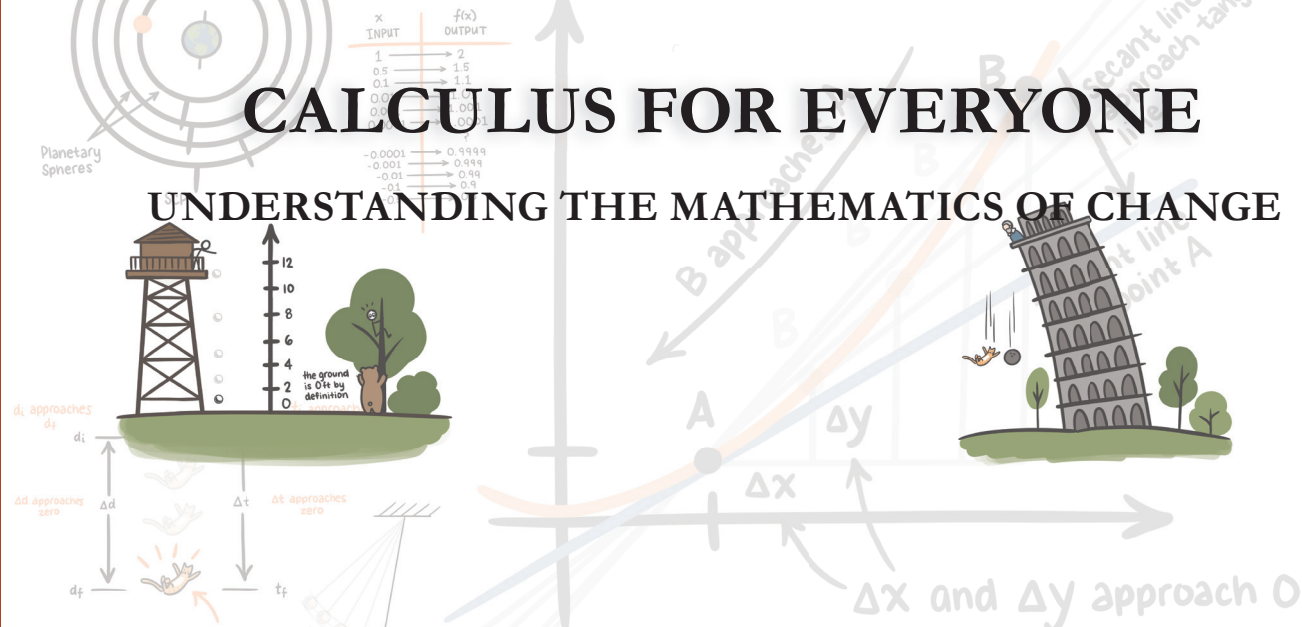
In the third year of his history series, Dave Raymond synthesizes the Bible with ancient history, showing clearly how God's providence directed the events in the ancient historical world. This course gives students a Christian worldview of the events from Creation through the life of Christ; an understanding of great events such as the Tower of Babel and Rise of the Roman Empire; and an examination of famous men and women such as Abraham, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cleopatra.

Antiquity Curriculum Package **\$195**

In the fourth year of his history series, Dave Raymond explores the rise of the Christian church from Rome to the Reformation. This course gives students a Christian worldview of the middle ages as they explore key events during the medieval era, such as the Fall of the Roman Empire, the Crusades, the Black Death, and the English Civil War, and study important cultures impacting the world, such as China, Japan, India, and Africa..

Christendom Curriculum Package **\$195**





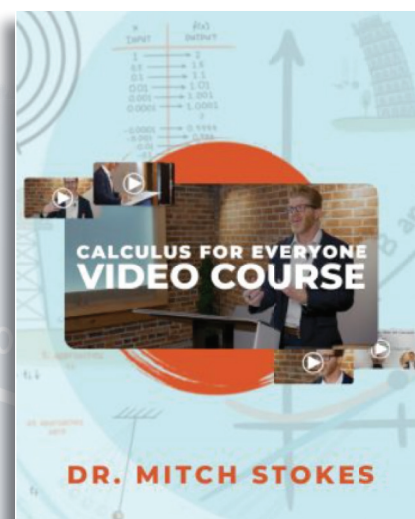
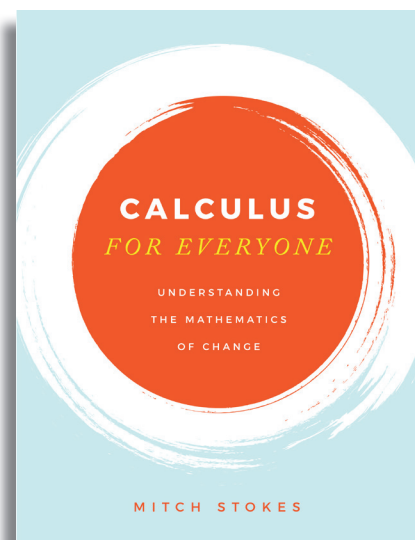
Based on more than a decade of classroom experience, *Calculus for Everyone* provides mastery of calculus's core by focusing on the foundational concepts of limits, derivatives, and integrals, explaining how all three are united in the fundamental theorem of calculus. Moreover, *Calculus for Everyone* explains how the story of calculus is central to Western culture, from Plato in ancient Greece, to today's modern physics. Indeed, this book explains why calculus is needed at all—and why it is needed so badly. By mastering the core of calculus—as well as seeing its meaning and significance—students will not only better understand math and science in general, but contemporary culture and their place in it. Beautifully designed with over 600 hand-drawn illustrations, this text seeks to mend the broken relationship between the liberal arts and STEM, between science and the humanities.

MITCH STOKES is a Senior Fellow of Philosophy at New Saint Andrews College in Moscow, ID. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Notre Dame and an M.A. in religion from Yale. He also holds an M.S. in mechanical engineering and, prior to his teaching career, he worked for an international engineering firm where he earned five patents of aeroderivative gas turbine technology. In addition to biographies on Newton and Galileo, his books include *A Shot of Faith (to the Head): Be a Confident Believer in an Age of Cranky Atheists* and *How to Be an Atheist: Why Many Skeptics Aren't Skeptical Enough*.

*Calculus for Everyone* is used in the Classical Conversations Challenge IV Program.

"Without the notion that the world has been mathematically designed by God, modern science wouldn't have gotten off the ground."

~ From *Calculus for Everyone*

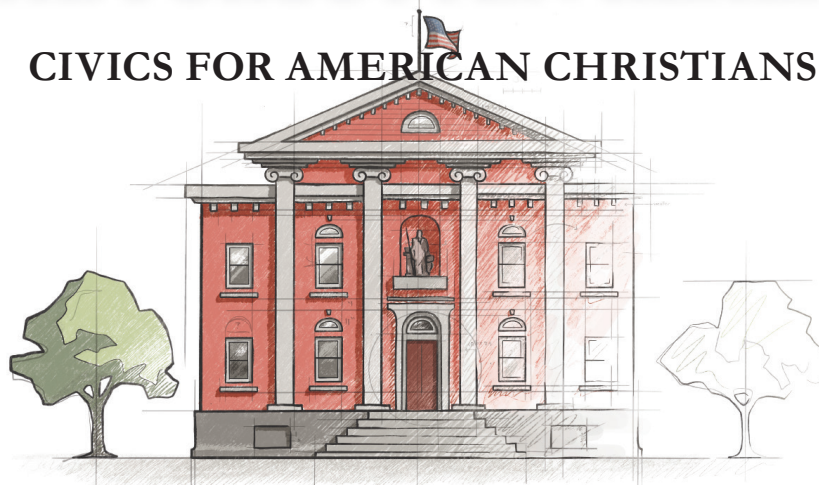


Calculus for Everyone Student Text **\$120**  
 Calculus for Everyone Exercise Solutions & Answer Key **\$24**  
 Calculus for Everyone Video Course (DVD + streaming) **\$85**

Calculus for Everyone Complete Package **\$229**

# THE FORGOTTEN REALM

## CIVICS FOR AMERICAN CHRISTIANS



Hold the activism. Hold the platitudes. We know something is wrong with our government. As American Christians, we have a rich political inheritance and a strong desire to act. Yet our action is stunted by reactionary politics and a lack of understanding of the systems which govern us.

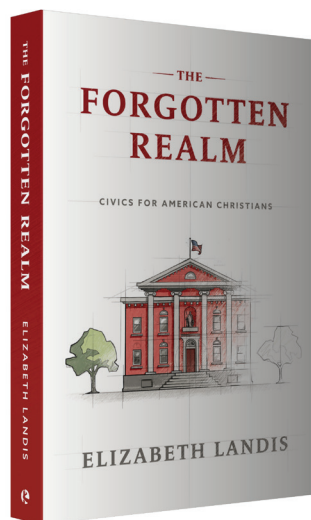
It is time for a practical manual on American government written specifically for Christians. In *The Forgotten Realm*, Elizabeth Landis explains these often ignored structures of government that the average citizen interacts with every day. Starting with the city and working outward to the county, special districts, state, and nation, Landis inverts the way many Americans think about politics and their



role as citizens. She demonstrates that there is much we can do to engage with the civil realm and heal our nation.

By looking at these structures and learning them well, American Christians will not only become more informed citizens but also more engaged citizens, able to bring the gospel of Christ into an often unreached space.

By faithfully pursuing civics, American Christians can ensure that the “Forgotten Realm” does not stay forgotten for long.



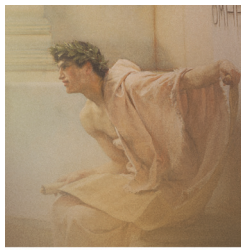
ELIZABETH LANDIS graduated from Ohio State University with a master’s degree in French. She and her husband Greg have five children whom they have home-schooled K–12. In 2016, a local issue pulled her into the civil realm, and she has been uncovering the forgotten realm ever since. She currently works as assistant to the president at New Saint Andrews College where she founded the college’s civics club in 2020.

**\$34.95**

### Who is this book for?

- **Students:** This book forms the core of a semester-length civics course at the high school or college level.
- **Citizens:** This book is a practical manual for the citizen who wants to understand how the governmental structures all around them work.
- **Clergyman:** While the civil realm is distinct from the ecclesiastical realm, they are both under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and clergyman are essential in leading, instructing, and encouraging their flocks in the affairs of the civil realm.
- **Christians:** This book presupposes a Christian audience. John Adams said, “**Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.**” However, the non-Christian is warmly invited to come along, and it is our sincere hope that they would understand that there is no true freedom apart from the freedom found in Jesus Christ.

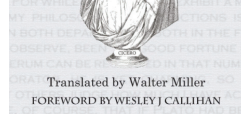
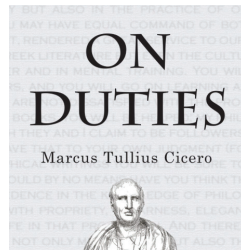
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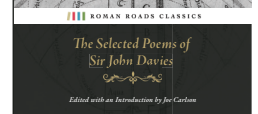
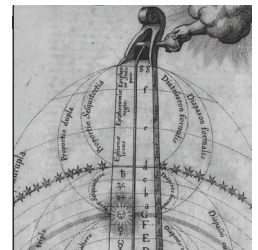
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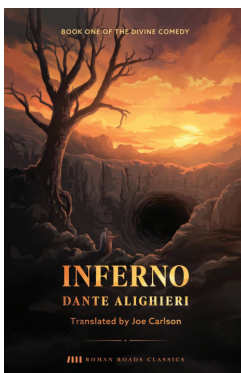
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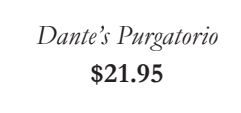
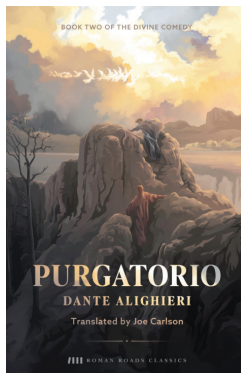
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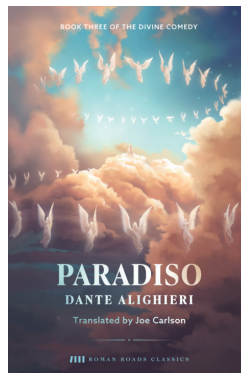
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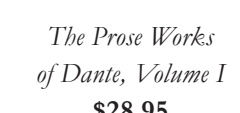
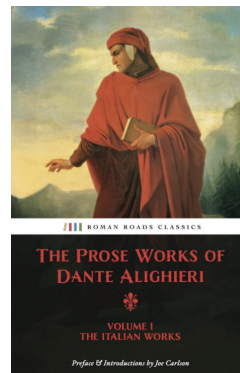
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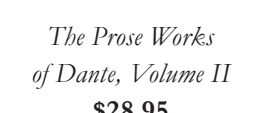
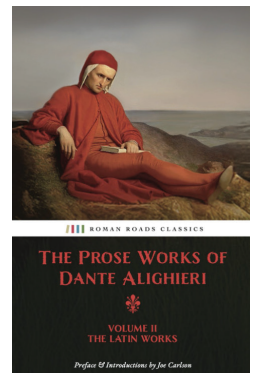
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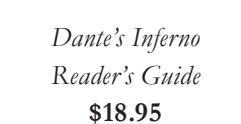
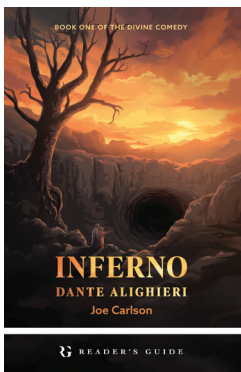


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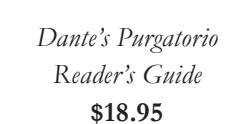
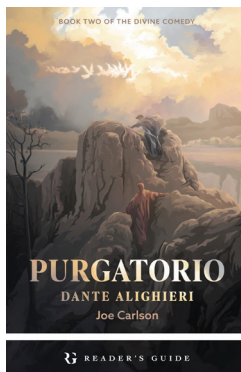


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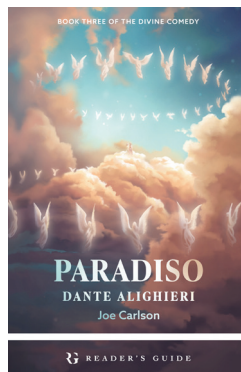
## READER'S GUIDES



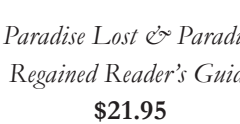
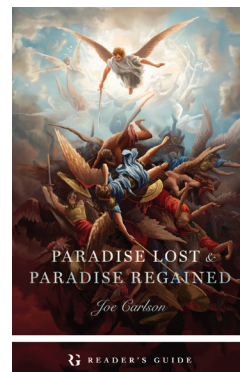
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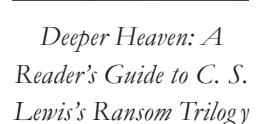
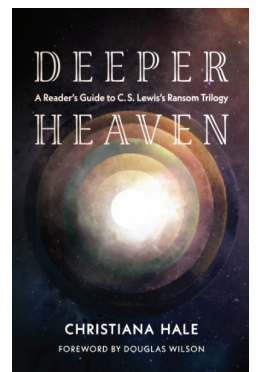
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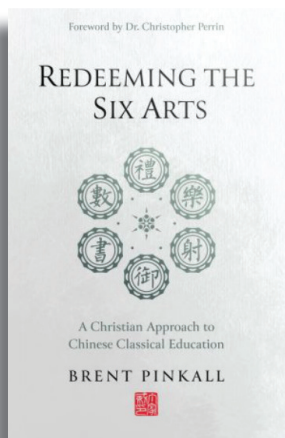


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*Deeper Heaven: A  
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# OTHER BOOKS & RESOURCES



**Christ does not erase our cultural identities. He redeems them.**

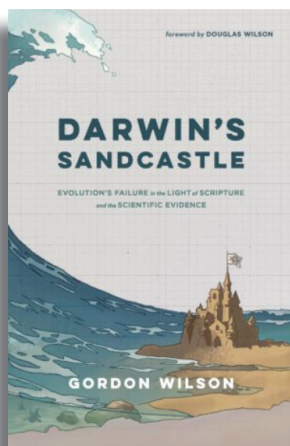
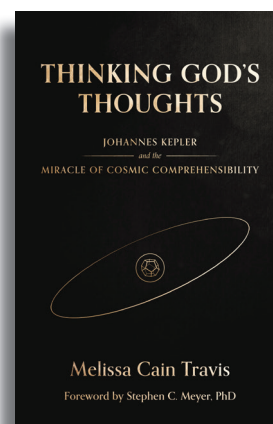
As Classical Christian education experiences a renewal in the West, Chinese Christians are eager to participate in it—but they face a dilemma. Contemporary resources on classical Christian education almost unanimously define it as a Western tradition rooted in Western languages and literature, and the seven liberal arts. Does this mean that Chinese classical Christian schools must also adopt a Western curriculum? Or might they draw from their own Eastern tradition?

In *Redeeming the Six Arts*, Brent Pinkall argues that classical Christian education is not fundamentally a canon of fixed texts or subjects but rather an approach rooted in the Fifth Commandment: Honor thy father and thy mother. Insofar as our ancestors differ, the languages, literature, and arts we study will also differ. Although Chinese Christians share the same “spiritual” fathers as their Western counterparts, their “earthly” fathers are different, and therefore their curriculum must reflect not only a shared “Christian” heritage but also a unique “classical” heritage. **\$26.95**

## Why is the cosmos intellectually accessible to the human mind?

A host of philosophers, theologians, scientists, and mathematicians of the Great Western Tradition have been struck by the uncanny interconnection between three fundamentally distinct domains of reality: nature, mathematics, and the human mind. This resonance has been discussed since antiquity and often attributed to a transcendent rational source of both material and immaterial aspects of reality.

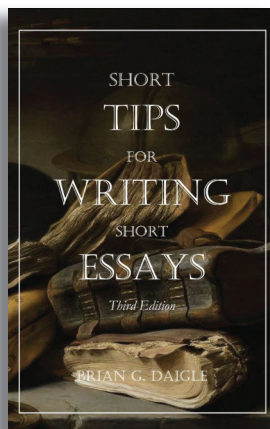
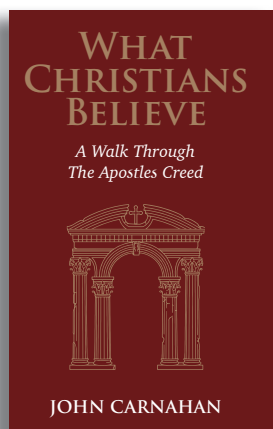
Johannes Kepler, a devout Christian, was instrumental in transforming classical astronomy into a true celestial physics. He was convinced that a tripartite harmony of archetype, copy, and image explained the interconnections that made his natural philosophy possible—that allowed him to share in God’s own thoughts. Rather than being diminished by the past few centuries of scientific progress, Keplerian natural theology is a more robust explanation of cosmic comprehensibility than ever before. **\$26.95**



**It's about time Darwinism is seen for what it is.**

Why are brilliant and logical scientists not reasonable on the question of the ultimate cause of the unity, diversity, and complexity of life on Earth? We wrongly think that an accurate view of life’s origins can be deduced by science and logic alone apart from faith and humble submission to God’s Word. Without the light of God’s Word, unbelievers have built up an edifice, a theory of life’s origins known as Darwinian Evolution, which they believe is an impregnable fortress. In our Darwin-dominated society, blind chance, mutation, and natural selection have received most of the glory for the unity, diversity, and complexity of life on Earth. It’s about time this philosophy is seen for what it is: a sandcastle on the beach, in the face of the rising tide. **\$21.95**

This book is an accessible commentary on the Apostle’s Creed. John Carnahan has supplied numerous biblical texts to illuminate the essential teachings of the creed. His work is an amplification of the creed itself, not adding or subtracting from it. And you will find it a faithful guide that builds out the truths that have upheld the Church for centuries. Includes an Apostles Creed Catechism written by Joe Carlson. **\$11.99**



The wordsmith’s anvil is a place of action, a place to work. It requires that we put forth significant intellectual sweat, hammer away at our work, and build our linguistic stamina. It is also where we, as writers, are formed. As the student hammers away at their work, they will find that their work is hammering upon them.

This little booklet is a great companion to every writer young or old. It is the pep talk in booklet form that every teacher should repeat to writers before an assignment every year. **\$7.99**



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INHERIT THE HUMANITIES

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