

AN APOLOGIA FOR A
LATIN-CENTERED
CLASSICAL
CURRICULUM

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Down with Critical Thinking

Well, not really. But now that we've got your attention, we'd like to point out what Latin can do for your brain.

By Martin Cothran

I was talking with a friend recently whom I hadn't seen in a few years. Her granddaughter, it so happened, is one of my Latin students, and she was there to pick her up that day. The question inevitably came: "So, what is Latin good for?" I have, of course, answered the question a thousand times, and although I never answer the question in quite the same way, there is one point I always make to those inquiring why, in the 21st century, anyone would want to study a dead language.

As Andrew Campbell points out in his article, "Why Study Latin and Greek?", the point you hear most often is that it increases test scores. That is true enough, but, as a teacher, that is the last thing you tend to think about—or notice. What you notice as a teacher is not how students score on some test later on in their academic career, but what it is doing for them now.

It is popular these days to talk about "critical thinking skills," as if it were a subject unto itself. But traditionally, critical thinking skills were not skills you studied directly, but were instead acquired by studying other subjects—subjects that lent themselves to the inculcation of mental discipline.

This requirement of mental discipline is the most important benefit Latin has for students. The study of Latin involves paying close attention to what you are doing, and taking care that you are doing it right. In the world of Latin grammar, you have to master several concepts at once, and make sure they are all in correct relation to one another.

How does Latin help a student to do this?

Latin is a grammatical language. For one thing, it is inflected, which just means that not only do verbs have different grammatical forms for different

grammatical purposes (as in English, Spanish, and French), but so do the nouns (as in Greek, German, and Russian). Because of this characteristic, the student must precisely decipher the part of speech for each word in a sentence in order to properly understand the language and to properly translate it.

When I have my students translate from English to Latin, they are forced to pay very close attention to the grammatical function of each word. If the word is the subject, then it must be in the nominative case, which requires one kind of ending.

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And if it is the direct object in the sentence, then it must be in the accusative case. And so forth.

But the nominative ending is not always the same. It will be different, depending on which of the five kinds of nouns is being used. The same is true for the accusative case, the dative, the ablative, and the genitive. There are a thousand ways you could translate the sentence wrong, and only one way to translate it right.

Someone has pointed out that there are 17 mental steps involved in matching a Latin adjective to the noun it modifies. It must match in case, gender, and number, and each of these involves discriminating between the several kinds of nouns and adjectives.

It is no wonder that it was said of the Romans that they were able to conquer the world only because they had conquered Latin first.

The Romans were an organized, disciplined race of people, and they bequeathed to us an organized and disciplined tongue. And this is why Latin

is particularly good for us. It requires us to inherit the discipline of their language into our understanding of our own.

The English language is great and versatile. As Elizabeth Kantor has written in her wonderful new book, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to English and American Literature*, the versatility of English—with its combination of a concrete Anglo-Saxon substrate and an abstract layer of Latin—has produced the richest literature in the world.

We should be thankful. But at the same time, like Latin, English

says something about the people who developed it. The structure of the English language betrays all the strengths and weaknesses of the English people. We do not lack for creativity, but we do come up short when it comes to discipline.

And that is what Latin is good for.

LATIN & GREEK



BY ANDREW CAMPBELL

The practical, cultural, and formative reasons to study classical languages.

The Practical Arguments for Classical Languages

The ancients did not press practical arguments too far. As Aristotle said, “To seek utility everywhere is most unsuitable to lofty and free natures.” Yet the pragmatic benefits of classical education are the ones our modern society is likely to look for first. Fortunately, they are abundantly available to answer some of the common questions skeptics may have about classical education.

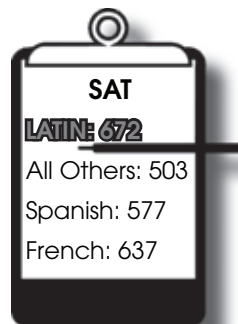
#1 Knowledge of classical languages increases English vocabulary. About half of all English vocabulary comes from Latin and another 20 percent from Greek. These words tend to be the difficult, polysyllabic ones—“SAT words.” A thorough knowledge of classical languages will increase the student’s English vocabulary tremendously.

#2 Classical languages aid in the understanding of English grammar. Studying a highly inflected language—that is, one that marks grammatical changes with a fully developed system of case endings—gives students a better grasp of English grammar. In fact, generations of teachers have observed that Latin teaches English better than English by requiring students to accurately identify each part of speech for every word!

#3 Latin is the key to modern languages. Knowing Latin makes it much easier to learn the grammar and vocabulary of the modern Romance languages (e.g., Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian), since they take about 80 percent of their vocabulary from Latin. Both classical tongues (Latin & Greek) greatly aid in learning other inflected languages, such as German or Russian.

#4 Latin students perform exceptionally well on standardized tests and are sought after by competitive colleges. As a result of increased vocabulary and facility with English grammar, students of Latin consistently outperform their peers—including those who have studied modern languages—on the verbal portion of the SAT. Between 1997 and 2006, Latin students outscored the average by 157 points. Higher scores open doors to competitive colleges and scholarships.

#5 Several careers require knowledge of classical languages. The technical vocabulary of the medical and legal professions and the hard sciences rests on the foundation of Latin and Greek. Latin is still a required subject for some higher degrees, as is Greek for many entering the ministry.



The Cultural Arguments for Classical Languages

While the ancients did not emphasize utilitarian arguments in defending or explaining their educational system, they did argue for it on cultural grounds. Ancient education meant *enculturation*, the process by which the highest values of their societies were passed on to the next generation. This is as necessary for us as it was for them—perhaps more so in this age of relativism and anti-intellectualism.

The Formative Arguments for Classical Languages

The classical curriculum has an unsurpassed track record, not just in filling students' minds with useful knowledge, but also in *forming* their minds and their spirits. Intellectual discipline, moral virtue, and appreciation of beauty are the regular results of running the classical race.

#1 Knowledge of the classics increases cultural literacy.

Just as Latin increases literacy in English, so does familiarity with Graeco-Roman culture increase cultural literacy. Along with the Bible, classical literature is the key to understanding English literature, as well as the literatures of Europe (e.g., Dante, English Romantic poets). Likewise, art and music are studded with classical references (e.g., Botticelli's *Venus*, Handel's *Semele*).

#2 Classical history is our history.

As Westerners, we are all heirs to the cultural patrimony of Greece and Rome. Familiarity with the history of the classical world helps in understanding the foundations of our modern democratic society.

#3 The cultural experience of the ancient world is highly relevant to us today.

The Roman Empire has been called the first great multiethnic society. Study of Roman successes

and failures in this area is timely. Likewise, someone who is familiar with ancient warfare will have a useful perspective on more recent military conflicts.

#1 The classical curriculum imparts exceptional intellectual discipline.

Classical languages form the mind, inculcating the habits of precision and attention to detail. "Every lesson in Latin is a lesson in logic." Intellectual rigor prepares the student to discern what is True. It is the surest remedy for the modern ill of relativism.

#2 The classical curriculum inspires moral insight and virtue.

The classical world first codified the great virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, and courage. Keeping before the student "the habitual vision of greatness" inspires and uplifts the mind and spirit toward the Good.

#3 The classical curriculum forms aesthetic judgment.

Just as the vision of greatness inspires us in the moral realm, living in constant contact with the highest artistic achievements of the West cultivates a taste for the Beautiful. In time, the student will not just appreciate his culture, but will be able to emulate its best and brightest.

Latin as an Ordering Principle

Phonics provides structure for your language arts program at the primary level. But what do you use to provide that structure when you have finished phonics?

By Martin Cothran

Over the last few years, I have spoken at numerous home school conventions around the country, and talked to thousands of home school parents. On the basis of the many conversations I have had with these parents, I have developed a theory. My theory is this: most home school parents are looking for a Latin program.

My theory may seem counterintuitive. It may seem, at first blush, not only incorrect, but preposterous. After all, if you took a poll, most home school parents would probably say they are definitely *not* looking for a Latin program. And I admit that, on the face of it, my theory would seem to be, if not entirely groundless, at least unsubstantiated—and quite possibly hairbrained.

But sometimes things are not as they appear.

Let me say first that just because most home school parents would *say* they are *not* looking to teach their children Latin doesn't necessarily mean that they really aren't. They may be looking for a Latin program and not know it. In fact, I think that this is precisely the case.

Hear me out.

What I notice about the parents I talk with is this: they are almost all looking for a structured language study that will serve the same purpose phonics has served for them in the past. Their kids have spent several years studying letter/sound correspondences and certain basic phonics rules, and now they can read. Their kids have flourished in a program that gives them the keys to unlock this thing we call "English." It has given them clear and objective guidelines to help them navigate through our language.

They know their children thrived on the structure that phonics provided them. It gave them a safe environment in which to study the English language—an environment in

which there were rules that needed to be followed in order get it right. It was easy, clear-cut, and sensible.

They may still be using a spelling program that invokes the phonics rules that their children studied in their early years, but the children can now read. Phonics has served its primary purpose.

The question then becomes, "What do I do now? Where can I find the structure and organization that my phonics program had to teach English to my older student?"

Parents seem to implicitly realize that the benefits of structure in language study don't end in the primary years. Despite its many irregularities and peculiarities, language

The reason we think language study has to be subjective is because we have forgotten Latin.

does have a structure, and structured subjects are best studied systematically.

Once again, the average home school parent may not think to phrase it this way. But what I have found is that, when you ask them if this is what they are looking for, their faces light up, and they say, "Yes, that's exactly what I'm looking for!" They didn't articulate it this way themselves, but with someone to help them put their finger on the problem, they can now see it more clearly.

So what is the answer to this question? What should you do after phonics?

The answer, of course, is Latin. Just like phonics, Latin provides a structure or backbone to your language arts program. Latin gives you a way to address the more sophisticated issues of the English language with the same level of objectivity and order that phonics employed.

There are a number of reasons we say this, and these are outlined in Cheryl Lowe's article "Latin: The Next Step After Phonics" (immediately following this one). This article was written several years ago, but we like to blow the dust off of it every now and then because it is perennially relevant.

In recent years, we seem to have unconsciously lapsed into the belief that—outside of phonics—all language study is somehow necessarily subjective: that there is no way to study it in an objective and orderly manner. I think that it is no coincidence that this view seems to directly correspond to the elimination

of Latin from the curriculum of schools from the 1920s to the 1960s.

In short, the reason we think language study is subjective is because we have forgotten Latin.

The rise of classical education from the ashes of the permissivist methodologies of recent decades is astounding. Even many public schools are taking a new look at the value of this allegedly dead language.

Andrew A. Campbell's book, *The Latin-Centered Curriculum*, explains the value of an education based on the mother tongue of Western civilization: Latin.

A Latin-centered curriculum is a curriculum that answers the question, "What do I do after phonics?" And it reminds us once again, that when children learn how to read, they don't have to wander in a wilderness of subjectivity.

LATIN

The next step after phonics

Far from being a “dead language”, Latin can bring life to your language arts program

by Cheryl Lowe

Latin in elementary school, after phonics? This may sound like a new and experimental idea, but it’s really an old and traditional one. Have you ever read *Goodbye Mr. Chips* or *Anne of Green Gables*? If so, you may have noticed that the students seemed to spend a lot of time studying Latin grammar and that it was completed before high school. In fact, this is where the name grammar school came from—from the days when the most important subject in elementary schools was Latin grammar.

But just because Latin was considered very important 100 years ago, doesn’t mean that it is all that important today. Times change. Why should our students today study Latin and why begin in the third or fourth grade, or even earlier?

Key to the English Language

The most practical reason for Latin study is that it also teaches English. Over half of our English words are really Latin words—and it’s not just any half, it’s the difficult half! The common one or two syllable words of every day speech are English, but the big, three to five syllable words are usually Latin. These are the words students start to see in their reading in science, history, and literature beginning in the third and fourth grades. Do we really prepare students for this transition?

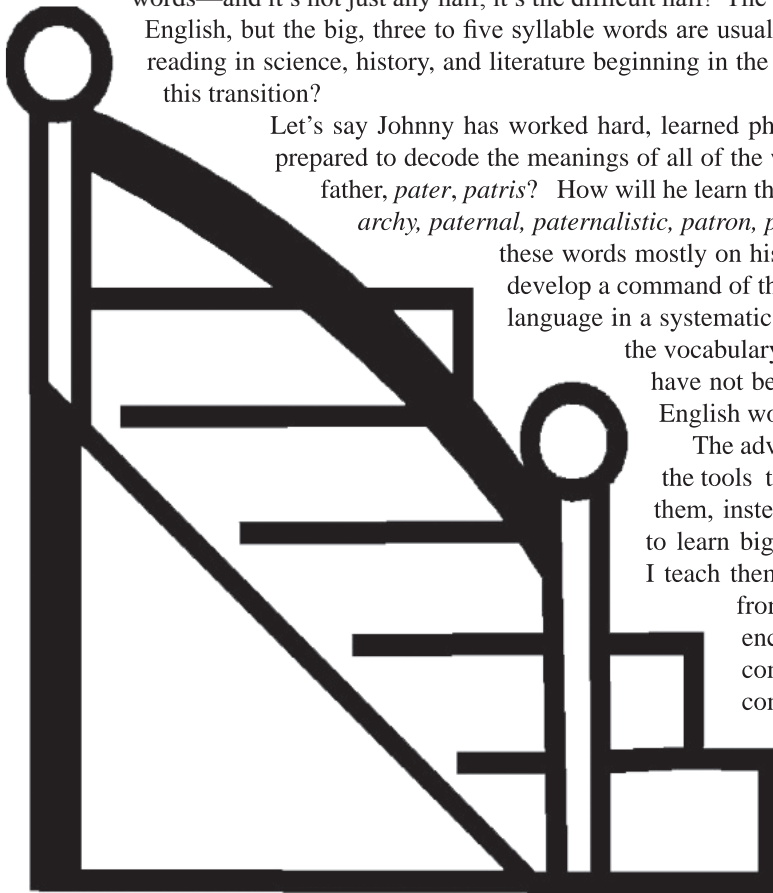
Let’s say Johnny has worked hard, learned phonics, and can read and spell the word *father*. Is he now prepared to decode the meanings of all of the words he will encounter that come from the Latin word for father, *pater, patris*? How will he learn the spelling, pronunciation, and meanings of *patriarch, patriarchy, paternal, paternalistic, patron, patronize, paternity, patrimony*, etc? He will probably learn

these words mostly on his own, in a hit or miss fashion. Most students never really develop a command of the English language because they are not taught the English language in a systematic way after leaving phonics. Many students do not develop

the vocabulary necessary to read well in their own language because they have not been given the tools to attack the incredibly large number of English words.

The advantage of beginning Latin early is that we give our students the tools to decode these big words just when they begin to encounter them, instead of five years later. I have noticed young students love to learn big words even if they don’t know exactly what they mean. I teach them such words as *ludicrous* (ridiculous, silly) which comes from *ludus* (game). Even though this is a word they may not encounter soon, they seem to enjoy saying it. They become comfortable with big words because, after all, most of them come from Latin, and they’re not so scary after all.

Students begin to see Latin roots in words every-



where and tell their parents about the new words they encounter and where they come from. Parents are thrilled and students develop confidence. **They are being given a valuable tool: Latin—the key that opens up the door to the English language.** Students need this key while they are still young enough to be excited about words and while they are rapidly developing vocabulary through their new skill of reading.

Another reason to begin Latin in the early grades is that students at this age still find memorizing an enjoyable task, something not

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usually true of students in high school. Much of the vocabulary and forms of Latin can be learned in grades two through six.

OK, so Latin is good for vocabulary development. Why not just study 100 Latin and Greek roots, and be done with it? It sure seems a lot more efficient and quicker than studying all that grammar, those awful declensions and conjugations that go on forever.

Grammar, Grammar, Grammar

Obviously 100 root words can't even compare to learning thousands of words in Latin, nearly all of which seem to have English derivatives. But there are more reasons to study Latin than a larger vocabulary and higher SAT scores. One is contained in the expression "all that grammar." All that grammar is exactly what students get in Latin that they don't get in French or Spanish.

To really understand the structure of language (and that's what grammar is), students must study a structured language. In Latin, grammar is the organizing principle, rather than a vestige, as it is in most modern languages. Students who learn English grammar by comparison and contrast with Latin grammar, develop an understanding of language far superior to anything that can be achieved by the study of modern languages alone.

Why do we even care about grammar anyway? Most parents I know are really concerned about the poor writing skills of their children and feel that an understanding of grammar will help them write with more clarity and precision. Parents have an uneasy feeling that the muddled writing of their children is evidence of muddled thinking. **Studying a disciplined, organized language like Latin helps students learn to think in a more disciplined, organized way. The very nature of the language affects the way students think and write.**

Simplify your curriculum

There is a lot of interest in unit studies among homeschoolers today. I think there are several reasons for this. One is lack of retention. Have you ever taught what you thought was the greatest lesson ever, only to realize three months later that your children swear they never heard of the subject? How dare they forget what you were sure they would remember forever!

Another frustration of homeschooling is all that curriculum. So much to learn, so many books, so many programs, so little

time. Isn't there any way to pull all of this knowledge together and consolidate?

A third reason is fragmentation. If we could only make more connections between all of the various fields of knowledge, there would be more meaning in their education and less learning for the short term.

I think all three of these reasons may be different ways of expressing the same idea. As my children went through their elementary years, I felt that there was something missing. **There was no subject rigorous and challenging enough to train and discipline their minds, and there was no focus that helped pull everything else together.**

I experimented with teaching them Latin and, although I did not have the materials I needed for their ages, I found that I had finally discovered the subject that was my heart's desire. My background was in math and science, but I fell in love with Latin. **The more I worked with Latin, the more I realized it was an educator's dream.**

Latin is the mother tongue of Western civilization. Because it has been the language that has transmitted our cultural heritage for over 2000 years, it pulls together language arts, history, geography, culture, art, architecture, music, values, religion, government, science, math. Everything in the modern world seems to be related to Latin and the ancient and medieval cultures that spoke it. By examining the roots of our culture in its mother language, knowledge begins to integrate naturally.

The best way to put it is this: Latin is a Unit Study where the work is done for you.

Latin is the Basic Subject because it is the Basic Language, and the way to really get back to the basics is to study Latin. This will be a new concept to many people, but those parents and schools struggling to integrate and simplify their curriculums (not to mention their lives) will find in the study of Latin, not just a language, but an organizing principle that could revolutionize their schools.



An Apology for *Latin* & Math

by Cheryl Lowe

Latin and math develop the mind in ways other subjects do not.

Many who are attracted to the idea of a classical education don't know exactly why, nor do they understand the necessity for Latin, or at least so much of it. A little bit of Latin is a good thing, but every year? Spinach is a good thing, but every day?

I think five decades of fads and experiments have made parents wary, and when they hear about classical education, they think, "Yes, that's what I want." Part of the appeal of classical education is simply the word 'classical.'

Classical is a word that has interesting associations: something that has withstood the test of time, the best, something with form, structure, and beauty, like a symphony or classical architecture. When put this way, all parents want a classical education; they want the best, the education that is time tested, the education that has form and structure, discipline and beauty. It sounds good to parents who are tired of the latest innovations that never seem to work.

But what is Classical Education? To be accurate, and we must be, we will use the historical meaning. This understanding of Classical Education can certainly be updated, but it cannot be radically changed. In Classical Education, the primary focus of language study is a classical language, and the primary focus of history is the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome. There are two and only two classical languages, Latin and Greek, and I will confine my comments to Latin.

Why study old dead languages and civilizations? First of all, Latin is not dead. It is still read by millions of people in every nation, and most of the classics in Latin are still in print, and many new books such as *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* and *Winnie the Pooh* have been translated into Latin. **There are many dead and dying languages in this world, but there are no more influential languages in history than Latin and Greek.** It is true that they are not used for everyday conversation, but it is completely false to characterize Latin and Greek as dead languages. They are not dead—they are truly immortal.

Yes, Latin helps with SAT scores. It does make learning a modern vocabulary easier. True, Latin is abundant in the technical vocabularies of the soft and hard sciences and law. A student of Latin should also gain a firmer grasp on English vocabulary by recognizing that all the big words come from Latin. While these benefits are impressive, they are minor compared to the real value of Latin. There are more important objectives that Latin achieves better than any other subject: The first is mental development, and the second is English language skills.

Latin develops the intellectual powers of the mind as no other subject can. Think of physical fitness, a student who is an athlete versus one who is a couch potato. The mind can be developed like the body. How does Latin do it? The best way to understand the power of Latin is to consider something you are probably familiar with; namely, math.

Math is systematic, organized, orderly, logical, and cumulative. In a cumulative study, each skill builds upon the previous one, nothing can be forgotten, everything must be remembered. All knowledge and skills are interrelated. The student continues to build a tower of learning block by block, until he has reached a very high level of skills and knowledge.

Math begins with memorization, computation, fractions, decimals, percents, word problems, and proceeds to problem solving, algebra, geometry, trig, and calculus. Math is hard because it builds so relentlessly year after year through every year of the child's education. Any skill not mastered one year will make work difficult the next year. It is unforgiving. It has to be over-learned. That is why few students reach a high level in math. They reach a glass ceiling because the cumulative nature of the subject catches up with them. Eventually they are over their heads and quit.

How does math develop the intellectual powers of the mind? Math forms the mind of the student to accuracy, logical thinking, problem solving. It is formation, not information. Math truly educates, transforms, changes the mind of the student to become like math, orderly, logical, accurate, organized. The true purpose of

education and all of the subjects we study in school is to develop, shape, and transform the mind and character of the student. The nature of the subject transfers its character to the student's mind.

What is special about math? Math is a language. A language is

Math is a language. A language is not really a subject. It is something more basic than a subject.

not really a subject. It is something much more basic and fundamental than a subject. Astronomy is a subject. The Civil War is a subject. Science, history, literature, government, and sociology are subjects. Subjects are by nature topical. Yes, there are basics to any subject, and ideally, they are taught in as cumulative a way as possible. If a student doesn't do well in world history one year, however, he can pick up and do fine the next year in American history. If he zones out during the cell structure, he can wake up and knock off an "A" in the classification system of plants. If he doesn't get *Hamlet*, he can tune in for *Macbeth*. Subjects are not as demanding as languages and thus will not produce the same caliber student.

Now what do we have on the language side of the curriculum that is comparable to, and that balances, the rigorous, challenging, cumulative, formative, study of math? Without Latin, the answer is "Nothing."

Math is important but it is secondary to language skills. In fact, math is dependent upon language skills. The math teacher teaches the concepts in words, and the mathematical symbols are used in place of words so they can be easily manipulated on paper. A truly educated person can be pretty lousy at math, because language skills are still the measure of the educated person, one who can speak and write with clarity and has power over his native language, English.

Latin provides the missing component in modern education, the systematic language training comparable to and balancing the mathematics side of the curriculum. Almost everything I said about math, you could have substituted Latin for, but not English, not science, not history, not French.

Why not English grammar? English is not a classical language; it does not have the structure and form, the logic and the rules. It would be like studying modern architecture or pop music, rather than classical architecture or classical music. English doesn't follow the rules. The Romans were disciplined and their language marched in columns, row after row like soldiers. English is lax and loose, bending and changing wherever it fit our fancy. We are an independent, liberty-loving people, and our language shows it. Languages reflect the culture of the people who speak them. The language influences the character of the people of a nation—and likewise is influenced by it.

Furthermore, students have a very difficult time studying their own language, which they use instinctively. Students have grown up with their own language. They take it for granted. They are bored by it. They are amazingly reluctant to analyze it because they can already put it to practical use. Beyond that, English grammar is abstract whereas Latin is concrete. In Latin, you know the direct object because it is in the accusative case. In English you have to

figure it out based on the context. By teaching a language that is very different from English, the student, for the first time, really starts to see how his own language works. His own language comes alive.

What about modern languages? Like English, they are not classical; they lack the structure, form and logical order of the classical languages. The classical languages—Latin and Greek—are so different from modern languages that they seem strange to students. They open up a whole new world and give students the ability to think about language—a very difficult task since students use language naturally. The indirect method of instruction works best with languages. Studying another language, a classical language, makes your own come to life. It allows the student to contrast and compare, to see the function of each part of speech and its role in our language. It's like putting on 3-D glasses, so that you can see how your own language works.

Latin develops and enlarges the mind to a far greater degree than math and brings the necessary balance to the curriculum. The study of Latin is a complete education in that it develops the intellectual powers of the mind and at the same time develops English language skills far more effectively than English grammar, thus achieving the two most important goals of education at the same time.

Latin, like math, gives the student the experience of studying one subject to a mastery level. This is what is missing in modern education. We try to teach everything and we cover too many subjects too superficially. The student is always on the surface, always a beginner. He's always just stuffing in a lot of unrelated facts. There are few opportunities to use higher order thinking skills when you are merely a novice. It is only when the student has studied a

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subject enough to have some depth that his mind can be stretched and challenged with higher order thinking skills. Latin and math give students the invaluable experience of studying one systematic subject to a mastery level over a long period of time, K-12 and beyond. This is a key to mental and character development and is the most valuable academic experience a child can have in school.

Latin and math, when taught to a mastery level, teach the student how to climb the mountain of learning. And if a student climbs one mountain, he knows what it takes to get to the top and he will be prepared to climb all of the mountains that he will meet in life.

What does it take to get to the top of the mountain? Is it great intelligence? No. It takes perseverance, hard work, stamina, will, grit. It takes a plan, a never-give-up attitude, wits, flexibility, and preparation. The education process is like sports; the teacher is a coach who can take the student to the top, the summit of his ability and prepare him for life. Latin takes the student to the top of Mt. Parnassus to survey the grassy plains below where he frolicked as a child, and calls him to remember how little he knew years ago when he thought he knew everything. It says, "Now that you have done it once, you can overcome any challenge that you will meet in life."

IN DEFENSE OF LATIN

BY R. W. LIVINGSTONE

The language of the Romans reflected their character.

Some critics have said that the value of Roman literature is that it has been the vehicle which conveyed Greek ideas to the world. The Romans took their art and, as far as their civilization rests on these, their civilization from Greece.

Why, then, do we study Latin? Some of the reasons are given by Cicero in a passage where he sums up the excellences of Greece and Rome and declares the grounds on which his country has a claim to be considered great.

Our mastery of character and of national life, of family and of the home is far higher and nobler than theirs; our ancestors devised for the state an indubitably better system of laws and institutions. Or again, take the art of war and think what Rome has achieved in individual heroism and even more in collective discipline. In these achievements, which depend not on literary gifts but on character, neither Greece nor any other people can be compared to us. Where will you find a sense of dignity, a resolution of purpose, a loftiness of spirit, a feeling of truth and honor which can be matched with old Rome?

In fact, he allows intellect to Greece but claims character for Rome. Shelley has expressed the same thought with a poet's imagination: "The true poetry of Rome lived in its institutions; for whatever of the beautiful, true, and majestic they contained could have sprung only from the faculty which creates the order in which they consist." If nothing moves in the world but what

is Greek, it is almost true to say that nothing stands but what is Roman. Combine the two and you have the strength of Rome without its hardness, the glory of Greece without its instability, and (what is important for education) you have perfect models of two sides of human nature, which in union go to make the perfect man and state.

Before Rome became mistress of the world, Europe had never found a way of combining liberty with order. Greece had propounded a theory of politics, but had been singularly unsuccessful in creating a stable, large-scale state—the imperial power of Athens lasted sixty years, that of Sparta and of Thebes even less. Such is the record of Greek political achievement. The empires of Alexander's successors were equally unable to discover the secret of permanence. But while these empires and monarchies successively formed and broke up as rapidly as the eddies in a weir pool come into being and dissolve, a small town in Italy was leading a struggling existence in the middle of powerful tribes. Sometimes she was victorious, sometimes she bought off the enemy, once or twice she was almost destroyed. In the end, after continuous warfare, she gained a precarious supremacy in South and Central Italy and turned her eyes across the seas. Two hundred years more of fighting were added to her wars in Italy, and she emerged practically the mistress of the world, with a strong organization and sounder statecraft than had yet been known.

In these early struggles, a character was formed that never lost traces of its origin, which is betrayed in the favorite Latin adjectives: *fortis, strenuus, constans, diligens, firmus, verecundus, castus, prudens, gravis, assiduus, and sedulus*. Hard necessity taught the Roman to prize these qualities. He became brave, stubborn, and honest because otherwise he would have been destroyed. He learnt the art of statesmanship and compromise because he had either to avoid civil war or perish. He avoided vice because there was no leisure to be vicious. He was not luxurious because he had no means of making money. All this became second nature to him. That is why Quintilian says, rather unjustly to Greece, "*Graeci praeceptis valent, Romani exemplis*." (The Greeks tell us, the Romans show us, how to live.)

The common characteristic is a deep sense of something which perhaps we can best express by the word "character." Greece has indeed done more for morals than any force except Christianity, but she has done it by appealing to the reason, by making men think. Her γνῶμαι (proverbs) are generally thoughts on life rather than direct moral precepts. But the Roman maxims are direct injunctions, as peremptory and practical as the Ten Commandments, the orders of a commander-in-chief on the battlefield of life. Greek takes us into the world of thought; in Latin, we live with a heroic race, "The commonwealth of kings, the men of Rome."

Like Aeneas in the lower world, we move among *illulstres animae*, splendid souls. Cincinnatus fetched from the plough to be chief magistrate of Rome; Valerius who, dying as consul, did not leave enough money to pay for his funeral; and Regulus, refusing to be exchanged for Carthaginian prisoners and himself opposing it in the Senate because "they are young and valuable generals, while I am an old and broken man" and going back to Carthage to torture and death.

These iron characters at times are harsh and terrible, but they supplied the inflexible will, which carried the Romans through defeats and disasters to the empire of the world. Cato, the great Roman statesman, was a hard man: hard to foreigners, hard to his countrymen, and hard to himself. There were, however, two people in the world to whom he was not hard. "He said that he that beat his wife or child," Plutarch recounts, "did commit as great a sacrilege as if he polluted or spoiled the holiest things of the world; and he thought it greater praise for a man to be a good husband than a good senator."

Roman literature contains, not by any means all the human virtues, but all the virtues which make great nations. "Do not

think," said Cato, rebuking the degeneracy of his own day, "that our ancestors made Rome great by their arms ... There were other things which made them great: industry at home, just government abroad, and a free mind in counsel, the slave of neither passion nor crime." Deep reverence for the family and for the woman as mother of the family, self-control, self-sacrifice, the sternest sense of duty, unrelenting determination, dauntless courage—Rome offers us examples of all of these in abundance.

But what does the Latin language itself, its grammar as well as its great authors, have to do with this vigorous and virtuous Roman character? And why should we study grammar in Latin or Greek, rather than English or French? No doubt it can be done in the modern languages, but they have certain disadvantages.

In English, at any rate, grammar study is artificial; we know the

language already and have no real need to dissect it, while in Latin we must master the grammar in order to understand the language at all, and the study is therefore spontaneous.

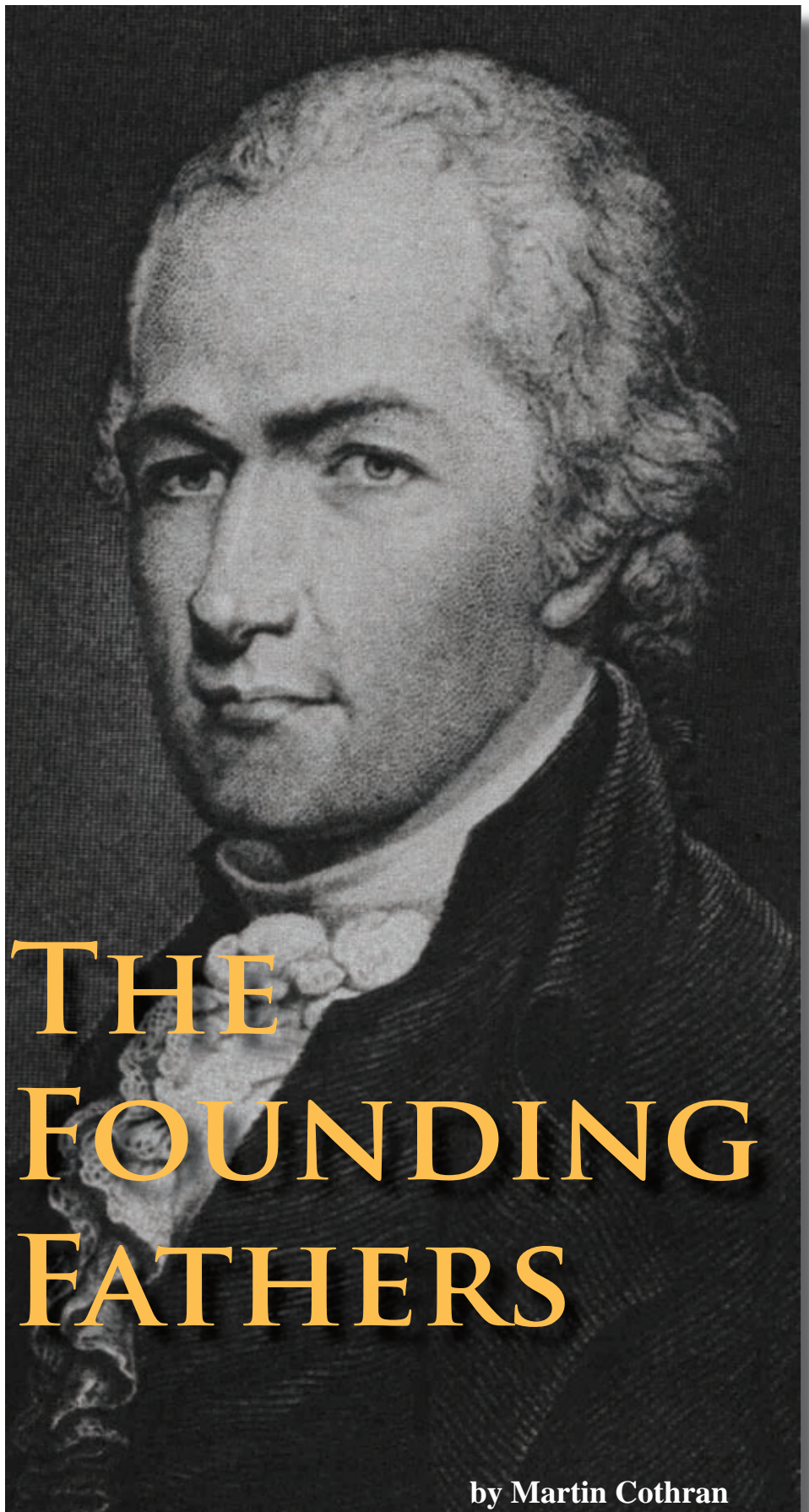
It is not an overstatement to say that not to know Greek is to be ignorant of the most flexible and subtle instrument of expression, and not to know Latin is to have missed an admirable training in precise and logical thought.

And if our object is to train exactness of thought, modern languages are far inferior to Latin, which has in a unique degree, in a degree no modern language exhibits, a logical quality. The Latin here, if nowhere else, was an intellectual. He disciplined his thought, as he disciplined himself; his words are drilled as rigidly as were his legions and march with the same regularity and precision. Modern languages, and English most of all, are lax and individualistic; in our grammar, as in our politics, we are non-conforming, dissenting, lenient to passive resisters and conscientious objectors—we have almost as many exceptions as rules. Our way is interesting and has its merits—more perhaps in life than in language. For, in the ideal language law is supreme; reason governs its grammar and the expression is exactly measured and fitted to the thought it expresses. Latin is such a language.

No other language, least of all a modern language, has this rigid logical cast. Greek does not have it. From Greek we learn a different kind of accuracy; for example, it is less logical, but more sensitive. It is not an overstatement to say that not to know Greek is to be ignorant of the most flexible and subtle instrument of expression, and **not to know Latin is to have missed an admirable training in precise and logical thought.**

The Classical Education of

There is a reason that many parents are so interested in teaching our children about the men who founded the United States of America, and it goes beyond just becoming familiar with who they were and what they did. More than just teaching our children about these men through the histories and biographies that tell the story of their lives, many of us are interested in our children becoming more like them. The Founding Fathers possessed two characteristics that distinguished them from other men of their time—and from most men in any time: wisdom and virtue. It is these qualities that we



THE FOUNDING FATHERS

by Martin Cothran

admire most about them and that we would most like to see in our own children. But more important than just admiring them for these traits, we should strive to understand how they became this way.

The Classical Education of the Founders

“Americans view the Founding Fathers in vacuo, isolated from the soil that nurtured them,” says Tracy Lee Simmons in his book, *Climbing Parnassus: A New Apologia for Greek and Latin*. For the Founders, says Simmons, these virtues came principally from two places: “the pulpit and the schoolroom.”

We are already fairly familiar with the explicitly Biblical influences on America’s founding, but we are far less familiar with the classical influences on the Founders—and how these two influences worked in concert to mold their education and their thinking.

It is a well-known fact that literacy was prevalent in colonial times. “A native of America who cannot read or write,” said John Adams, “is as rare an appearance...as a comet or an earthquake.” It is not nearly as well-known a fact, however, that early Americans with a formal education usually knew several other languages as well as their own.

The typical education of the time began in what we would call the 3rd grade— at about age eight. Students who actually went to school were required to learn Latin and Greek grammar, and, later, to be able to read the Latin historians Tacitus and Livy, the Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides, and to be able to translate the Latin poetry of Virgil and Horace. They were expected to know the language well enough to translate from the original into English, and back again to the original in another grammatical tense. Classical Education also stressed the seven liberal arts: Latin, logic, rhetoric (the “trivium”) as well as arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music (the “quadrivium”).

Thomas Jefferson received early training in Latin, Greek, and French from Reverend William Douglas, a Scottish clergyman. At the age of fourteen, Jefferson’s father died, and, at the express wish of his father, he continued his education with the Reverend James Maury, who ran a classical academy. After leaving Douglas’ academy, Jefferson attended the College of William and Mary, where his classical education continued along with his study of law.

When Alexander Hamilton entered King’s College (now

Columbia University) in 1773, he was expected to have a mastery of Greek and Latin grammar, be able to read three orations from Cicero and Virgil’s *Aeneid* in the original Latin, and be able to translate the first ten chapters of the Gospel of John from Greek into Latin.

When James Madison applied at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton), he was expected to be able to “write Latin prose, translate Virgil, Cicero, and the Greek gospels and [to have] a commensurate knowledge of Latin and Greek grammar.” Even before he entered, however, he had already read Vergil, Horace, Justinian, Nepos, Caesar, Tacitus, Lucretius, Eutropius, Phaedrus, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Plato.

Other key figures in the American founding received similar educations, including John Taylor of Caroline, John Tyler, and George Rogers Clark, all of whom studied classics under the Scottish preacher Donald Robertson.

It is interesting to note that the study of Latin and Greek, which is what the term “classical education” originally implied, was not something they learned in college, but something they were expected to know before they got there.

These men not only had to read classical authors in school, they read them in adult life for pleasure and profit. Hamilton apparently had a penchant for copying Plutarch (the Roman) and Demosthenes (the Greek). John Adams would copy long passages of Sallust, the Roman historian. If you look around on the Internet a little, you can find a manuscript of 12 lines for sale, in the original language, from the Greek historian Herodotus, in Adams’ hand. It will cost you a mere \$6,300.

The founders knew these writers and quoted them prolifically. Their letters, in particular, display a wide familiarity with classical authors. The correspondence between educated men of the time was commonly sprinkled with classical quotations, usually in the original Latin or Greek. It was not only prevalent, but apparently sometimes annoying to the recipient. Jefferson used so many Greek quotes in his letters to Adams (who liked Latin better than Greek) that, on one occasion, Adams complained to him about it.

It apparently wasn’t the first time Adams displayed reticence about classical languages. When he was young, it turns out, he wasn’t always the most enthusiastic scholar, and resisted studying his Latin. His father had a remedy for that, however; he sent him out to dig ditches, an activity which quickly revived his enthusiasm. He later grew to love

The Founding Fathers possessed two characteristics that distinguished them from other men of their time—and most men in any time: wisdom and virtue.

Latin, however, and insisted on the same classical education for his sons John Quincy (who later became president like his father) and Charles.

Several of the founders, including Adams, attended Harvard. The sole academic requirements for admission to Harvard University in the 1640s is as follows: "When any scholar is able to read Tully [Cicero] or such like classical Latin author ex tempore and make and speak true Latin in verse and prose suo (ut aiunt) Marte [by his own power, as they say], and decline perfectly the paradigms of nouns and verbs in the Greek tongue, then may he be admitted into the college, nor shall any claim admission before such qualification."

No ACT or SAT scores. No application essays. No affirmative action. Just Latin and Greek.

Students were also expected in these early years, according to the Harvard College Laws, to be able to translate the Old and New Testaments from the original Greek and Hebrew into Latin. Not only that, but listen to another Harvard requirement of the time: "The scholars shall never use their mother tongue, except that in public exercises of oratory or such like they be called to make them in English." In other words, with limited exceptions, students were prohibited from using English in class or in class assignments.

Some of this undoubtedly changed by the time the founders would have attended, but not much. When it came to classical education in colleges of colonial times, they took no prisoners.

Of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention, 30 of them were college graduates, an astounding number for the time. But what of those who were not college graduates, such as George Washington? Were they influenced in any way by classical education? In Washington's case, while he had little formal education, he admired classical thinkers greatly. There are records showing that he ordered busts of figures such as Cicero that were presumably put on display at his Mt. Vernon home. He also cared enough about classical culture to have Joseph Addison's play about Cato the Younger (a famous Roman statesman) performed for his troops at Valley Forge. He also insisted on a classical education for his stepson.

Even many who had little formal education were often quite knowledgeable in classical subjects. The Virginian George Wythe, who later became known as the "Teacher of Liberty," was educated at their backwoods home by his mother. His Greek was accounted by his contemporaries to have been perfect.

Classical influences were pervasive in the schoolroom, but it didn't stop there. Even what Americans heard from the pulpit was imbued with classical references and allusions. Ministers of that time were much more highly educated than today, and were the ones most likely in any community to have had a classical education.

It is not uncommon to hear some today say that Christians should shy away from the pagan authors of antiquity. This is an idea the generation of the founders—including great Christian thinkers such as Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards—would simply have considered preposterous. Not only was classical education conducted largely by ordained Christian ministers (or aspiring ones), but education in the classics was considered an essential element in the education of a Christian cleric. In fact, all of the great Christian theologians and thinkers of early America were soaked and steeped in the classics. Not only did they think a classical education was not inconsistent with a Christian vocation, they considered it absolutely essential.

It was primarily religious skeptics and men who were more enamored with the possibilities of practical science of the time than spiritual realities who took a dim view of classical education—men such as Benjamin Franklin, who, while having become a deist later in life and finally a theist (but still not a Christian), considered classical languages an anachronism.

How the Classics Influenced the thinking of the Founders

If the founders were steeped in the knowledge of classical thought, how did it affect their own thinking about the new nation? For one thing, it inculcated in them a respect for the lessons of history, lessons that were readily apparent in their writings and debates about how to construct the American Republic. "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided," said Patrick Henry, "and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past."

They combed the annals of the ancients for examples of governments that worked well—and for those that did not. They knew, well before the philosopher George Santayana was born to say it, that "those who do not know history are condemned to repeat it."

"These men," says Simmons, discussing the Philadelphia debates of 1787, "had read and digested Polybius, Aristotle, and Cicero, and they used the ancient luminaries to frame and illustrate their ideas before the assembly... These heated yet erudite debates, along with the Federalist Papers, fairly pullulate both with subtle classical allusions—with which Madison, Hamilton, and Jay assumed readers to be



Alexander Hamilton

tolerably familiar—and direct references to the leagues—Amphictyonic, Achaean, Aetolian, Lycian—formed by the ancient Greeks in order to achieve political and physical security.”

Not only are the Federalist Papers replete with classical references, but the pseudonyms each of the writers chose for themselves were all taken from the writers of classical times.

Classical Education Today

To become inspired by the great deeds of great men is to give ourselves the motivation to do similar things. We become great partly by seeing what other great men did and being inspired to do such things ourselves. But while beholding the great deeds of others gives us the motivation to be like them, it doesn't equip us to achieve what they achieved. We can admire other men, but that won't necessarily make us more like them. In order to become like

those we admire, we must not only admire them, we must do what they did.

It is tempting to look back on the education of these great Americans and to think that what they did is too difficult for the students of today. But that would be a grave mistake. Yes, they enjoyed some advantages over us, mostly in terms of having fewer distractions, but that is something we have the power to control. The fact is that we have advantages they didn't have. For example, the educational resources available to colonial children were not only harder to find, but of vastly inferior quality.

We can, moreover, say we lack their fortitude, but that is not something they brought to their education; rather, it is a benefit they received from it.

Education is the cultivation of wisdom and virtue. In deciding how to accomplish it with our own children, we would do well to see how it was done in a time when wisdom and virtue were more prevalent than in our own.



John Adams

"The Why?" of Classical Education

by John Seel

Parenting is first and foremost a responsibility of discipleship. Discipleship is not about activities and programs, but the transformation of the heart. The transformation of the heart begins with the framing of beliefs - what we assume to be true about others, the world, and ourselves. "Education," said Sister Mariam Joseph, "is the highest of arts in the sense that it imposes forms not on matter, as do the other arts, but on minds."

The Two Tasks of Discipleship

This transformation involves relativizing the assumptions our culture takes for granted, and orienting them according to what is good, true, and beautiful. Dallas Willard makes the same point: "Christian spiritual formation is inescapably a matter of recognizing in ourselves the idea systems of evil that govern the present age and the respective culture that constitutes life away from God."

There is both a negative and a positive aspect of this transformation. The negative task involves a critique of culture, and the positive task involves the setting forth of truth. The task of Christian education, then, is to understand God's good creation and the ways sin has distorted it. As God's image bearers, we may exercise responsible authority in cultivating the creation, to the end that all people and all things may joyfully acknowledge and serve their Creator and true King.

The primary question before us is, Why classical education? In the 2nd century, early church father Tertullian pondered: "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?" Why study the classical pagans in order to equip a biblical mind? Why is the study of dead languages valuable? Why is it necessary to go back before going forward?

The Christian Use of the Pagans

There is a clear Biblical precedent for using classical authors in the service of communicating the gospel. Paul on Mars Hill quoted from memory the works of Greek Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. J. Gresham Machen, the great Presbyterian apologist, once urged

the freshman class at Princeton:

The Christian cannot be satisfied so long as any human activity is either opposed to Christianity or out of all connection with Christianity.... The Christian, therefore, cannot be indifferent to any branch of earnest human endeavor. It must all be brought into some relation to the gospel. It must be studied either in order to be demonstrated as false, or else in order to be made useful in advancing the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom must be advanced not merely extensively, but also intensively. The Church must seek to conquer not merely every man for Christ but also the whole of man.

So an acceptance of the classical educational tradition does not mean an uncritical acceptance of the worlds of Greece and Rome. It involves taking the unique insights of the ancients in order to gain perspective on and better prepare for an engagement with our own culture.

What is classical education?

Classical Christian education is traditional education that began in the late middle ages and is sometimes associated with the Christian humanist movement that emerged in the Northern Renaissance with men such as John Colet and Desiderius Erasmus. It is an education that places an emphasis on the mastery of core content through the study of the Trivium - grammar (the study of the basic facts of a discipline), logic (the study of the relationships of these facts with other facts), and rhetoric (the study of the persuasive written and oral communication of these facts to others). It places a priority on words as the foundation of thought.

The mastery of words is gained through the careful study of highly inflected languages such as Greek and Latin. It embraces the triple contribution of Jews, Greeks, and Romans as synthesized through the Christian Church to the rise of our modern world. Not only has this Western Civilization shaped our identity, it has been one of the greatest intellectual and cultural achievements in history. In his book, *Human Accomplishment*, Charles Murray writes:



The Greeks laid the foundation for Western achievement in the arts and sciences. But it was the transmutation of that intellectual foundation by Christianity that gave modern Europe its impetus and that pushed European accomplishment so far ahead of all other cultures around the world.

This rigorous study of the past relies on engaging the student through relentless questioning - a model of instruction still used routinely in the finest law schools in the nation - the Socratic Method.

Classical education is the way education was done until the late 1880s in Europe and America. During these years, C. S. Lewis argues that, intellectually and spiritually, Western civilization crossed a Great Divide:

Whereas all history was for our ancestors divided into two periods, the pre-Christian and the Christian, and two only, for us it has fallen into three - the pre-Christian, the Christian, and what may be reasonably called the post-Christian.

The problem with most modern Christian education is that it is no different in its core educational philosophy from secular education. What we know as liberalism in the church is called progressivism in education. Classical education is a return to the educational philosophy that dominated for centuries before the "God is dead" philosophy of Nietzsche found its voice in the "Truth is dead" musings of John Dewey. **One can legitimately ask the question whether Christian education is truly Christian if it is**

The goal of classical Christian education is to equip our students with a pre-modern intellect of truth and knowledge, so they can engage in a post-modern, relativistic culture.

not also classical. Chapel services and Scripture memory does not a Christian educational philosophy make. Classical Christian education is decidedly against the stream of the educational establishment. It is an expression of what ought to be and what used to be, not another example of what is.

The Cure

Classical education is a cure for what ails our culture, a secular, relativistic world-view. This post-modern youth culture that our children face is a very different world from that in which we were raised. The goal of classical Christian education is to equip our students with a pre-modern intellect of truth and knowledge, so they can engage a post-modern, relativistic culture.

The Tool

Classical education is also the most powerful education tool available for shaping a Biblical mind. It is the heart of a liberal education. As Tracy Simmons has put it:

A classical education is more than a discipline of the mind. It's a trans-

formation of mind. A classical education is, as Livingstone called it long ago, "a training in insight and sympathy," a training forever changing one's map of the cosmos; the world becomes a more multi-layered terrain in sharper relief.

Sixteenth century Christian humanist Erasmus wrote in his *Handbook for the Militant Christian*:

I might also add that a sensible reading of the pagan poets and philosophers is a good preparation for the Christian life.... These readings mature us and constitute a wonderful preparation for an understanding of the Scriptures. I feel this is quite important, because to break in upon these sacred writings without this preparation is almost sacrilegious.

The Heritage

The greatest minds of the Christian church as well as the founders of the American republic had this form of education. C. S. Lewis, for example, did not come out of nowhere. He writes:

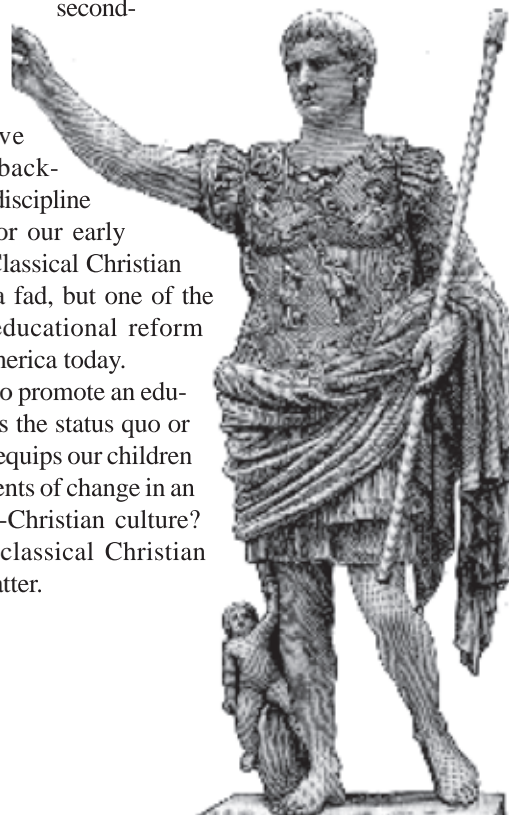
To lose what I owe to Plato and Aristotle would be like the amputation of a limb. Hardly any lawful price would seem to me too high for what I have gained by being made to learn Latin and Greek.

When Thomas Jefferson was planning the University of Virginia in 1819, he wrote,

It should be scrupulously insisted on that no youth can be admitted to the university unless he can read with facility Virgil, Horace, Xenophon, and Homer: unless he is able to convert a page of English at sight into Latin: unless he can demonstrate any proposition at sight in the first six books of Euclid, and show an acquaintance with cubic and quadratic equations. Anything less would make the place a mere grammar school.

One senses immediately how far education standards have slipped. Our secondary education no longer prepares men and women who have the intellectual background or mental discipline of our founders or our early church fathers. Classical Christian education is not a fad, but one of the most profound educational reform movements in America today.

Do we want to promote an education that accepts the status quo or an education that equips our children to be powerful agents of change in an increasingly post-Christian culture? The promise of classical Christian education is the latter.





In Defense of Classical Education

by Tracy Lee Simmons

Readers of English novels or American biography have often noticed the peculiar spectacle of young innocents getting carted off to school only to be cast into the thorny thicket of two ancient and difficult tongues, Greek and Latin. By threat of stinging rod, they were made to memorize the words and rules of two languages they would never speak. It was a curious affair. What was the point of it all?

Latin and Greek discipline and form the mind, but they can do far more. Taught with an aim to cultivate and humanize, they can render something more and greater to the intelligent, talented, and patient. **While a classical education (defined by Latin and Greek language study) is not the only one worth having, its passing from schools and colleges has impoverished our culture and, incidentally, degraded our politics.** The classical languages can shape and enhance one's intellectual and aesthetic nature, shaping both the mind and heart.

The American soil, however, is not naturally fertile for classics, whose seed falls on hard clay. As another man of letters told us nearly eighty years ago, we as a nation possess a "weakness for new gospels," a vital but hazardous trait, as we stand in danger of discarding both the good and useful in a quest for the dubious and untried. We pride ourselves on our capacity to reach far and entertain the fantastic idea. And we think ourselves more as doers than as thinkers. While others waxed about going to the moon, we went. We are forever on the

move.

But this restless drive, which Americans are wont to think unique to us, also fuels the rest of the frenetic world, particularly in the West where – despite some multi-culturist claims – our civilization supplies the model most peoples around the globe wish to emulate. We spell Progress with a capital. Here the new is always better, the old worse; the new is always rich and relevant; the old threadbare and obsolete. Ours is the "shining city on a hill," in John Winthrop's memorable coinage, a city that could begin afresh because it had no past. We could start from scratch and travel lightly.

Yet having crossed the millennium, we feel a few spiritual tremors. Impetuosity does not reflect. The super-

annuated, ever-changing mind cannot speak to the whole of life. It cannot contemplate; it cannot assign value. It can drive us to build new roads but it cannot explain where we want to go. It can build rockets to Mars and beyond, but it cannot tell us whether it's wise to go there. It cannot answer questions it long ago lost the wisdom to ask. The lives of the minds and souls it leaves are bereft of standards, those talking points of judgment which are acquired only with time and patient effort.

Intellectuals are not immune. Scratch a believer in bold new ideas and find a slave to fashion, proving the adage that the newest is always the most quickly dated, whether it comes from Madison Avenue or the Modern Language Association. Here is the spirit of El Dorado,



the hope that riches and salvation wait around the next bend in the road. Old gospels lack the beckoning allure of the road not taken. But like the explorers in the desert ever prone to mirage, we have had, along with remarkable discoveries, a few false sightings. And we are beginning to sense a certain lack

be served? And, more importantly, are there different kinds of use we should acknowledge?

The modern mind, schooled to be practical, stands ill-prepared to wrestle with these questions because they are at bottom philosophical ones; our practicality has, ironically, rendered us incapable

established and refined the standards by which we live today held that gem in such high esteem. Thus we can regain some sense of history and our place along its timeline. Gratitude, according to Chesterton, is the truest sign of happiness in individuals. A safe corollary seems then that a happier society would feel a debt to the past and its treasures, and this debt would be paid gladly by those taught in the ways of respect and humility. For those without respect and humility stand to these riches as those without knowledge of geometry once stood before the gates of Plato's Academy; they are forever excluded.

Such respect (if not always such humility) classical education fostered for centuries. It lent an anchoring to intellectual life and provided all educated people, as we now say, with a common set of references. Or, to switch metaphors, it placed a true north on our cultural compass. Rather than seeking new gospels, we should direct our gaze behind us so that we may more securely find our footing on the road ahead. If in fact, "the past is prologue," it is only the past that can instruct and guide us. The present is too close. And the future is but a haze of possibilities and dreams. The future does not yet belong to us.

Education ... has also been a trinket on the shelves of snake-oil salesmen and a plaything for social planners in America for well over a century.

of permanence in modern life. The new gospels have certainly delivered, but they have not saved.

Education, that vague and official word for what goes on in our schools, has also been a trinket on the shelves of snake-oil salesmen and a plaything for social planners in America for well over a century. They too have been driven by the spirit of ceaseless innovation. And we have paid the high price. The peddlers have shrouded the higher and subtler goals of learning which former generations accepted and promoted. These bringers of the New have traded in the ancient ideal of wisdom for a spurious "adjustment" of mind, settling for fitting us with the most menial skills needful for the world of interchangeable parts. They have decided we are less, not more, than the wiser people humanity might become. **Instead of seeking to discern what an education can bring to us, we now ask what we can get out of it; there's a difference.** And the benefits accrued do not exist, apparently, if they cannot be measured – and measured by tools calibrated by craftsmen out to replicate themselves. Standards require standard makers.

Nonetheless, on the face of it, the question of use is a fair one. Philosopher Alfred North Whitehead reminded us that any education not useful is wasted. An education, he said, must be "useful, because understanding is useful." But what must we understand? If education must be useful what uses are to

of answering them. So while thinking ourselves a knowing and enlightened lot, we stand deaf to our own ignorance, which has become a white noise. Gilded degrees hanging on our walls bear witness to our certified smarts. But we have stood Socrates on his head: Whereas the only thing that the Athenian knew was that he knew nothing, the only thing we *don't know* – and with far thinner credentials, it would seem – is that we know so very little.

We do not know, in other words, what more reflective ages have deemed the important things. And we don't know them because they have not been taught to us, or gentle prods to our self-esteem have spurred us to consult only our druthers in deciding what's worth knowing. We have adopted the leveling assumptions we've inherited - *whatever works for you* – and fed off the intellectual capital earned by others who, we presume, have already done the hard-thinking for us. We pride ourselves on self-reliance while following uncritically the roadmaps of others. For independently skeptical people, we ask few questions.

What we don't know can hurt us. Given the world's fixation on technology and all things financially gainful, that "grand old fortifying classical curriculum" requires not an uncritical re-adoption (to which there's no chance anyway) but a systematic reappraisal, if for no other reason than that so many men and women of centuries past who

MULTUM NON MULTA

MUCH NOT MANY

ANDREW CAMPBELL

Would our children really get a better education if they studied fewer subjects?

IT IS ALL WELL AND GOOD TO TALK ABOUT TRADITIONAL classical education, but how do we put it into practice today? Don't we have far more history to learn other than classical history, not to mention science, modern languages, and common school subjects like health and driver's ed.? After all, we're not preparing our children to be Greek philosophers, Roman orators, or (most of us) British statesmen. We have practical matters to consider: government requirements, standardized tests, college admissions.

Yes, all that is true, at least to a certain extent. But we can still derive some important principles from the history of classical education. One of these principles was articulated by Pliny the Younger; that principle is *multum non multa*: not many things (*multa*), but much (*multum*). Formal education should not merely introduce us to many things—the “*multa*,” which can by necessity lead only to superficial knowledge—but should encourage us to drink deeply at the springs of our culture. Much not many.

How does this play out in the classical curriculum? First, the number of subjects is limited to a few key disciplines. We are accustomed to schools expanding their offerings to include vocational and technical subjects such as home economics, wood shop, and computer keyboarding. In the wry words of Jacques Barzun, we expect our schools to turn out “ideal citizens, supertolerant neighbors, agents of world peace, and happy family folk, at once sexually adept and flawless drivers of cars.” The classical curriculum, on the other hand, insists on a limited number of demanding subjects taught in depth. Moreover, formal study of certain subjects—especially science and modern languages—is reserved for high school. As we'll see, this is actually an efficient use of the student's time and effort.

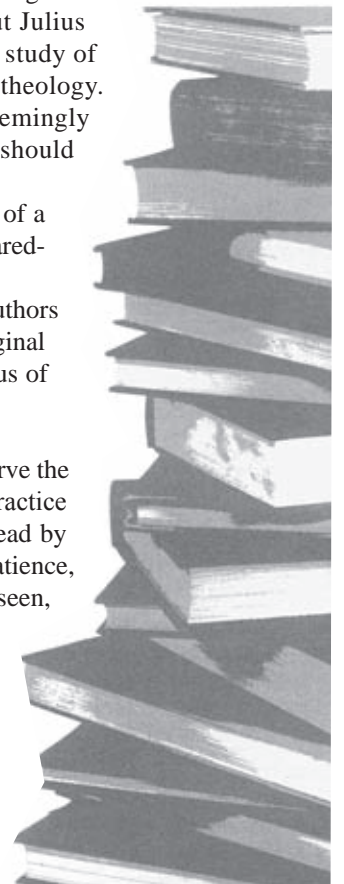
Second, whenever possible, subjects are taught in relation to one another and in the context of broader intellectual concerns. For example, as the student gains proficiency in Latin translation, some historical, literary, and theological readings may be undertaken in the original language. The student doesn't just read a chapter about Julius Caesar or Cicero in a history textbook; she reads Caesar's and Cicero's own writings in Latin. The study of selections from Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* is at once a lesson in Latin, logic, history, and theology. Further, one of the key “intelligences” is lateral thinking, the ability to make connections between seemingly disparate fields and ideas, and the classical curriculum encourages this skill. In all subjects, students should be led to ask big questions: What is Man? What is the good life? How then should we live?

Third, the core readings in English and History (Classical, Christian, and Modern Studies) consist of a very few representative masterpieces that the student reads slowly and studies in depth. Does such a pared-down program sufficiently prepare students for college work, let alone life?

The verdict of history is yes. The great Renaissance educator Vittorio da Feltre assigned only four authors to his young students: Virgil, Homer, Cicero, and Demosthenes. (These were, of course, read in the original Latin and Greek.) The traditional classical model emphasizes the slow, careful reading of a small corpus of great literature—especially the epic poets.

Contrast this with the typical approach of contemporary American schools. One cannot help but observe the trend in modern schools to substitute light “escape” reading for the more difficult classics. The practice is defended in the name of getting students to read. The assumption is that because students learn to read by reading, schools must provide books that students will want to read, books that will not overtax their patience, their limited vocabulary, or even their more limited education. A corollary to this assumption, as we have seen, is that students cannot enjoy reading serious classics with their demanding styles and remote contents. Clearly, the classical academy rejects this thesis. Not only does it refute the notion that classics are inaccessible or unenjoyable to young readers, but it reminds us that the purpose of learning is discovery, not escape. [...] Substituting the literature of escape for the classics is not education, but an attack on learning; it is not intellectual, but anti-intellectual. It represents a capitulation to the adolescent appetites of our students and our race.

In his book, *Climbing Parnassus: A New Apologia for Greek and Latin* [available from Memoria Press], Tracy Lee Simmons minces no words on this subject:



Most public schools in America now strive to be cut rate educational malls for the intellectually lame—whether or not students first darken the school doors that way, so most of them leave—while even some private schools pose as little more than colorful felt boards for the earnestly shallow, commonly confusing pious or patriotic piffle with real education.

Unfortunately, this trend is noticeable even among home schoolers. While truly “good books” are an excellent and necessary

the grammarians and rhetors were highly selective in the texts they placed before their students. These works were models both of style and of their culture’s aesthetic and moral norms. We would do well to take seriously their approach.

Does this mean that students will go through thirteen years of schooling never cracking an English novel? Are we denying our children the pleasure of floating down the river with Rat and Mole, bursting with excitement when Almanzo wins first

strongly encouraged to read aloud for at least one hour three times a week. Daily is better. If time does not permit parents and children to read together regularly, high quality audio books and dramatizations may prove helpful. Independent and family reading is linked to schoolwork and enriches it, but should not be considered part of the formal school day. Rather, this time introduces the student to a wide range of English literature and foreign works in translation, establishes the habit of daily reading, and draws families together.

MULTUM NON MULTA MUCH NOT MANY

preparation for the Great Books, in most cases they may most profitably be read independently or within the family circle, not as part of formal schooling. Later, students are rushed through the whole Western canon in a few years of Great Books, with reading lists based on those of university programs. For example, the formal reading list for the seventh grade presented in one popular guide includes a dizzying twenty one books, ranging from *Don Quixote* (an abridged version is permitted) to *Pilgrim’s Progress* to the *Grimms’ Fairy Tales* to *Pride and Prejudice*. And this is only for English! Another publisher’s recommendations for the same year include eighteen titles, taking the student through Genesis in a week and the whole of the Iliad in five. At the same time, the students are also reading a work of theology, a study on ancient cities, the Epic of Gilgamesh, and a challenging adult novel by C. S. Lewis.

By contrast, Simmons reminds us that “schools of the best kind have always aimed high while keeping feet to the ground. They didn’t try to do too much; they tried to do the most important things.”

The core readings suggested in The Latin Centered Curriculum focus on those “important things”—the few truly enduring and representative literary monuments of the past 2,500 years. Ample time is given for students to read, reread, and “live into” their schoolbooks. As will be seen in the following discussion, the ancients possessed an effective method for approaching their great classics—which were no easier for the schoolboys of A.D. 100 than they are for our daughters and sons. The difference is that

prize for his milk fed pumpkin, or pushing past a row of old coats to step into the Narnian winter? Of course not. What it does mean is that we apply the principle of *multum non multa* in selecting schoolbooks. The streamlined classical curriculum leaves plenty of time for other pursuits, including reading for pleasure and discovery. It is in these hours that students can sail the seas to Treasure Island, sit in the drawing rooms of Austen and Trollope, thrill to the daring escapades of the Scarlet Pimpernel, march with the Roman legions in *Eagle of the Ninth*, circle the globe with Phileas Fogg, or experience the angst of modern dystopias in *1984* and *Brave New World*.

In addition to studying the core readings in depth, then, the student is expected to read independently every day, and families are

The advantages of the *multum non multa* approach are many. Eliminating busywork—workbooks, redundant curricula, excessive “escape” reading—from the school day cuts the student’s work time tremendously. Rolling subjects together—Latin and logic, Greek and geometry, history and literature—further reduces wasted time and mental energy. The time savings may be applied to the student’s own interests and to enrichment subjects such as sports, dance, or cooking. Parents will find that their preparation time is much reduced as they eliminate redundant subjects and learn alongside their children. Parents may also enjoy considerable savings on formal curricula, perhaps freeing funds for music lessons, building a quality home library, or other family needs.

The principle of *multum non multa*, which could be translated, “less is more,” has been subordinated in recent years to what may be termed *multum optimum in se* -- “more is necessarily better.” The educational well being of our children may depend on which approach we, as parents and educators, choose.

How can I
teach
LATIN

if I don't
know it
myself?

by Cheryl Lowe

There are a lot of good reasons for thinking that Latin should be restored to its former place of honor as the Basic Subject in the elementary years. But knowing *that* you should teach it and knowing *how* to teach it are two entirely different things. How can a busy home school mom with no background in Latin even hope to teach this sometimes difficult subject? I can answer this question. I can answer it because, at one time, I was a home school mother who didn't know Latin. Here are some suggestions for how those who don't know Latin can successfully teach it.

Teach it yourself. The good news is that you can teach your children Latin! The bad news is that you can teach your children Latin! In other words, you must learn it along with them. The materials are available for a successful elementary Latin program, but it is unrealistic to think that children will learn Latin without a teacher. They cannot be handed a Latin program and be expected to learn this rigorous subject alone. Many parents, in fact, have had a year or two of Latin. That will certainly make it easier, but it is not necessary. Latin programs like *Latina Christiana* are designed for exactly this purpose: to enable people who don't know Latin to teach it.

Do it in a group setting. I recommend, if possible, organizing a small Latin class, either within a family or by combining children from several homeschooling families. A mom, or several moms, in your homeschooling group may very well relish the task of learning and teaching Latin for interested families. Peer pressure (the fear of showing up unprepared) is great motivation for students to keep up with the daily work of mastering forms and vocabulary. Unless you have a large family yourself, you're unlikely to be able to take advantage of this dynamic unless you do it with other families. Group recitation of forms, vocabulary, prayers, songs and competitive games make learning Latin a lot more fun.

Pace yourself. Most people overestimate what they can accomplish in one year and underestimate what they can accomplish in five. One reason for starting Latin in the 3rd or 4th grade is to give you and your children plenty of time to learn a challenging subject. Learning Latin may seem like an overwhelming task but when it is broken down into one workable lesson a week, it becomes just a matter of discipline: all you have to do is "stick to it."

Approach it as a basic subject. Latin must be approached this way, just like arithmetic. We give our children seven or eight years to master arithmetic. It's part of the daily routine. No one thinks of dropping arithmetic because the kids don't like it or because it's hard or boring or not needed anymore because of computers. Latin must be thought of the same way. Students derive their expectations from parents and if Latin is presented to them as a basic subject necessary for a complete education, like math, they will accept that and learn it, year after year. If it is presented as a new subject that's going to be lots of fun, or as enrichment, or optional, then when it gets to be routine and hard, students will want to drop it and take up something else that appears new and fun. In order for your children to understand Latin as a basic subject, you have to understand it this way yourself.

Keep Latin front and center. Make Latin the center of your language arts curriculum, not something your child is required to do after he has completed all of his other "English" assignments. You may find that a lot of those assignments are unnecessary. Children will be a lot more

positive about doing Latin if they see that it takes the place of some of the English work they disliked anyway, instead of being additional work to do after an already overloaded curriculum has been completed. For instance, it is not necessary for Latin students to study a separate English grammar or vocabulary course. I design most of my history and geography study around Latin, as well as some spelling and composition. Students feel that their subjects are being consolidated rather than expanding; their retention increases because much of what they are learning is connected. Properly taught, Latin provides the focus and direction necessary for the elementary curriculum.

Teach the history and culture associated with Latin. Students will be unmotivated to learn a language if they know nothing of the people who spoke it. The *Story of the Romans* is a delightful introduction to history. Students will learn about the natural virtues of the Romans, and why they have inspired so much admiration throughout history. Since the Romans are more suitable for younger ages it is best to sacrifice chronological order and study Rome in grades 3-5 and Greece in grades 6-8. Students will then have the opportunity to compare and contrast the Greeks and the Romans and understand their impact on subsequent history. After this foundation in the classical age, students will have a deeper knowledge of "the fullness of time" and have some appreciation of the momentous change brought about by the coming of Christ. Latin continued as the language of learning through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Studying ancient and medieval history along with Latin makes both the history and language come alive in a way that simply is not possible when either is studied alone.

Have fun while you're at it. If you approach Latin with enthusiasm, then your children will pick up that love and enthusiasm too. Teaching techniques are important in Latin. Memorization through oral drills and recitations can be fun. Singing songs and saying prayers in Latin motivates students and makes Latin a part of everyday life. The greatest satisfaction, however, is the feeling of accomplishment when something is finished. When the child looks back over what has been learned in one year, it can be exhilarating. At the end of the third grade, students can say over twenty sets of grammar forms and twenty-five Latin sayings from memory. They look at each other and can't believe they did it. When we have learned all five declensions we have a celebration. It is a great feeling. When we have a test over all four conjugations, six tenses, active and passive voice, it is a milestone.

Latin is methodical, it is systematic, it is cumulative—and it is relentless. The student thinks it will never end, he will never learn it all. But then one day he is sitting on top of this mountain we call Latin grammar and thinking to himself, "Well, I guess it really wasn't that difficult after all." He has learned an important lesson in life: hard work and perseverance, not genius, are the keys to success.

Let's Memorize the

LATIN GRAMMAR!

by Cheryl Lowe

Because of the education meltdown in the 20th century, the art of teaching Latin, and nearly everything else, has essentially been lost. As we work to restore the content of the classical curriculum, we must also strive to resurrect the art of teaching it.

Latin, as it has been taught in the second half of the 20th century, was a two year ordeal - grammar in the 9th grade and Caesar in the 10th. Few students who experienced this grueling regimen signed up to spend a third year with Cicero. Having been required to learn in one year what previous generations had learned in four, most students have less than pleasant memories of Latin. But that is our way in the 20th century; we are in a hurry to cover “everything” and we are addicted to superficial work. So the student pays the price; he must cover the text, receive a grade, and earn a credit. But, has he learned anything? Has he been motivated and inspired to continue his study or has he developed a dislike for the subject? The grade and the credit mean nothing. It is the answers to the last two questions that really matter.

As Latin teachers we need standards to judge ourselves by and when we look to the past, it is a sobering lesson, indeed, to see the achievements of former ages: in the 1800s fluent readers of Latin were regularly admitted to Oxford at the age of sixteen. Even more startling are the meager instructional materials available to teachers at that time – 8 ounce grammars with very little in the way of translation exercises. How did they teach Latin with such skimpy little books?

Latin teachers in the past had mastery knowledge, and they also had a long

tradition of mastery teaching. Not only did they know Latin, they knew how to teach it; they had techniques honed through centuries of experience, refined through trial and error. I believe this forgotten art of teaching Latin must be rediscovered and restored in order for the classical education movement to thrive and grow. Classical education will remain an elusive dream, classical in name only, until we as teachers are able to develop Latin programs that are as successful as those of the past.

In “The Teaching of Latin and Greek”, published in 1911 and long out of print, Charles Bennett outlines the scope, sequence, and methods of Latin instruction. I believe his principles are absolutely sound and have found them to be true by my own teaching experience. And further confirmation is that they are completely consistent with the trivium stages of learning. Dr. Bennett wrote his book at a time when the traditional methods of Latin instruction were being abandoned for more ‘progressive’ methods. By explaining the failures of the newer textbooks of his own age, he sheds much light on what we need to do in ours.

Around the turn of the century when Dr. Bennett wrote his book, students began their Latin study around the age of 10-11. In previous centuries students had begun a year or two younger. While the age is not critical, I do think beginning Latin in the 3rd grade is best. Students who are reading well at this age need a new challenge, and the Latin grammar gives them some good meat to chew on; it gives discipline to the student and structure, form, purpose, and goals to the whole elementary curriculum. Beginning Latin at a young age gives

students ample time to master grammar in the grammar stage, syntax and translation in the logic stage, and thus come to the rhetoric stage in the 9th and 10th grades fully prepared to enjoy the great Latin classics of Caesar, Cicero, and Virgil.



The Four Principles of Latin instruction

by Cheryl Lowe

Dr. Charles Bennett, one of the greatest Latin teachers of modern times, on how to teach Latin.

Principle #1: Memorize the Latin Grammar

Setting priorities is the key to success. There are many good things to do, but there is one essential thing. Do it, and let everything else take second place. In Latin, that one essential thing is to learn the Latin grammar—the declensions and conjugations, which we also call the “forms.” Work through the grammar systematically, not as a collection of random chants, or a declension here, a conjugation there. Teach the grammar as a system. Focus on it. Learn it. Master it. Remember that in the past students and teachers had very little beyond the Latin grammar. Could that have been the key to their success?

In case you have never seen a Latin grammar, it is a reference manual of grammar forms and syntax; there are no exercises. Whatever course you are using, be sure to purchase a Latin grammar.

Principle #2: Recite the Latin Grammar Orally

The Latin Grammar is too much to just memorize visually or learn by writing over and over. Oral recitation of declensions and conjugations is an invaluable aid to the memory. Recite declensions and conjugations every day. This should not be an option.

Principle #3: Drill Grammar Forms for Mastery

It is a great accomplishment to be able to recite and write all of the declensions and conjugations perfectly, but it is not enough. It is necessary to be able to give an immediate response to a “form” request. Ask your students for the “accusative plural of *stella*,” “of the laws,” “in the river,” “I had walked,” “we were seeing,” “they have been attacked.” You get the idea. Strive for immediate recall. Drill 5-15 minutes every day.

Immediate recall will take several years to attain. Only
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when students have immediate recall are they actually ready to do any serious translation work. Translation work before mastering the grammar is a serious waste of time and expenditure of energy. It leads to frustration and is the near universal error in Latin instruction today. We make this same mistake in all areas of teaching. In mathematics, for example, students do word problems, long division, and even algebra before they have mastered basic math facts.

Principle #4: Overlearn

When you think your students know the grammar, they probably don't. Only students who have overlearned, have even a faint chance of actually applying their knowledge when the time comes to use it.

I hope you have noticed that all four of these principles have to do with mastery of grammar forms. To bring these principles into clearer focus, let me tell you what not to do.



Corollary I: Vocabulary

Do not have your students memorizing long vocabulary lists which they have no opportunity to use unless you intend to let them forget the words each week or invest serious time in flashcard drill. Vocabulary is best learned in context when the students are actually reading Latin or by memorizing prayers and music. Invest your time in mastering the grammar and teach a basic vocabulary of 500-1000 words over a period of 3-4 years. In other words, aim for a small usable vocabulary that students can remember. It is too much to ask for elementary students to master the grammar and acquire a large vocabulary at the same time.

Corollary II: Translation and syntax

The study of syntax and translation are logic level skills and are best postponed until the logic stage, grades 6-8. In speaking of the traditional approach of which he approves, Dr. Bennett states, “During the acquisition of forms (grammar), little attention was paid to syntax. Only a few indispensable principles of the most elementary kind were introduced at this stage ... During the acquisition of the declension of nouns, adjectives, and pronouns, and largely during the study of the conjugations, the pupil was fed in the Reader on these isolated words and phrases. Complete sentences were almost unknown.” Lest you think this method is beneath middle and high school students, I have taught adults who are just as happy as third graders, perhaps more so, to concentrate on grammar forms.

A good Latin program will have a modest vocabulary, present grammar forms systematically, drill isolated forms and delay translation work until the grammar has been mastered. Translation work while learning the grammar should be limited to simple drills of inflected forms and very basic model sentences. English to Latin sentence translation is too difficult and should be limited and only done in the classroom with the assistance of the teacher.

We believe our *Prima Latina*, *Latina Christiana*, *First Form*, and *Henle* programs conform closely to these principles, and are the best choices for teachers with or without a Latin background.

How can you master the Latin grammar? Buy a grammar if you don't already have one to go with whatever Latin program you are using. Continue with your Latin program and make any adjustment you feel helps you to focus on the grammar forms while continuing with your program. Students must have vocabulary, sayings, and exercises to do each week. Make sure the vocabulary is manageable and the exercises are focused on forms rather than difficult translation. Skip translation work if necessary, especially English to Latin.

We are always pushing higher level skills into the lower grades, thinking we are doing advanced work. This

occurs in every subject but especially Latin and mathematics where students often try translation before learning grammar forms and algebra before mastering arithmetic.

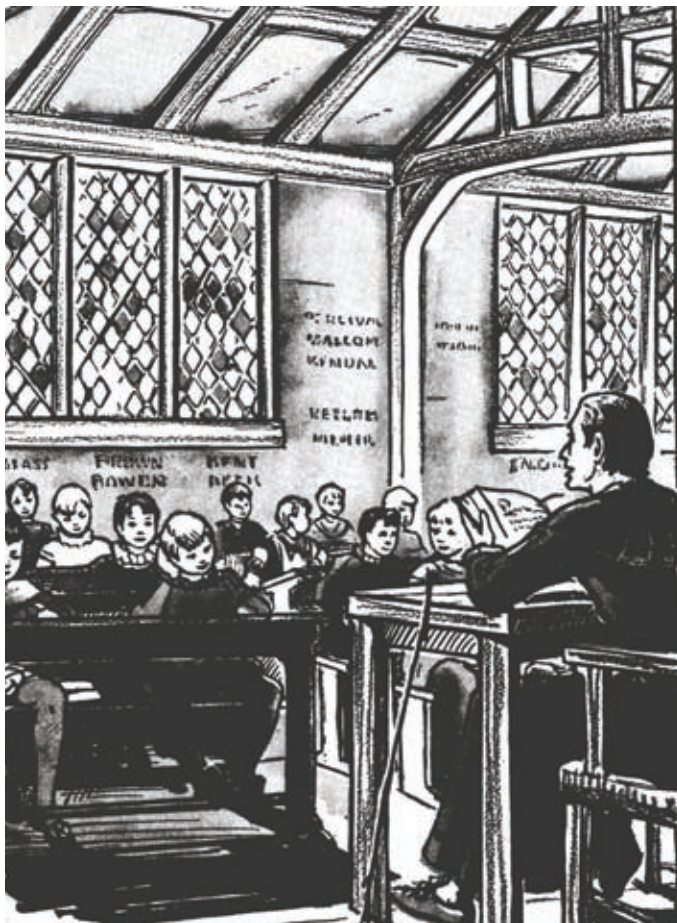
Parents are impressed, and the program looks advanced—and the student suffers the consequences of our pride, for that is what it is. Failure to master basic skills, whether it's long division or Latin grammar forms, leads to the glass ceiling. The students are unable to reach high levels in math, Latin, or other subjects because the foundation is so weak that it eventually crumbles under the weight of advanced academic demands. Student frustration increases and they drop out before calculus or Cicero or Shakespeare. If this happens, it is we who have failed our students. 📖

Why Recite?

Forget matching, multiple choice, or fill-in the blanks. If you want a child to really know - truly own - a body of information, Recitation is the only way to go. Previously the sole method of testing, Recitation requires mastery of a subject like no other testing mechanism can. With nowhere to hide and no opportunity for charms or tricks, it requires of the student focus, poise, and absolute certainty of the information offered. The child cannot make educated guesses or selectively opt out of questions. Each child is fully responsible for each fact; the “flubbers” are obvious - and usually also encouraged to improve by the child’s peer group. This is a test that is pass or fail only.

Beyond providing an objective demonstration of knowledge acquired, Recitation fosters the kind of confidence we want our children to have - the kind earned by accomplishing a challenging feat, the kind that enables them to humbly believe they can learn anything. This is an invaluable benefit of conducting regular Recitations. This is why we hold them in such high regard .

Frequently asked exactly how we conduct Recitations, we offer you a model for a Latin Recitation that would be appropriate for Latina Christiana students on the next page. But first the rules of Recitation:



How To Conduct A Recitation and Why!

by Leigh Lowe

1.) Conduct Recitations with formality.

This is not an opportunity for students to show-off, rather a time to demonstrate their mastery, the fruits of their labors. They should see Recitation as a test and public speaking engagement in one. No slouching, slurring, fidgeting. Recitations can be a group activity or an individual one. Use both to great effect.

2.) Be prepared.

The teacher must be fully prepared for Recitation. In best cases, she also has the Recitation content memorized. Seeing is believing; nothing proves to students that they can in fact recite the whole of (fill in the blank here) like seeing someone else do it. Fumbling words or shuffling papers contributes to a lack of rhythm which can kill a Recitation. Peeking down at notes is fine, but not ideal. Without being silly, pick a nice pace and cadence for your group – that’s what makes it fun.

3.) Prioritize the key information.

This is not the time to seek out trivial or obscure pieces of information. Recitation should cover the information that will ideally be remembered for a lifetime. Keep the content consistent and cumulative. The order of facts should always be the same, with new information added at the end. Students who participate in Recitation should eventually be able to conduct it without supervision (not that we recommend this) because they will know exactly what comes next.

4.) Do not underestimate your student(s).

We’ve seen Kindergartners recite 30 Bible verses in a row; sixth graders rattle off 70 stanzas of *Horatius at the Bridge*; high schoolers recite Latin grammar forms for 20 minutes without pause. There is no greater gift we can give students than to expect the best from them.

Though we are offering a Latin Recitation model here, don’t hesitate to transfer this example to other content areas. For American Studies, recite the presidents, states and capitals, dates of the key wars; for math, recite multiplication tables; for Christian studies, recite Scripture, books of the Bible, the 10 Commandments. The possibilities are truly endless. Take advantage.

Model Latin Recitation

Start by saying, “Salvete Amici Latinae, surgite, oremus.” Students stand and say all of the prayers they know: Table Blessing, Pater Noster, etc. Provide a prayer sheet for them to follow along with at the beginning, but say the prayers aloud from day one. They should fold their hands and be respectful even though their eyes may be open and looking at you or a paper. Eventually the prayer sheet should be banished.

If you are learning music, you could sing or recite music. We recommend using the songs from the *Lingua Angelica* CD along with the musical accompaniment. Next say “declension endings, a, ae.” Students should complete seven sets of declension endings including two each for the 2nd and 3rd declensions. Do not pause to announce each new declension. Simply roll through the 70 endings.

Then say “model nouns, mensa, mensae.” Students recite the declensions of seven model nouns: mensa, mensae, mensae. . . , along with servus, bellum, pater (or lex), flumen, portus, res. No translating here – just the Latin ma’am. If you have done i-stems and -er nouns you can add ager, puer, vir, pars, mare.

Next, say “conjugations, voco.” Students conjugate the first conjugation model verb voco in 6 tenses active voice, then the second conjugation model verb moneo in 6 tenses also. If you are in *Latina Christiana* just use your cue words in the Teachers Manual to provide the perfect sequence and structure.

Once you have recited all the Latin forms, you may begin with English grammar.

Recite the eight parts of speech. Do meanings for all 6 tenses in English. Recite pronouns, adjectives, and more verb forms if you know them. List the 5 cases. What is the possessive case? The to/for case? The direct object case? The subject case? What are the two ways to show possession in English? What are the 4 attributes of nouns? What are the three genders? What are the 6 attributes of verbs? And so on.

Then move to Form Drills. Now’s the time to translate. Practice for speed and accuracy. Say “of girls” and the group or an individual student responds “puellarum.” Or say, “to or for the men” and the student responds hominibus. You can also reverse it and give the Latin and ask the English of your students. Form drills are difficult for young students but you can start working on them slowly. The idea is if you say “puellam” they know that it is a direct object, and puellarum means “*of the girls*.” You want them to know the form instantly, not have to decline the noun in their heads to get to the form they need.

End with “Finite! Optime! Sedete!” And revel in a job well-done.

CAV E AT EMPTOR

Seven questions to ask when looking for a Latin program.

by Leigh Lowe

WITH LATIN DEFENDED AS THE CORE OF A CLASSICAL education, we often meet parents sprinting to add Latin to their curriculum. Though noble in their pursuits, parents are often too quick to pick up any Latin program that mentions Caesar or promises to improve SAT scores. But choosing a Latin program is not an insignificant task. Putting a program in front of your student and writing “Latin” in your schedule does not a classical curriculum make.

Here are a few questions to ask when looking for a Latin program:

#1 Is the program age-appropriate? We have stated time and time again that students who begin Latin in the grammar years have a great head start on students who wait to begin Latin until high school or even college. Not that there is any problem in starting late if you have to, but there are advantages to starting early. The point is THERE IS NO NEED TO RUSH. Many parents, even though their children are still fairly young, get anxious about whether their child will move fast enough in a particular program. But more important than reading Virgil by age nine is that foundational Latin skills are mastered and that students feel confident enough to continue. Latin’s benefits do not come in crash courses – they are earned through continuity, consistency, and time. Start with a program designed for young students, one that includes sufficient grammar instruction, age-appropriate vocabulary, and plenty of support. A Latin program should complement your existing curriculum (especially your language arts selection) and promote slow and thoughtful progression. Beware of a program that just “stuffs in” an abundance of information. A good program is discerning about the quantity and sequence of the information presented. And remember this: when students fail in their attempt to learn Latin, it usually is the result of trying to do too much too soon; it is almost never because they were too slow or methodical.

#2 Does the program utilize a “parts to whole” approach? Be wary of a program that overwhelms a student with the whole picture before he has time to learn and apply the parts. Think of it this way. You would never teach a child long division before teaching addition and subtraction, would you? As with Latin, dissecting a complicated whole is significantly more difficult than first learning and applying the smaller parts. In this respect the debate over learning to read offers a good illustration. Many modern reading programs throw children into reading and expect them to learn the phonetic rules

by osmosis. It is called the “whole language” approach. Advocates of phonics have rightly pointed out that this approach serves mostly to confuse children, and that the best way to teach children to read is to introduce them to the letter-sound correspondences first. With the phonics foundation in place, students are considerably better prepared for dealing with the whole language later.

The approach to teaching Latin should mirror the “parts-to-whole” approach taken in phonics. Latin is an inflected language, with endings performing almost all grammatical functions. A student should learn one rule or system at a time (a set of declension endings, for example) which can be applied to all nouns of its class – instead of prematurely tackling a complex whole (a sentence for example) and being required to grammatically parse words. “Whole-to-parts” approaches seriously impede the pace at which a child can progress because they de-emphasize the system of the language and the breadth of service individual skills provide. In avoiding “whole-to-parts” programs, beware of programs that introduce advanced ideas like principal parts prematurely or stress translation over grammar. If a program is too tough for a parent to comprehend and teach, it will probably be too difficult for the child as well.

#3 Is the program grammar-based as opposed to conversational? We really don’t need to tell you that no one speaks Latin anymore, right? So, why choose a Latin program that prepares a student for a study abroad trip to – the middle ages!?! People don’t rush off and learn Latin to converse with each other. Why, then, use a conversational Latin program that prioritizes the least important thing about Latin study? Aside from the significance of spoken Latin in prayers and hymns, there is almost no reason one would ever be asked to SPEAK Latin. Don’t get bogged down worrying about pronunciation or conversation. Latin has garnered its reputation as the summa of subjects for far more than just producing Latin conversationalists.

Latin assumed its position as queen of the languages because it is unique in its ability to transcend traditional educational boundaries and empower students like no other subject can. Because it is rigorous, systematic, finite, and cumulative, Latin prepares students to excel in math and sciences. Because it is the base language for English and all Romance languages - with the grammar, syntax, structure, and all the subtleties that go along, students of Latin become masters of words, precise in spoken and written discourse. Conquering Latin, a student knows he can conquer anything. A grammar-based Latin program retains these intrinsic rewards – focusing on the uniqueness that makes Latin

study so powerful. Conversational programs, on the other hand, build instruction around stories, translations, or pictures and are inherently unstructured or erratic, consequently stripping Latin of its core benefits.

Furthermore, a grammar-based approach to the language teaches students self-discipline and proper study habits, since a grammar based approach is, by its nature, extremely structured and incremental. Taught this way, Latin is the best thinking-skills course a grammar school student can take.

#4 Is it a Latin program or a derivatives program? Many Latin programs stress the relationship between English and Latin vocabulary and exalt derivatives as the main reason to pursue Latin. In fact, many programs focus exclusively on Latin derivatives. The popularity of this approach is probably due to the mistaken belief that the greatest benefit of Latin is the knowledge of Latin root words. This is one benefit of Latin, for sure. But the greatest benefits of Latin, as we said before, come from the grammar study that it involves, an aspect of the language that would be completely missed if a student studied only derivatives. But there is another point to be made here, and it is this: the best way to learn Latin derivatives is a direct study of the language itself. In other words, a child will learn Latin derivatives better if he studies the entire Latin language than if he studies the derivatives independently. This is because he is learning the words in some kind of context, making it easier for him to remember them.

#5 Does the program overburden the student with vocabulary? It is very easy to inundate a child with more words than he can genuinely master. Though it can be exciting for a parent to recognize Latin as a source for new and challenging words, it should be remembered that grammar school students are increasing their vocabularies at every turn, in every course. Rather than peppering a student with list upon list of unrelated words, a limited vocabulary base of 200-400 Latin words should serve as the vocabulary spine for the year and be integrated as the guide for language study in all other courses. Introducing too many words at too fast a pace will take the student's attention away from the grammar that must be mastered early in order to understand the language properly. The trick with Latin is the grammar. Once the child has learned Latin grammar, vocabulary is the easy part.

#6 Is the program visually appealing? Aesthetics are not unimportant. Beauty, after all, was of equal importance to truth and goodness to the ancients. When you look at a Latin program, take into account its appearance – does it overwhelm you or your student? Does it trivialize the subject with trite pictures? Does it provide enough space to write answers? Have margin for notes? Does it arrange lesson content in easily accessible styles? Basically, do you want to open this book? Do you like it? Latin itself is challenging – there's no need to let the organization of the lesson provide unnecessary distractions!

#7 Does the program focus on Christian or classical Latin? This is not necessarily an either/or question. But, one of the things you will want to notice about

a program is whether it includes Christian Latin content. Latin was the international language of Christians for over a thousand years. To exclude this in favor of focusing solely on Roman Latin content is a common mistake. Acknowledging both Latin's Christian and classical heritage offers the more historically accurate cultural background for the language. In addition, Christian Latin programs usually encourage Christian (also called ecclesiastical) pronunciation as opposed to the classical pronunciation. Remember, no one speaks Latin so pronunciation shouldn't be your priority. While the two pronunciations are similar, Christian Latin pronunciation is closer to English in many ways and thus a little easier to learn. Furthermore, Christian pronunciation is the pronunciation you will hear in the Latin music sung by great choirs today - to us, a terrific incentive for Christian Latin.

Seven Questions to ask when choosing a Latin Program

1. Is it age appropriate?
2. Does it utilize a “parts-to- whole” approach?
3. Is it grammar based?
4. Does it teach Latin Grammar or only Latin Roots?
5. Is the vocabulary well-chosen?
6. Is the program well-organized & appealing?
7. Does it teach Christian Latin?

