

The Arts and Classical Christian Education

by Patch Blakey

In writing this brief introductory article for this issue of *Classis*, I wondered where the first mention of “songs” or “singing” was in the Bible. The first reference that I could find was in Genesis 31:27: “Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?”

This statement was made by Laban to his son-in-law, Jacob, after Jacob’s secret departure from his deceiving father-in-law. Of course, Laban didn’t mean what he said about sending Jacob away with mirth and songs. He was continuing to be sly and deceptive. The Lord had already told Laban in a dream not to speak either good or bad to Jacob. The reasons that Jacob fled secretly are given earlier in the passage, and it wasn’t because Jacob didn’t want a cheerful send-off.

The second reference to singing that I found was in Exodus 15:1: “Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

This occurrence was to praise and glorify God for His miraculous deliverance of the children of Israel from Pharaoh and his army at the Red Sea. It was not a cheerful time for Pharaoh and his charioteers, but on the other hand, the Israelites were pretty thrilled.

It can be seen that singing songs was something that all men had access to and did, both those who faithfully submitted to the God of Abraham as well as those that did not. Man was created to

be creative, which includes being musical (Job 38:7). It is part of his nature, and it is an aspect of man that does not appear to have been lost during the Fall. It would seem then, that music, like anything else creative that man does, can be either used to glorify God or not.

If we as classical Christian educators believe that man is to glorify God in all that we do (1 Cor. 10:31), then we need to give careful thought to how we are to instruct students in a way that glorifies God. How are we to incorporate not only singing, but all of the arts into the Christ-centered liberal arts education that we desire to provide the students entrusted to our care? Do the fine arts become our major emphasis in our curriculum, our primary emphasis, or our only emphasis? Where’s the balance?

An administrator at a classical Christian school once told me of an essay he had read. It noted that students must be taught music (as a requirement of a faithful educator), but to such a degree that there would be no time to teach them anything else! If we were to expand this requirement—not just as regards music, but to all of the arts—then answering the question of balance and emphasis in the curriculum is made even more difficult.

However, let me offer an observation based on an explanation from the apostle Paul. He wrote to the Corinthian church, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12).

The Triune God created all things, and in Him are all

the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:2-3). That means that He created math as well as language arts as well as the fine arts. He intended, like the human body which has many parts, yet is one body, that all types of knowledge should have their place, yet comprise the well-rounded education of our students. This is as Paul further explained to the Corinthians in his body analogy: “If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body” (1 Cor. 12:17-20).

Likewise, if the whole curriculum were math, then where is the Latin? If it were all music, then where is painting or drama? But all knowledge derives ultimately from the Creator God, and therefore points back to Him. It is all a vast body of knowledge, and as classical Christian educators, we want our students to be grounded in that body as broadly as possible, to the glory of God.

With that said, I am extremely pleased with the articles in this issue of *Classis*, and want to thank each of the authors for their thought-provoking submissions. Hopefully, administrators and teachers will all feel stretched by these articles and, also just a little uncomfortable so that each is forced to take another look, perhaps a broader look, at what is included in the school’s curriculum with regard to the fine arts.

Patch Blakey is the executive director of ACCS.