

Mutual Provocation

by Patch Blakey

There are a couple of Bible verses that I hear often and am personally partial to. One is from Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The other is similar, found in Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Without getting into a deep meditation on these verses, it seems apparent that at some level, we as Christians share a mutual need and a mutual responsibility to encourage and build one another up.

In addition, Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example" (Phil. 3:17). We are to look for godly examples and follow them. Just as teachers in the classroom are required to be godly examples to their students, teachers are also required to be godly examples to their fellow teachers.

Proverbs tells us that there is an incremental approach to learning that shifts from a passive intake to an aggressive pursuit. Ultimately, all knowledge comes from the Triune God of the Bible.

My son, if thou wilt receive
my words, and hide my
commandments with thee;

So that thou incline thine
ear unto wisdom, and apply
thine heart to understanding;

Yea, if thou criest after
knowledge, and liftest up thy
voice for understanding;

If thou seekest her as
silver, and searchest for
her as for hid treasures;
Then shalt thou understand

the fear of the LORD, and
find the knowledge of God.

For the LORD giveth
wisdom: out of his mouth
cometh knowledge and
understanding.

Proverbs 2:1-6

What should all of the above mean to teachers? One thought is that we are always either teaching or being taught ourselves. The latter should have at least the purpose of equipping us to be better teachers. We want to be found following Paul's advice to Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Of course, we may not be pastors as Timothy was called to be, but nonetheless we need to know our subject matter well, know our students well, and know our trade of instruction well.

We need to find others who can stretch us to perform at our maximum potential. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise" (Prov. 13:20a). This kind of "walking" is a self-conscious action on our part to be discriminating in seeking out good examples for ourselves to follow, using the word *discrimination* in its best context. Jesus assured His disciples that "a disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). It therefore makes sense that we would want to find and follow those who are exemplary in their calling as teachers.

The articles in this issue of *Classis* were all written by teachers from ACCS schools. The authors all understand and are committed

to the application of the Trivium and to John Milton Gregory's *Seven Laws of Teaching*. These essays were written by teachers for teachers. They are intended to be stimulating or provoking; to be like "iron sharpening iron."

My hope is that in reading these articles, you will be challenged in ways that you may not have been previously. You may be inspired to alter your approach to classical Christian education in a more productive vein, to become more diligent in applying the basics. You also might become motivated to write an article yourself for possible publication in a future issue of *Classis* that would challenge your peers in other classical Christian schools.

In any eventuality, I am thankful for those teachers who responded to our request for articles, and I think you will be pleased with the collection provided in this issue of *Classis*.

Patch Blakey is the executive director of ACCS.