

## Hugh of St. Victor's *Didascalicon*...

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himself as consistently Christian, but he was juggling chainsaws, and cut off more than one finger in the process. As Protestants, we must reject any hint of Platonism which, in education, tends to show up in logic stage. (One could argue that the medievals remained primarily at the logic stage in philosophy and theology. However, until we can write *poetry* like they did, we should keep our mouths shut and learn a lesson or two). While we read Hugh in his more Platonic moments, we must remember that he saw his readers progressing through stages of knowledge and wisdom that mirrored God's wisdom and knowledge. Though his language is Platonic, his worldview is *theocentric*.

Hugh is not only concerned with "Secular Letters." That is merely groundwork to prepare us to study "Sacred Letters." There are three types of men who read the Scriptures: those who seek riches or honor and those who delight in the "marvels" of Scripture, and the third group who read the Scriptures, "so that they may forthrightly demolish enemies of the truth, teach those less well informed, recognize the path of truth more perfectly themselves, and understanding the hidden things of God more deeply, love them more intently."<sup>20</sup> It is this sort of reader that Hugh wished his readers to be, and it is this sort of reader that Hugh himself strove to be.

To the patient and persevering reader, the *Didascalicon* offers us a window into the medieval mind, and through that mind, a vista into the vast learning of antiquity. To those of us dedicated to "rebuilding the ruins" and "recovering the lost tools of learning," surely we should be eager to learn from one who was himself engaged in the same task. One day, may our children's children say of us as Hugh said of those who study Scripture "precisely": "Surely the devotion of these persons deserves praise and is worthy of imitation."<sup>21</sup>

*Now, therefore, let us ask Wisdom that it may deign to shine in our hearts and to cast light upon its paths for us, that it may bring us "to its pure and fleshless feast."<sup>22</sup>*

20. Ibid., 134.

21. Ibid., 134.

22. Ibid., 151. Fittingly, Hugh ends his book with a quotation from the Latin *Asclepius*, part of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Nothing was beyond Christianization for the medievals!

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## Book Review: Protocol Matters

Although Sandra Boswell's book, *Protocol Matters*, is a double entendre, it's not one with a risqué or indelicate meaning in either sense. In fact, both meanings are precisely germane. Protocol, how one conducts oneself in the company of others, does indeed matter, it is important. Also, the book is a compendium of matters or issues about establishing a "protocol" or social event for the purpose of instructing students in proper etiquette and customs.

Proper etiquette is another means of demonstrating love through our actions. Knowing the proper thing to do in a wide variety of social situations can help put others at ease as well as ourselves. Boswell has done an outstanding job of addressing the vast array of potential social issues that most people encounter in life, and provides explicit directions on how to navigate each of them.

Boswell begins by addressing protocol training, explaining what it is and why it is important. She continues by emphasizing how to teach protocol in the home and ultimately how to establish a protocol training program at school that addresses students in an age-appropriate fashion (a la trivium).

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## Book Review: Teenagers and Manners

reviewed by Patch Blakey

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She explains not only how to set up a protocol program, but provides extensive details of who is to do what and when so that such a program is a delight and blessing to the students as well as a necessary cultural learning experience.

The book provides anecdotes from personal experiences from her years as a protocol instructor in a classical Christian school as well

as from personal experiences in every day life. Some are embarrassing for the unnamed parties while others are quite amusing. She even has a section on how to graciously and effectively handle rude people.

The procedures for making proper introductions are always an important first step for getting a group together for an event and Boswell covers the various possible perturbations that can arise in social situations. Table settings and manners are described for casual family style meals to formal dining occasions, in-

cluding the number of courses, what they typically are, when there may be a fork on the "spoon side" of the plate,

### Protocol Matters:

Cultivating Social Graces in Christian Homes and Schools

by Sandra Boswell

Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2006, pp 231, \$18

and more. For that matter, how many of us would know the difference between the glasses used to serve a white or a red wine? When may one excuse oneself from the table once the meal has begun? Is it required that all men rise when a woman leaves the table? The answers to these questions and several others are surprisingly *not* what I would have intuitively expected prior to reading this book.

Clothing is often described throughout the Bible, and it is generally done in a context-appropriate manner. In our

postmodern, relativistic culture, anything seems to go at any time or any place, including wearing pajamas for shopping at the supermarket. We have forgotten what the proper clothing is for various contexts. *Protocol Matters* calls us back to our civil Christian roots describing proper attire as the Bible does, in a context-appropriate manner.

This is a very practical book, which means it has a lot of detail, but it is formatted in a manner that allows the reader to locate and peruse that portion that may be of immediate interest. It is a highly valuable book and a necessity not only for Christian schools that want to engender godly conduct in their students, but also for homes where parents want to learn themselves and instruct their children how to be comfortable and help others to be comfortable through the use of proper godly courtesies. After all, protocol matters.

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