

# CLAS S I S

THE BULLETIN of THE  
ASSOCIATION of CLASSICAL & CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

*Sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago*

MARCH ■ 2007

VOLUME XIV ■ NUMBER 2

## Why We Do What We Do

*by Douglas Wilson*

The resurgence of classical Christian education in our country over the last twenty years has been a great blessing. And yet, as with all blessings, the passage of time tempts us to take them for granted, which is another way of assuming “it has always been like this.” When a school first begins, the ever-present danger of having to close the doors helps keep the mind focused, and the mix of excitement, danger, bills, coffee, and adrenaline has gotten many a school through the first two years.

But at some point, survival is no longer the central issue, and the basic vision has been worked out. Everything seems to be going fine. The way it is in the school is “just the way it is.” And this is the point where we must remind ourselves why we have undertaken the task we have. Why do we do what we do?

Inertia can *become* the answer, but it is not the faithful biblical answer. Many institutions regard the need for their own continued existence as a self-evident truth. We should be here tomorrow for no other reason than that we were here yesterday. But this is not good enough. If we were unfaithful yesterday, we need to be faithful tomorrow. If we were faithful yesterday, we need to be faithful tomorrow. What does that faithfulness look like?

In the first place, we do what we do because God continues to give us children. As long as He is granting us the gift of children, we are called as parents to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). This is the most important task that God has given to parents, and it is a task that goes far beyond providing food and shelter. This passage in Ephesians is a far-reaching one—the apostle uses a word for *admonition* here that was a common word in the ancient Greek world, and it was a word with enormous implications. The word rendered as admonition here is *paideia*, and it means the discipline that enculturates a child into the civilization into which he was born. This means that, for Paul, a Christian *paideia* presupposes a Christian culture or civilization.

This is a central Christian duty, and on one end of it we find the basic Christian family. On the other end is a Christian civilization, which may be in various stages of existence. These things wax and wane. When St. Paul wrote these words, Christendom was centuries in the future. As we read them, Christendom is centuries in the past. But because the book of Ephesians is still the Word of God, and because God continues to give us children, we are responsible to continue to assume the task assigned to us. We do so in a position that is more like that of the first recipients of the letter than it was for Christians four hundred years ago. The Christians of the first century

*Continued on page 2*

### NATIONAL ACCS BOARD

Rob Tucker ■ *Chairman*  
*Rockbridge Academy*  
*Millersville, Maryland*

Ty Fischer ■ *Vice-Chairman*  
*Veritas Academy*  
*Leola, Pennsylvania*

Tom Garfield ■ *Secretary*  
*Logos School*  
*Moscow, Idaho*

Marlin Detweiler  
*Veritas Press*  
*Leola, Pennsylvania*

Tom Eddy  
*Olathe, Kansas*

Rick Hall  
*Westminster Academy*  
*Memphis, Tennessee*

Ron Lee  
*Schaeffer Academy*  
*Rochester, Minnesota*

Don Post (*Sabbatical*)  
*Tall Oaks Classical School*  
*Newark, Delaware*

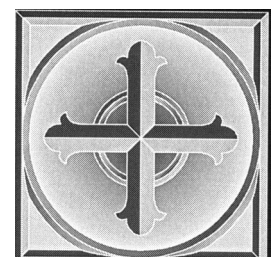
Larry Stephenson  
*Cary Christian School*  
*Cary, North Carolina*

Ty Willis  
*Regents School of Austin*  
*Austin, Texas*

Bob Donaldson Ex-Officio  
George Grant Ex-Officio  
Douglas Wilson Ex-Officio

### Inside this issue:

Book Review.....	3
New Members.....	4
Quid Novi.....	4
Teacher Training.....	5-6
Classifieds.....	6-15
Conference Info.....	16



*Douglas Wilson is the pastor of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho. He is a founding board member of both Logos School and New Saint Andrews College, and serves as an instructor at Greyfriars' Hall, a ministerial training program at Christ Church. He helped to establish the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC), is the editor of Credenda/Agenda, and the author of numerous books on classical Christian education, the family, and the Reformed faith. He served in the U.S. Navy in the submarine service, completed a BA and an MA in philosophy, and a BA in classical studies, all at the University of Idaho.*



## Why We Do What We Do

*continued from page 1*

were building from scratch, and we are rebuilding from the ruins, but we still have much in common.

This means that Christian families who undertake the responsibility of providing a classical Christian education for their children are, to steal a phrase from the liberals, “thinking globally, and acting locally.” We do what we do because God’s covenant purposes will not be fulfilled apart from the blessing of covenant succession being fulfilled. And that will not happen unless our children grow up into the same faith that we have, loving the same God we love, and teaching their children just as we taught them, generation after generation.

Other goals are fine, but we must not be distracted by them. “Getting into the right college,” or “landing a good job,” are all legitimate things, provided we do not idolize them. But we are tempted to idolize them when we forget the ultimate point. That point is the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The point is the establishment of the kingdom of God, on earth as it is in heaven. The point is to bring up Christian children to live as Christian adults, so that they can bring up Christian children in the same way.

This is not going to happen unless we cultivate, with a great deal of gratitude, a sense of history, a sense of place, a sense of community, and life together. All this means education. When we think globally, we have a sense that we are part of something *significant*. But we do not become starry-eyed ideologues. When we are simultaneously encouraged and overwhelmed by the enormity of the task, we turn from that prospect, and God in His kindness gives us a third-grader to help with the homework. The vision is broad,

but the range of action is narrow—as narrow as your own family, or the children in your own classroom. The humorist P.J. O’Rourke once quipped that everyone wants to save the world, but no one wants to help mom with the dishes.

So the school secretary is doing two things simultaneously. She is rebuilding Western Civilization and she is pulling out a child’s tooth.

The Latin instructor is doing two things at the same time. She is restoring a cultural heritage, and she is correcting papers that did not conjugate *laudo* correctly. The administrator is doing two things. He is reading books to recapture a sense of

how much we have left to do, and he is also trying to contact a local friend of the school to see if he can plow the snow out of the parking lot. God works with us in this way. We sometimes think there is a tension in it, but not really. After all, the ultimate Logos of the universe became a particular baby with ten fingers and ten toes. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Why should we not have to dwell among us?

And so this is why we do what we do. God has given us a vision of a renewed or restored Christendom, perhaps in a hundred years, and perhaps in five hundred years. But instead of sitting quietly, pining for the day when this might happen, God has given us days to fill with fruitful educational work in the meantime. And this is not busy work either. No one can quite tell how a redwood grows, and you can’t really watch it. But everything little thing contributes, and this is why the apostle can encourage us to know that this, our labor in the Lord, is not in vain. As Cornelius Van Til once put it so wonderfully, parents and teachers “labor in the dawn of everlasting results.”

*The Christians of the first century were building from scratch, and we are rebuilding from the ruins, but we still have much in common.*