



THE COURIER

THE GENEVA
SCHOOL
NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2006

January 2006

Jan 2: School resumes after Christmas break

Jan 9: College Financial Aid Presentation ~ 7pm in the music room

Jan 11: Early dismissal (12:15pm) for grades 7 - 12

Jan 12 Semester exams and early dismissal (12:15pm) for grades 7 - 12

Jan 13: Semester exams for grades 7 - 12. Early dismissal for all grades (3 hours prior to regular dismissal time; all K4 students attend morning session)

Ryan Bailey conference at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church ~ 7:00 - 9:00pm (see back page)

Jan 14: Ryan Bailey conference continued ~ 8:30am - 12:30pm

Jan 16: Student/Faculty holiday

Jan 17: Student holiday/Faculty workday. Prospective Parent Open House (9:30am & 7:00pm)

Jan 20: Report cards sent home

Jan 28: The Geneva Players present *Our Town* at Park Maitland School Auditorium ~ 7:00pm

Moms in Touch

Led by Julie Tressler, a group of dedicated moms meets every Monday at 8:15am for approximately one hour to pray for The Geneva School students, parents, teachers, staff and Board. Come as you are to the office at Cascades (across the street from the School) after you drop off your children.

THE GENEVA SCHOOL

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Higher, Faster, Stronger

By Michael Eatmon - Academic Dean

Several weeks ago I celebrated (or should I say, "sustained?") my thirty-sixth birthday. This day, like many an ordinary one, could have come and gone easily, even pleasantly, were it not also the day on which nearly 4700 accreditation reports were due in to Maria Francis. Such a convergence, however, of birthday and doomsday demanded not to go unnoticed, not to pass unexamined. The concurrence catalyzed in me considerable contemplation, I can assure you, and that, largely, of the labor of love that is Geneva.

As I began on that November morn to reminisce upon my past 36 years, or what precious few of them I could remember, I realized that I had already invested in The Geneva School a full one-third of my life. For more than a dozen years, the vision of Christian classicism has continuously lured and captivated me. Its clarion call has beckoned me strive unrelentingly toward the ideals of perfection that lie ever before us, ever beyond humanity's fallen and ephemeral grasp -- ideals whose origin, purpose, and essence are found consummately in God Himself.

Christian classicism's unequivocal challenge of *altius, citius, fortius* requires us as educators and parents, disciples of Jesus and students alike constantly to ascertain whether we be striving in all our thoughts, words, and deeds in such wise as to pursue excellence, whether in such a manner as to attain the prize of the high calling in Christ. Accordingly, Geneva must pose continually these higher-faster-stronger questions of itself: of its curriculum, of its pedagogy, of its culture, of its incarnation of these ideals. When and where it deems itself amiss, the School must correct its course; where less than excellent, it must reform. The Christian faith expects as much. Christian learning, no less.

Continued on page 2....

Higher, Faster, Stronger continued

Since late last spring, one such category of inquiry has been that of language arts in the Grammar School (GS). While over the past half-dozen years Geneva's "average" GS student has scored at or about the SAT's 90th percentile for the composite language arts of spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and writing, the School has recognized by parental suggestion and responsible self-assessment a reasonable room for improvement. Upon review and reflection, significant curricular questions arose and begged better answer than several of the solutions currently in place.

- o Do language arts (LA) curricula now in use comport with, or even simply complement, the academic ends and pedagogical means of Christian Classicism?
- o Do they offer a cohesion and a comprehensiveness of instructional goals and objectives for the LA sub-disciplines, grades two through six?
- o Do they provide for a continuity in content from one grade-level to the next and a clarity of curricular-mapping from one teacher to the next, so that students may pass from year to year without gap?
- o Do materials used at present in the GS prepare its students for more advanced LA studies in the Dialectic and make the curricular transition as naturally incremental as possible?
- o Do the various texts and resources interact well, do they "speak the same language" as one another and as other LA programs used outside Geneva, both within grade-levels and among them?

Having invested hundreds of man-hours in investigation, analysis, and deliberation of these concerns during the past six months, the administration and the Board's Academic Affairs Committee have determined that a change of course in GS

language arts curricula would profit all our students. Further, the administration and committee concluded that even mid-year modifications would benefit each student's study of spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and writing, augmenting instruction already very good toward greater degrees of excellence. Though, optimally, reforms of this scope would wait for implementation till a following school year, the administration felt compelled to respond sooner and more saliently.

Beginning Wednesday, January 18, the first day of the third quarter, new texts, materials, and resources will appear in

Grammar School classrooms, grades two through six, that answer "yes" to the pertinent and imperative questions posed above. The new curricula will enable faculty to educate their students in the English language arts in ways yet better than those before. In short order students should become more skillfully equipped to achieve the highest standards possible in their ongoing studies of spelling, vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing, and their improvements promise to be immediately noticeable. Please pray in the interim, if you would, for the speedy arrival of books and the successful in-service training of faculty, as together we work to pursue excellence in the education of your children.

The Geneva School's unabated challenge to strive always higher, faster, stronger requires us as parents and educators constantly to question whether we be running in such a manner as to attain the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. My birthday musings of a month ago only confirmed what we all affirm already. When and where we find ourselves amiss, whether personally or corporately, let us entreat God for conviction and courage to correct our course; where less than excellent in thought or word or deed, let us seek from God both sight and strength to reform. The Christian faith expects as much; Christian discipleship demands no less.

Wisdom, Virtue and the Internet

By David Petrak - IT Manager

Can wisdom and virtue be found on the Internet? The resounding answer is Yes! The Christian Classics Ethereal Library¹ publishes the texts of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of classical Christian works. The website for the CiRCE Institute² provides resources and references for Christian classical schools. Even the websites of major newspapers, such as the *New York Times*,³ *The Wall Street Journal*,⁴ and the *Orlando Sentinel*,⁵ offer wisdom to be gleaned by those who have eyes to see.

Navigating the path to wisdom and virtue across the internet, however, can be a tricky business. Pitfalls range from the subtle to the obvious, and discerning the manner in which trouble presents itself is not easy.

Among the more obvious stumbling blocks is pornography. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, in writing a concurring opinion in *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, famously wrote of pornography, "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it."⁶ The journey from over-sexualized photos of celebrities to pornographic material is a short one. As Jesus urged, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28, NIV).⁷ For parents, students, faculty, staff, Board members -- everyone really -- the ready availability of pornography online, and even the more subtle forms of visual sexual temptations -- so prevalent that we have become numb to them -- are a threat to the pursuit of wisdom and virtue: one which we must flee from with the same urgency Joseph demonstrated when propositioned by Potiphar's wife.

Social connections made over the Internet are equally difficult to assess. We love the idea of being able to connect with children that have gone off to college, to support members of the military,⁸ and to learn about and pray for the needs of missionaries.⁹ & ¹⁰ Church websites help people find bodies of believers, and school websites like ours¹¹ are often the way people are introduced to communities like The Geneva School. But some websites may also present particular threats to travelers seeking the true, the good, and the beautiful. Websites such as myspace.com, livejournal.com, friendster.com, and others allow people to post stories, photos, and any other information desired. These websites have age requirements designed to protect children and young adults. But these same children and young adults often choose to lie about their age, since the perception is that the lie doesn't hurt anyone or doesn't really matter. Just as easily as a website connects loved ones, it may also allow connections with foolish or evil persons who do not initially appear to be so. Online friendships that initially seem innocuous and fun often - and sadly - direct the participant to coarser and ultimately more sinister material.

Can a simple "click" really cause so much trouble? Just as the serpent presented Adam and Eve with a choice that appeared to be appealing but ultimately led to destruction, so the offers of prosperity made "virtually" often lead to real sin, hardship, and despair. Solomon wrote, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).⁷ Sin is certainly nothing new. We arm ourselves against such foes when we talk about these dangers among ourselves, peers with peers, teachers with students, parents with children. With God's help, together we may travel the road that leads to wisdom, virtue, and to life itself, and arrive safely at our destination.

Websites Referred to

1. www.ccel.org
2. www.circeinstitute.org
3. www.nytimes.com
4. www.wsj.com
5. www.orlandosentinel.com
6. <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=378&invol=184>
7. www.biblegateway.com
8. www.army.mil/operations/iraq/faq.html
9. www.smallings.com
10. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/DACB/DACBCDFILES/index.html>
11. www.genevaschool.org

What Man has Made of Mann

Public Classical Education: A Step in the Right Direction

By Foster Lerner

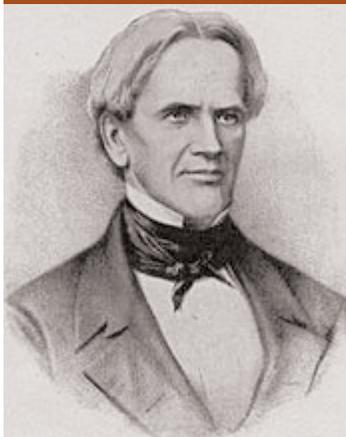
The following essay is a recent submission for Mr. Eatmon's rhetoric class.

American public education has striven since its inception to supply its students the best education possible to prepare them for life. Its revered and deeply humanitarian founder, the self-made Horace Mann (1796-1859), in defense of his intentions to improve America's substandard schoolhouses, wrote in his 1848 report to the Massachusetts School Board, "Under the Providence of God, our means of education are the grand machinery by which the 'raw material' of human nature can be worked up into inventors and discoverers, into skilled artisans and scientific farmers, into scholars and jurists, into the founders of benevolent institutions, and the great expounders of ethical and theological science." But in response to this appeal, the question might have been posed, "Sir, just how do you plan to develop this 'raw material,' which is our sons and daughters? How do you plan to educate our children to live productive lives of virtue, honor, and happiness?"

How can public school teachers today effect this change in their students, providing their pupils the tools they require to reach their full potentials? Today, many educators around the nation have answered this question by implementing a form of education that has been in use from medieval times to the present, known as the Trivium. Though dating back to the Middle Ages, there is nothing bewildered or outdated about this model. Rather, it is the formidable and effective foundation of classical education, by which

children from the elementary to high-school levels are taken to their full potentials through the threefold phases of Grammar, Dialectic, and Rhetoric. These three phases focus students in areas of learning that their developmental stages render easy for them. The memorization of facts and simple arithmetic is focused on at the Grammar level, giving them at an early age a fundamental vocabulary and system on which they can build. Through their early teens (when a child's conversation becomes more candid, if not quarrelsome, contentious, and downright cantankerous), students are taught logic to allow them to look at relationships and to reason independently in the Dialectic phase. Finally, students are taught in the Rhetoric stage to express themselves beautifully, persuasively, winsomely, presenting their views and displaying what they have learned.

This beautiful and sound system attempts to integrate all of its subject-matter into a unified whole. Unlike the current form of public education, which teaches a dissociated body of information, students are taught to understand the relationships between and among different disciplines: how mathematics is necessary to music, how music affects philosophy, how philosophy has shaped history, how history influences science. This kind of understanding is essential, if students are to apply what they have learned to their lives. The classical model's Dialectic and Rhetoric stages, especially, encourage connections to be created in the student's mind, not only through logical training, but also by encouraging dialogue in class related to the topic at hand. In this way students develop a mind able not



Horace Mann

Born in a small Massachusetts town, Horace Mann (1796-1859) had little formal education as a youth, but read much at the town library, where he learned enough to be admitted to Brown University. After graduation in 1819, he taught for a while, studied law and then entered politics, where he soon became a rising star in the state assembly. In 1837 Mann left his highly promising career in politics and accepted the position of First Secretary of the State Board of Education in Massachusetts. He took office at a time when glaring weaknesses existed in public education in Massachusetts. Horace Mann resigned in 1848 to take a seat vacated in the United States Congress and in 1853 he assumed the Presidency of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

only to retain, but also to assimilate and integrate new data and facts into a coherent system.

Just as classical education works to glue together what is often taught as a fragmented system of disciplines and data, so will classical education, through the study of Western civilization, help to integrate a confusing, and often contradictory, world. Students read from primary sources and begin to gain a context and a standard vocabulary through which to verbalize their thoughts.

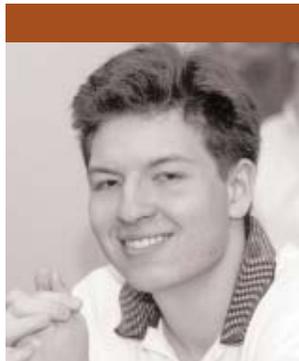
Some may judge this as indoctrinating students to favor Western culture, or perhaps even Christianity, which defined Western culture for more than a thousand years. On the contrary, Western culture is studied over others because it is the culture in which the student lives and moves, and while the study of foreign cultures and languages is to be commended, one had first better master one's native tongues and traditions. In addition, although Christianity has dominated the Western scene until rather recently, there have been throughout the past two millennia dissenters and rebels who rejected their age's received dogma and rhetoric. They, too, receive attention. For the study of Western civilization is concerned not with indoctrination, but with education. Rather than taking the power of free thought out of the students' heads, classical education gives them the very vocabulary and constructs they need to express their unique views and to learn more.

Some may also reject classical education as elitist. Here a clarification must be made. There are two types of elitist. There are those who exclude in some way all but the wealthy and well-situated, but classical education is nothing of the sort. Rather, if what is meant by "elitist" is an institution that strives for the highest academic and cultural standards and for the most effective methods possible to achieve them, then

classical education is guilty as charged. Yet there is no shame in attempting to attain the best education possible. Classical education does have high standards, but it discriminates against no one. In conjunction with this charge of elitism, there often comes the indictment that classical education teaches children things of no value to them in the "real world." What the accuser means, of course, is that if there is no single vocation which arises directly out of a student's study of a given discipline, then the discipline itself is worthless. This assertion is the result of one's assumption that the sole purpose of education is to get students better jobs when they graduate. The classicist holds, however, that the purpose of education is not simply to get degrees, but by them to increase in skill and virtue. Besides, far from being worthless, rhetoric, and logic, and aesthetics, and ancient languages, and a plethora of other studies unique to a classical education are truly some of the only disciplines universally applicable and useful. No matter what vocational paths children follow, they will use what they learned in these classes. Classical education does not seek to teach its students a discrete body of material so much as to encourage a frame of mind that will allow them to excel in whatever vocation they choose. Further, this sort of education will lead to fuller lives of leisure and enrichment, lives more meaningful than is reflected by incessant hours of staring emptily into a television.

Classical education is for all children. There is no single class or group to which it is restricted. Whether a man become a politician or a physician, a sanitation worker or a gardener, the training he has received in a public classical school will assist him in his calling. The classically-educated plumber may design a better pipe. The construction laborer who erects bridges may design one both more beautiful and better built. No matter what one does with

Continued on page 6



Foster Lerner

In 2001 Foster entered the seventh grade at The Geneva School and is presently a member of the junior class. He is an established musician (voilin, viola, handbells, and voice) and is traveling to Austria, Germany, and the Czech Republic with the Orlando Deanery Boychoir from December. 26 - January 7. After graduation from Geneva, Foster plans to continue his education at a Christian college.

What Man has made of Mann continued

one's life, classical education will assist, even guide, one toward making the world a better place. There are those who believe that some cannot or should not be educated at all, predestined by society not to lead, but to follow, not to think, but to have others think for them. This is not so much defeatist as it is arrogant, and classical education (like Horace Mann's vision for public education) is built upon the premise that all people by nature desire to know and are capable of being educated. All people, says this ennobling view of education, can overcome their baser proclivities, in order to rise to their full potentials as leaders and contributors to society.

Indeed, in a democratic society such as America's, the need for a well-educated and discerning public is even more pronounced than in other more strictly-stratified societies. Citizens must be able to reason past their stomachs to the heart of the issues being addressed by politicians, to see the flaw in a specious argument or to point out an alternative. Additionally, in a society governed by the people and for the people, citizens must not only see through others' clever arguments, but they must also make their own speech convincing and beautiful, presenting their case in a way that will win support for their cause. A public aware of history, capable of reason, and effective in communication is the only type that can prevent democracy from devolving into the majority's tyranny. Thus, especially in America's case, classical education is singularly poised to contribute greatly to public happiness and domestic tranquility.

Classical Education is the cultivation of wisdom and virtue, by nourishing the soul on truth, goodness, and beauty.

Andrew Kern, The CiRCE Institute

There are also economic benefits for any society peopled with classically-educated citizens. As Horace Mann pointed out before public education of any sort was a reality, the prosperity of a society that has well-educated, reasoning, conscientious citizens would be

beyond description: it would be blessed by efficiency and abundance. This society, steered by minds of innovation and coupled with insight, could not avoid stimulation and growth -- growth

that would justify any cost required to train teachers to foster in their students a lifelong love of learning, the hallmark of classical education. Even if economic growth and societal prosperity were not an effect of implementing classical education, the classical model would remain inherently better than the public models now in use. The classical alternative is more integrated, has been shown to work with far more success, and trains important faculties in children that current public education fails to fortify, or even to touch. For these reasons, the cost of training teachers to implement classical education should not be deemed too high a price, especially for the future of the nation's youth. It is the duty of any conscientious public, with hearts set on doing what is right and minds on what is wise, to encourage at even the highest cost this superior form of education in American public schools, that all children may in time reach their full potentials.

Were Horace Mann here today, and were he to be asked, "What sort of educational system ought we to adopt that will most benefit our children and our society?" he might very well reply, "Public classical education."

College Financial Aid Presentation

January 9 ~ 7pm in the Music Room

Marguerite Jacobs from the Financial Aid Department at Rollins College will present up-to-date information and advice regarding financial aid for all college-bound students and will answer all your questions. This event is open to anyone in 9th - 12th grades and is especially recommended for students and parents of 11th & 12th graders.

The Geneva School Players
present
Thornton Wilder's

Our Town



Saturday, January 28 at 7:00pm
Park Maitland Auditorium
1450 S. Orlando Avenue, Maitland
Tickets ~ \$5 each
Available from the School office

.. A richly timeless commentary on nothing less than the tragicomedy of human existence -- San Francisco Chronicle

"We can all be thankful for the bountiful gifts Thornton Wilder provided for us in his 1938 play, *Our Town*." -- Matthew Murray on TalkinBroadway.com.

Marvelous! -- The New Yorker

"Reviewing *Our Town* is akin to reviewing the Holy Bible or *The Joy of Cooking* or *Oedipus Rex*. Like those other works, Thornton Wilder's 1938 play is sui generis, so perfect in its simplicity that any comment on it risks seeming superfluous. The work's iconic status is compounded by the fact that any production of it must be basic in the truest sense, presented with little or no scenery or props and acted by performers who don't feel it necessary to offer fresh, bold insights on Wilder's salt-of-the-earth characters." -- Michael Portantiere on TheaterMania.com.

Thornton Wilder's classic *Our Town*, which played to sold-out audiences on Broadway, is truly an American classic. First produced in 1938, the Pulitzer-Prize winning *Our Town* has become an American stage treasure and is Wilder's most renowned and frequently-performed play. Set at the turn of the 20th century, the play reveals the ordinary lives of the people in the small town of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire.

This January *Our Town* comes to Geneva! The Geneva Players feature a talented group of performers who have worked hard to embody the characters of this play. As the Stage Manager, Drew West narrates Wilder's immortal tale of love, marriage, death, and daily life. Also starring are Jonathan Spilman and Becky Lopdrup as Dr. and Mrs. Gibbs, Roth Allen and Christalyn Steers as Editor and Mrs. Webb, and Alex Cloke and Caroline Mitchell as the young couple who find love and life, George and Emily.

The play is described as "a wonderful gift for fans of great drama," according to the executive producer of Masterpiece Theatre, Rebecca Eaton. "*Our Town* is the quintessential American play!"

Wilder's principal message in *Our Town* -- that people should appreciate the details and interactions of everyday life while they live them -- became critical at a time when political troubles were escalating in Europe. World War II was on the horizon when the play hit theaters in 1938. It was a time of tremendous international tension, and citizens across the globe suffered from fear and uncertainty. *Our Town* directed attention away from these negative aspects of life in the late 1930s and focused instead on the aspects of the human experience that make life precious. Wilder revealed his faith in the stability and constancy of life through his depiction and discussion of the small town of Grover's Corners, with its "marrying . . . living and . . . dying."

The Geneva School

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Disordered Affections and the Assault on Virtue

The world, the flesh, and the devil are waging war on us and on our children, and they're marshaling keyboards, mice, and modems to do their bidding.

Plan to attend a free weekend conference, co-hosted by Geneva and St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, on contemporary threats to sexual purity. Led by Christian counselor Ryan Bailey, founder of the Rivendell Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, these two days of candid conversation will both open your eyes and steel your soul.

At St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
4917 Eli Street ~ Orlando, FL 32804

Friday, January 13 ~ 7:00 - 9:00pm
For adults only

Saturday, January 14 ~ 8:30am - 12:30pm
For Rhetoric students (grades 9 - 12) and adults

For further information, please contact Scott Bucko, Bob Ingram, or Michael Eatmon at 407-332-6363.

