

The Future of Christianity in the West – 7

This is the sixth of nine articles in a series entitled “The Future of Christianity in the West.”

The fourth institution that Rod Dreher urges must be strengthened in his much-discussed book, *The Benedict Option*, is the Christian school. Not only the church, not only marriage and the family, but Christian educational institutions must be established and strengthened for the coming dark age of secular paganism.

Classical Christian Schools

“One of the most important pieces of the Benedictine Option movement is the spread of classical Christian schools,” Dreher insists.¹ The idea that an hour of Sunday School and an hour in church can counteract 30 hours in the classroom and even more hours exposed to the internet each week is foolhardy. Yet Dreher is critical of “Christian schools” that teach a secular curriculum onto which they slap chapel and a few hours of worldview education. “The trite theological education many received at Christian school will serve more as a vaccination against taking the faith seriously than as an incentive for it,” Dreher warns.² A Christian education should cultivate a love for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, and a zeal to pursue these ideals wherever they may be found. It is essential such schools teach Scripture, the history of Western Civilization, Latin, and the arts. “There is no more powerfully counter-cultural way to cultivate resilient Christians from their youth,” Dreher maintains.³ For those without access to a classical Christian school, he recommends classical Christian homeschool. Again, he says, “Classical Christian schools... are essential to the future of Christianity in America.”⁴

It is of no little interest that Reformed Chinese Christians have established Christian educational institutions as they have had opportunity to do so. The Early Rain Presbyterian Church in Chengdu saw it as essential that they start a classical Christian school – not merely a Christian school, but a *classical* Christian school for their children, *and* a college, *and* a seminary. The government disbanded the church and its schools in December of 2018 seeing them as a threat to its singular authority. Yet one brave Christian mother, when told that she must now place her child in the state schools, replied to the authorities, “I hear what you are saying, *but we will not do it.*” Though driven underground and decentralized, their school continues. Many of these Chinese Christians in the face of persecution see clearly what American Christians fail to see in the face of prosperity: we must educate our own.

Our congregation has been in the middle of the classical Christian school movement since 1997. Veritas Academy was started in the Johnson’s living room in the summer of that year and slowly developed from a homeschool co-op meeting at the Eastern Heights Presbyterian Church on Stephenson Avenue to a full-orbed K-12 school of nearly 200 students. Other of our members were involved in the founding of a second classical school as well, the Habersham School.

¹ Dreher, *The Benedict Option*, 146.

² Ibid., 159.

³ Ibid., 161.

⁴ Ibid., 173.

A number of factors go into the process of choosing schools for one's children such as location (is it near or distant); cost (expensive or inexpensive); curriculum (Christian, classical, secular and benign, secular and hostile); facilities (science labs, computer labs); extra-curriculars (athletics, music, arts); and special education programs. We have always maintained that one must not judge the decisions about schooling that fellow believers make, given all the variables. For some of us, the circumstances and convictions may add up to the public schools, for others the Christian school, for others a secular private school, for others the classical Christian school, for others homeschool. What particular families choose to do is not at issue.

What is at issue is the importance of establishing classical Christian schools for the benefit of the Christian community. It is vital that these schools receive the financial and moral support that they need. A particular family may not ever benefit from their existence. However, the continued flourishing of the Christian community may be tied to well-being of these schools that are continuing the heritage of the Christian academy.

It also will be necessary for orthodox Christians to establish their own colleges and universities. Christians are actually quite good at this. The idea of a uni-veritas, an institution in which all branches of truth, all the academic disciplines are brought together in one place under the authority of God's word and God's church is a Christian idea. The world's first universities established at Bologna (1088), Paris (c. 1150), Oxford (1167), and Cambridge (1209) were, of course, Christian, as was nearly every university in the Christian West until the late 19th century. This would include America's oldest universities at Harvard (1636), William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), and Princeton (1746). Secular pagans, with rare exceptions, don't establish institutions. They take over existing ones and destroy their intended purpose (witness the mainline denominations, the above educational institutions, and even American democracy). We must educate our own.

Terry L. Johnson is the senior minister of Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, GA. He is author of various books including *Leading in Worship*, *Worshipping with Calvin*, *Serving with Calvin*, and *The Identity and Attributes of God*.

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